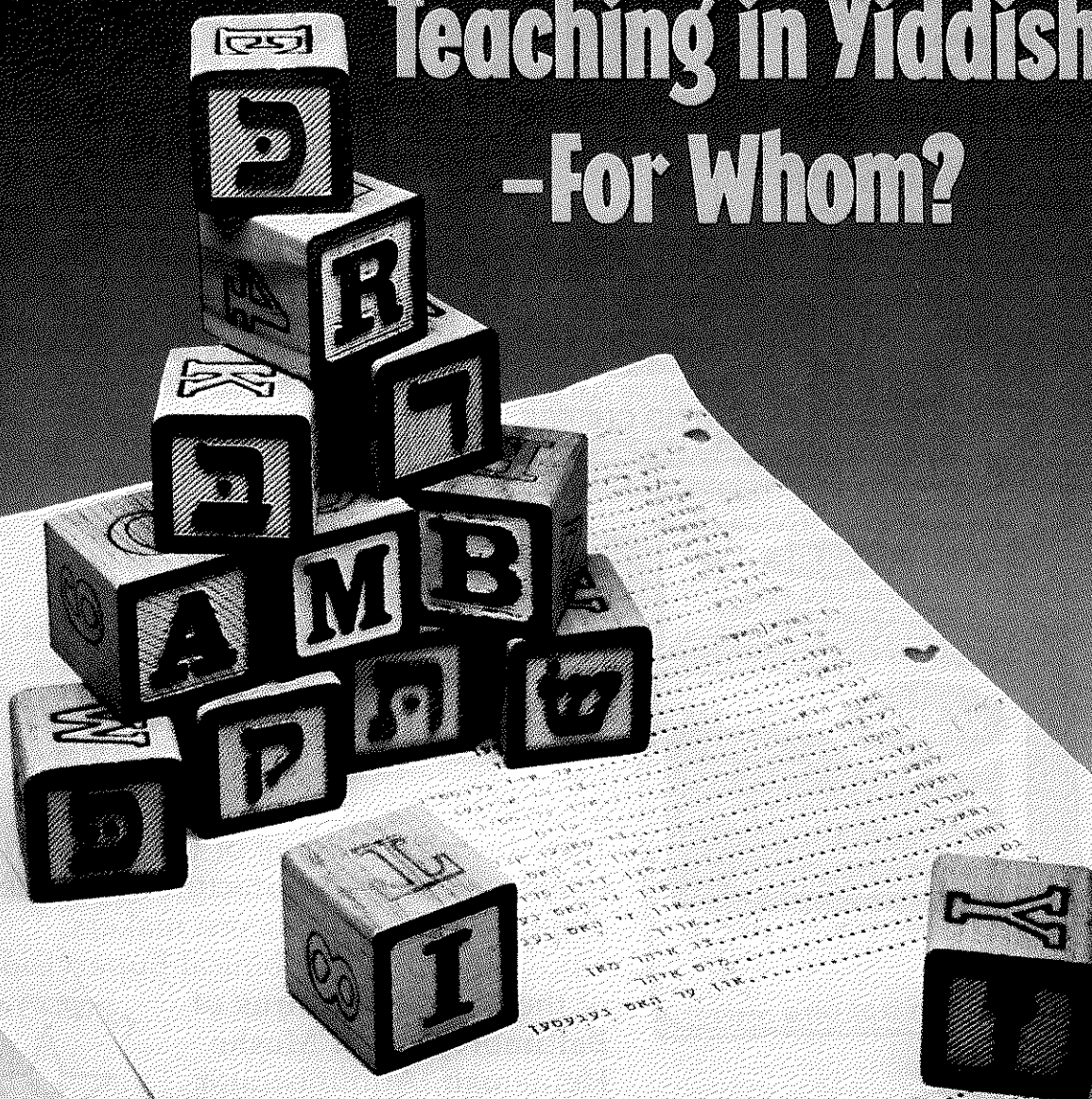


THE JEWISH OBSERVER

TAMMUZ-AV 5748/SUMMER 1988
USA \$2.50 / FOREIGN \$3.00
VOLUME XXI / NUMBER 5

Teaching in Yiddish —For Whom?

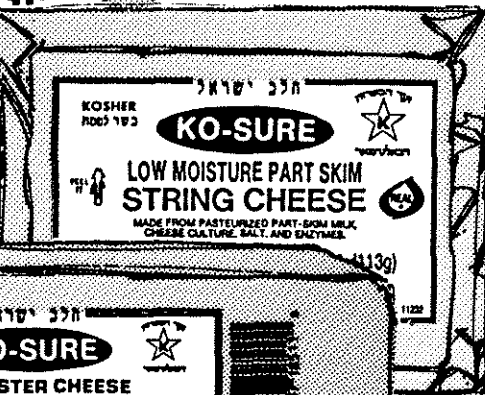


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THE JEWISH OBSERVER

THE JEWISH OBSERVER (ISSN) 0021-6615 is published monthly except July and August, by the Agudath Israel of America, 84 William Street, New York, NY 10038. Second class postage paid at New York, NY Subscription \$18.00 per year; two years, \$30.00; three years, \$40.00. Outside of the United States (US funds only) \$10 surcharge per year. Single copy: \$2.50; foreign: \$3.00. Send address changes to The Jewish Observer, 84 William St., N.Y., N.Y. 10038. Tel.: (212) 797-9000. Printed in the U.S.A.

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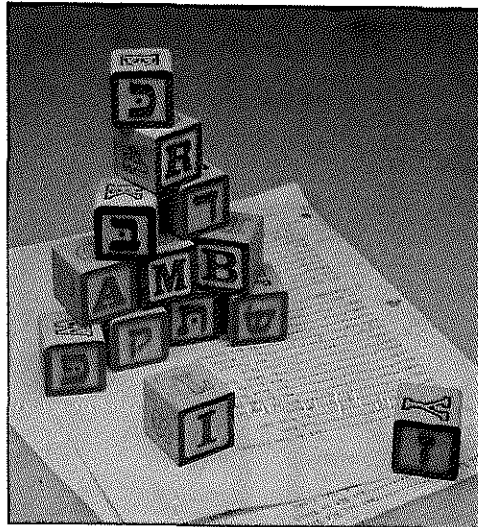
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Letters to the Editor

The Three Weeks, climaxed by Tisha B'Av, are an experience in mourning for our alienation from G-d, reminding us of what should be obvious—that the Jew is in *Golus*. In keeping with this period, THE JEWISH OBSERVER invites the readers to increase their *Golus* awareness with the following essay by

Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller

THE SWEET

HISTORY LESSONS FOR FUTURE CONDUCT

Unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—we must stress that which should be obvious; that the Jew is in *Golus*. For what may be obvious to the Jew who went through the *Churban* in Europe may not be obvious to the American-born Jew, not even the American-born *ben Torah*. He was born here, he feels comfortable here. Indeed, G-d has been good to us here. Jews on the whole are getting ahead, and Orthodox Jews in particular are succeeding spiritually as well as materially. So the Jew is a member of an ethnic minority. America is made up of many minorities. We have rights like the rest of them. If we are indeed in *golus*, it's a sweet *golus*.

There is an oft-quoted saying that

Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller, Rosh Hayeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva in Chicago, is a frequent contributor to these pages. He originally presented the theme of this article as part of a symposium at the 60th National Convention of Agudath Israel of America.

he who does not learn from history will have to relive history. When we speak of the Jewish people, we must paraphrase that statement: The Jew *will* relive history and therefore he *must* learn from history. The *Ramban* in his commentary to *Parshas Lech Lecha* teaches us, *Maasei avos siman lebanim*. That which happened to our Patriarchs—Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov—is a portent of what will happen to their children, the Jewish People.

The *Avos Hakedoshim* in their personal lives laid the foundations and set the pattern for all subsequent Jewish history. This is what we mean when we say the Jew will relive history. The corollary to this rule is that we must learn from how the *Avos* dealt with those history-making situations in which they found themselves. The *Ramban* (see commentary to *Bereishis* 32,4 and 33,15) teaches us that Yaakov's preparation for and his meeting with Eisav is the *Parshas Hagalus*, indicating what would happen to us in future encounters with Eisav's

descendants. It also provides us with a formula for coping with our present-day *golus* among Eisav's children. If we fail to learn from it, we will have to relive that *Parshas Hagalus* at very great risk.

Even in actions where our Sages were critical of the *Avos'* conduct, they nonetheless followed their example: The Midrash tells us that because *Yaakov Avinu* referred to Eisav eight times as "*Adoni—my master*," eight kings arose from the children of Eisav before Yaakov's children had even one king.¹

Yet when Rebbe Yehuda *Hanassi* saw that his scribe, Rabbi Efes, had addressed a letter: "From Yehuda the Prince, to my master, the Emperor Antoninus," he told him to rip up the letter and to write instead: "From Yehuda your servant, to my master, the Emperor Antoninus." When Rabbi Efes asked him why he lowered himself and his prestige as *Nassi*, Rebbe answered, "Am I better than my father Yaakov who, when he addressed Eisav, referred to himself as *avdecha Yaakov*—your

GOLUS *Can we live a miracle as if it were natural?*

servant Yaakov?)*

Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch זצ"ל, the Telzer Rav and Rosh Hayeshiva, explained that Yaakov was found wanting for not having attained a level of spirituality that would have made it unnecessary to humble himself before Eisav; yet the actual state in which he found himself left him no choice but to refer to Eisav as "my master"—and this became the model for future generations.

PATRIARCHAL SURVIVAL TACTICS

The Jewish People throughout the millennia here survived because whenever they were persecuted and driven from one country, they found refuge in another country. This pattern was directly established by the *ma'aseh Avos* of Yaakov Avinu, who, in pre-

* The writer wishes to note that in the original presentation, at the Agudath Israel Convention, the Midrash was inadvertently misquoted. The above is the correct form of the Midrash.

paration for his confrontation with Eisav, divided his people into two camps: "*Im yavo Eisav el hamachaneh ha'achas vehikahu vehaya hamachaneh hanishar lifleita*. And he said, if Eisav will come upon one camp and smite it, then the remaining camp will survive" (*Bereishis* 32, 9).

Says the *Ramban*, this is also an indication of what will happen: In future generations, the children of Eisav could never completely destroy us. They may persecute us, even torture us, in some of their countries. A ruler in one land will make decrees against our possessions or against our persons, while another government in a different part of the world will have mercy on the refugees, and protect them.

It does not take too much imagination to realize that our generation is living witness to this recurring pattern of Jewish history: "If Eisav will come upon one camp and smite it"—if Hitler brought about an almost total annihilation of European Jewry—"then the remaining

camp will survive"—we here in America were that remainder. If today Jews in other parts of the world are suffering privation and persecution, then we here in America and in Eretz Yisroel are the *machaneh hanishar*—the other camp.

But we do have one thing in common with "the other camp"—and we make a grave error in not realizing it—that we here are just as much in *golus* as are our brethren in Russia, in Iran and in Arab lands. Except that they suffer from the first half of the *passuk*—"If Eisav will come upon one camp and smite it"—and we are the beneficiaries of the second half—"then the remaining camps will survive." And we have no guarantee that the roles cannot be reversed.

A LESSON FROM LAVAN

We must be keenly aware of this *golus* status, even when we are blessed to be among the survivors, as the Vilna

Gaon points out in his commentary to the Pesach *Haggadah*:

In "*Vehi She'amda*," where we recount how G-d is keeping His oath guaranteeing the survival of Avraham and his offspring, we say, "For it was not only one who rose against us, but in every generation they arise (present tense!) against us to destroy us, and the Holy-One-Blessed-Be-He saves us (present tense!) from their hands." But what if we don't realize this? What if we live under a *malchus shel chessed*—a benevolent government—and we don't see those that are out to destroy us? That, says the Vilna Gaon, is the connection with the next paragraph: "Go out and learn—what did Lavan want to do to our father Yaakov? Pharaoh leveled his decree only against the males, whereas Lavan sought to destroy everyone." That is, even though we do not consciously sense them, G-d is constantly performing great miracles for us. If it is not obvious to us and we are overly secure, it is time to leave our comfortable illusions and learn from *Lavan Hoarami*.

At first glance we can't see what Lavan intended to do to Yaakov, yet the Torah tells us that *Arami oveid avi*—he sought to uproot the entire Jewish People:

Yaakov is living with his uncle, Lavan, married to his two daughters. (Some say that even Bilhah and Zilpah were also Lavan's daughters, by concubines—see *Targum Yonoson ben Uziel*.) Yaakov's children are Lavan's grandchildren. He is making vast sums of money for Lavan, and along the way, becoming independently wealthy and building his own family. Yaakov does not have the slightest inkling that there is a problem. And then he begins to hear rumblings: "And he heard the words of the sons of Lavan saying, 'Yaakov has taken all that belongs to our father, and from our father's possessions he has acquired all this honor.' And Yaakov saw the face of Lavan that it was not with him as it had been yesterday and the day before" (*Bereishis* 31,1-2). Yaakov steals away, not yet realizing the full import of that

change in Lavan's face. Lavan pursues him. And then, in the final moment of truth, Lavan reveals his true intentions: "It is within my power to do evil with you and the G-d of your father appeared to me last night and told me do not speak with Yaakov good or bad" (*Bereishis* 31,29). Lavan, the loving uncle, father-in-law, grandfather, and business partner, has revealed himself. Don't delude yourself, *Lavan beketish la'akor es hakol*—Lavan sought to destroy everything!

EXISTENCE BY MIRACLE

Over two hundred years ago, Rabbi Yaakov Emden wrote: "The existence of the Jewish people among the nations of the world is a greater miracle than that of the exodus from Egypt."

This same observation was made by the *Chovos Halevovos*² hundreds of years before. "If a person wants to see miracles in his times similar to those performed by the *Ribbono Shel Olam* at *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and *Ma'mad Har Sinai*, let him look with a truthful eye at how the Jewish people survive among the nations of the world since they have gone into *golus*, and how their needs are being met. We flourish even though we differ essentially from our host nations. Our inner values and outer behavior are different from theirs, and they know it." These are factors that normally arouse hatred between groups, and yet we still to live among them. Moreover, they know that the Jew is 'making it,' sometimes even doing better than them. "Their middle-and lower-classes often work harder than ours do. And yet we exist among them—as the *Ribbono Shel Olam* had promised us: 'Even when they are in the lands of their enemies I have not despised them and I have not rejected them to destroy them, to nullify my covenant with them, I am *Hashem* their G-d' (*Vayikra* 26,4)."

Do you think we are not in *golus*? *Mir zennen shoin ein moll in golus!* We are in *golus*—but the *Ribbono Shel Olam* is with us.

If we are fortunate enough to live in a *malchus shel chessed*, it is because we are beneficiaries of that second half of the *passuk*, "And the remaining camp will be a refuge." The danger is that we look at this awesome miracle of our existence, and we consider it to be natural. We think that we exist in *golus* because we get along so well with non-Jews, because we're so clever, so resourceful, so industrious, so ambitious . . . because the Jew, no matter how you throw him up in the air, is going to land on his feet. But it just is not so.

ON THE BACK OF THE FISH

Among those wonderful *Aggadot* in *Perek Hasefina*, Rabba Bar Bar-Chana relates: "We were traveling on a ship and we saw a huge fish. Sand had collected on its back and a meadow of grass had grown there. We had thought that it was dry land, so we landed on it. We lit a fire, baked and cooked our food there. And when its back got hot, the fish turned over. . . . Had our boat not been nearby, we surely would have drowned" (*Babba Basra* 73b).

This, like all the other *Aggadot* there, is obviously an allegory. Rabba Bar Bar-Chana is teaching us that there are times in our *golus* when we mistake the back of a fish for a beautiful, grassy island of refuge. It appears to us as dry land, and we forget that we are in the middle of a stormy sea of *golus*. We decide to enjoy ourselves. We light our fires, we bake, we cook, we drink "*lechayim*," and we live it up as if we were here to stay, and as if nothing is going to bother that fish. We make the mistake of thinking that this state of existence in *golus* is natural and permanent. The wonderful illusion lasts until we make those fires a bit too hot and the fish turns over! And if the ship of Torah—our only real guarantee of survival—is not nearby, we run the risk of sinking to the depths of that sea of *golus*.

People talk about the unprecedented situation of Jews in America.

Over two hundred years ago, Rabbi Yaakov Emden wrote in a widely quoted essay: "The existence of the Jewish people among the nations of the world is a greater miracle than that of the exodus from Egypt."

Nonsense! Nothing is unprecedented in the history of the Jewish people. We are always reliving history:

The so-called "Golden Age" of the Jews of Spain lasted for over a century. The Jewish people in Spain were under the impression that Spain was their island of tranquility—they had produced philosophers, doctors, merchants, poets, and ministers. But then things began to change. In 1492, even though Don Yitzchak Abarbanel was the Finance Minister and one of the closest advisors to Ferdinand and Isabella the Jews were thrown into a turmoil—not by the discovery of America, but by *Gerush Sefarad*, the expulsion of the entire Jewish community from Spain.

The Jews of Germany, beginning from the Emancipation in the early nineteenth century, labored under the same kind of illusion. In the First World War, they fought loyally by the side of their non-Jewish compatriots for the glory of the Kaiser. In the Weimar Republic, which followed, they enjoyed civil rights and rose to positions of influence and power, producing some of Germany's greatest scholars and scientists, poets and musicians. There were those who said: "*Berlin ist Jerusalem*."—Until an insignificant corporal, with the same master plan as Lavan's for a final solution, appeared on the scene. *And the fish turned over!*

HIGH PROFILE . . .

Let us not be misunderstood. The message here is not: "It can happen here unless we watch out for the Neo-nazis and the Aryan Nation." In effect we are

saying the opposite: that Jews in *golus* are living a miracle and one dare not confuse that miracle with *teva*—nature. We cannot apply political or sociological laws to a miracle. Schools of higher learning and advanced think-tanks cannot teach us anything that can realistically apply to the categories of Jewish history.

In order to understand Jewish history, you must understand Torah: As Rabbi Shimon Schwab has said (see JO, Feb.'88), "The Jew in *golus* has to take along the *Chumash*." Consulting the *Chumash*, we find that there are no simple guidelines to *golus* conduct. On one level, we are bidden to maintain an extremely high profile, and on the other, we are commanded to keep out of sight—possibly both at the same time.

We are the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. The hallmark of the *Avos* was "*Vayikra b'Sheim Hashem*"—they proclaimed the Name of *Hashem* for the world—publicly declaring the Divine significance of that Name (*Bereishis* 12,8—see *Ramban*). Before Avraham came upon the scene, *Hashem* was known as G-d of Heaven. After he proclaimed His Name, He was known as the G-d of *Heaven and Earth* (*Bereishis* 24,7 see *Rashi*). Yitzchak continued this mission (*Bereishis* 26,28). And Yaakov proclaimed the Divine Name by dwelling in the tents of Torah and learning with all who sought G-d's teachings (see *Sforno* to *Bereishis* 36,51). The *Ramban* explains that Yaakov's form of proclaiming G-d's Name was by bringing into the world a family whose very existence bore testimony to the true *emuna* among the nations of the world.

This is our *tachlis*—our mission as a people. We have no other *tachlis*. As the *passuk* says: "I have created this people to declare My praises" (*Yishayahu* 43,21). In fact, the whole purpose of the creation is, as *Chazal* tell us, for *K'vod Hashem*.

If this is our purpose, can we shirk our responsibilities? Must we not proclaim the *Sheim Hashem*? Should we not teach Torah to our fellow Jews, and teach the world by our example how a human being was meant to live? Our mission is to show the world by our service to G-d that there is a Creator, and demonstrate by our conduct how His creatures should live. If in this we maintain a high profile, then we are fulfilling the purpose of our *golus* among the nations of the world. (See *Smag, Mitzvas Asei* 84.)

. . . HIDDEN FROM SIGHT

On the other hand, we are also bidden to hide ourselves as much as possible. The Torah records: "We [the Jews] circled Mt. Seir for many days and G-d said, "You have gone around this mountain enough—turn to the north" (*Devarim* 31,3). On the simple level, this was a message to proceed toward their goal, *Eretz Yisroel*. The *Kli Yakar*, however, draws from a *Midrash* and says that this passage "plumbs to the depths." It explores the depths of the *tehom*, which is a reference to *Golus Edom*.³ This *passuk* is an allusion to the Jewish condition at that time, and for all generations.

We are traveling around Mt. Seir, the territory of *Eisav*, not yet having attained our final goal. Nor will we attain that goal until *Moshiach*

On one level, the Jew in *golus* is bidden to maintain an extremely high profile, and on the other, we are commanded to keep out of sight—possibly both at the same time.

comes. But, says the Torah, while you are going around among the descendants of Eisav—that is, during Eisav's period of ascendancy in this world—hide yourselves. (Implicit in the word *tzafon*—literally, north—is *hatzpinu atzmechem*, hide yourselves.) The *Kli Yakar* explains: "If a Jew find some sort of success in this world, he should conceal it. Don't show it to Eisav because no-one hates the Jews as do the children of Eisav. In their eyes, everything we possess was stolen from them when Yaakov took the *brachos* from Eisav. Therefore, '*hatzpinu atzmechem*—hide yourselves.'

Says the *Kli Yakar*, "This is the exact opposite of what Jews are doing today. If the Jew achieves a little success, he has to flaunt it. Somebody who has a hundred gold coins, clothes himself and his family and lives in a house in the manner of a person who has thousands, and this arouses the hatred of the gentiles. In this, they are transgressing the *passuk's* command: '*Hatzpinu atzmechem!*'" (The *Kli Yakar* wrote these words during the late sixteenth century!)

Those who ignore this *passuk* (and unfortunately this has become inordinately common) do so at great risk. . . . It is no secret that this has been one of the main sources of the anti-Semitism from which the Jewish People has suffered throughout the years of *golus*.

A CONFUSED AGENDA

This, then, is our agenda: When it comes to proclaiming the Name of *Hashem*, we should be seen *and* heard. Our pronouncements and actions should be instrumental in making

Him "the G-d of the Heaven and the Earth." In this, we must maintain a high profile. But when it comes to our material success, we should try to keep out of sight. We should proclaim for the world, "*Hashem hu haElokim*," not show them how much we own. We seem to have *fardayt di yoitzrois*—reversed the agenda. When it comes to proclaiming the Name of Heaven in the world, not only are Jews as a whole not manning the ramparts, but unfortunately there are all too many in the forefront of what is perceived as a battle to secularize America. However, when it comes to conspicuous consumption—letting the non-Jews know to what extent we've made it and how we can spend it—we can't be beat.

When typically Jewish-sounding names are broadcast throughout the land in connection with insider stock trading, using controlled substances, and child abuse, there is obviously too high a Jewish profile. When pornography and images of violence are propagated by an elite of east and west coast Jewish authors, publishers, movie and media moguls, whose first amendment rights are defended by a highly visible corps of Jewish ACLU types, then we are too obvious.

There is little you and I can do about this. But if by our apathy and inaction we allow the American Jewish establishment to speak in the name of the entire Jewish People, ultimately we will have to give an accounting. For the situation has so evolved that should we want to know what position to take on almost any given issue of public policy dealing with religion, morality, and related affairs, we can almost unerringly say that, whatever position is taken by the secular-Reform Jewish establishment and the ACLU, we should

take the opposite. To give just a few examples, on the ERA, abortion, "gay rights," government aid to private schools, or any issue dealing with the so-called separation of church and state, the Catholic Church and the fundamentalist Christians have taken stands that are closer to the Torah position than the so-called "Jewish position" is. I believe that it is our sacred duty to proclaim the Name of G-d not only for its own sake, but also to remove the *Chillul Hashem* resulting from the perception that the Catholic Church and the Moral Majority have become the guardians of America's morality, against the Jews.

DISPELLING THE GROTESQUE CARICATURE

We must also do whatever possible to dispel the grotesque caricature of the Jew that is projected by so-called Jewish weddings and bar mitzvas. It's not enough to have a wedding attended by thousands of people. One must engage a public relations outfit to handle the press and call in the T.V., who then make it into a media event, which someone obviously feels is a *Kiddush Hashem*. But that is not the end. The paper has to dutifully conduct interviews with the caterer who reveals how many thousands of chickens and how many tons of chopped liver and gallons of dressing he'll be using.

When this happens, or when *The New York Times* runs a prominently featured story on the Queen Elizabeth II being chartered for a bar mitzva celebration, we are heating up the fire on the back of the fish. *Gedolei Torah* have for the past several years been raising their

voices against the excesses in this area—it would seem to little avail. But the time has come for intelligent and dedicated Jews to realize not only the adverse effects that extravagance has on the individual and on the family, but of the real and present danger that it presents to *Klal Yisroel in golus*. And we must realize that it's not only weddings and *simchos*, but our entire lifestyle that stings the eyes of our neighbors. One has only to pick up a Jewish publication and look at the ads to realize to what appalling extremes the ostentatious display of our material success has reached.

This tendency has been aggravated by the insidious assimilation of an objectionable character trait of our host society. Unfortunately, even the most committed Jew, who would never dream of outright assimilation, cannot help but absorb certain attitudes from the very air of the society in which he lives. On the whole, Americans are the world's nice guys. But they do have certain *midos ra'os* (pernicious traits), no different from all other nations of the world. One of them, perhaps the main one, is a lack of *tznius*. By this we mean not only improper in dress, we mean an inordinate preoccupation with hype and P.R., and an appalling lack of personal modesty and humility. Publicity in all forms and varieties becomes an end unto itself. And we absorb all this by social osmosis.

Even our actions on behalf of Torah are affected. *Chazal* tells us that the first *Luchos* (Tablets of Law), which were given in a public, awe-inspiring fashion, did not last. The second *Luchos* were given quietly, and they did last. The message should be obvious. Yet even some of our most dedicated Jews—and even our most sacred institutions—have been making the mistake of acting as though the medium were the message. Getting your name or your institution's name in *The New York Times*—or any other paper, for that matter—is an accomplishment in itself.

There are those who think that if they put up a menorah on public

property in the city square, they've accomplished great things for *Yiddishkeit*, even if they have to defend their position by declaring that the menorah "is not a religious symbol." We thus witness the ultimate absurdity of arousing the hatred and derision of the gentile world and, at the same time, removing the *Sheim Hashem* from the very Jewish symbol that we are trying to publicize. I personally believe that there should not be a nativity scene in the public square, but that we should not fight against it. I also believe that there should not be *lehavdil* a Chanukah menorah on public property and we certainly should not go to court to fight for it.

CHOOSING THE ISSUES— NO FOOL-PROOF FORMULA

There can be no specific formula for choosing issues on which to take a stand. There must be a case-by-case evaluation. The general guidelines, though, suggest that we agitate for issues of significance for the interests of *Klal Yisroel*, on which we have sound legal and moral rights, and which will not unduly arouse the enmity of our neighbors. I use the term "unduly" advisedly. For almost anything we do or say in defense of our rights is bound to arouse some negative reaction in some quarters. But we should not become so drunk with the successes that we have had in this area, that we go to the legislatures or the courts on every trivial issue. In any case, quiet *hishtadlus* should be pursued before strident public positions are broadcast over the media and in print.

This does not mean to say that when we see a non-Jew walking down the street, we must step off the sidewalk for him. Nor does it mean that we should go to the City Council or the State Legislature or Washington, hat in hand, bowing obsequiously, humbly petitioning for the favor of "Your Honor, The Mayor," "Your Excellency, The Governor," and "Your Majesty, The President," as the subjects of the

Czar were once forced to do. We must pick our issues carefully, work for them discreetly, and if necessary, defend them with vigor and dignity.

On the positive side, I believe that Agudath Israel has led a dignified, low-key revolution in championing the rights of the Orthodox Jewish community, without being shrill or compromising Jewish values in the process.

DIGNITY, NOT PRIDE

Finally, let us realize that there is a difference between Jewish dignity within humility and the pride of Eisav. When Eisav offered to accompany Yaakov on his journey, Yaakov said, "Let my master go before his servant and I will conduct myself slowly and quietly, at my pace, in keeping with the work which is before me and in keeping with the pace of my children, until I come to my master, to Seir" (*Bereishis* 33,14).

Yaakov Avinu, even while he ostensibly humbled himself before Eisav, revealed the inner secret of the Jew's formula not only for survival, but for ultimate ascendancy. *I cannot go with you*, said Yaakov to Eisav. *I have to go my own way at my own pace, modestly and quietly, without noise and fanfare, in keeping with the tasks that I have to accomplish in this world, and in a manner which befits the chinuch of my children, until that day will come—and surely it will come—when we come to Seir.*"

As Rashi explains, Yaakov had no intention at that time of going to Eisav's country. But Yaakov did not lie. When will he come to Seir? With the advent of *Moshiach*, as the Prophet Ovadia said, "The savior will ascend the Mountain of Zion to judge the Mountain of Eisav. And on that day we shall see the Kingdom of G-d" (*Ovadia* 1.12). ■

1. "And these are the kings that ruled in the land of Edom before a king ruled over the children of Israel" (*Bereishis* 36,31).

2. In *Shaar Habechira*, Chapter 5.

3. "Tehom" is the fourth *golus*—that of Eisav, which is alluded to the beginning of *Sefer Bereishis*.

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In the April 1988 issue of *The Jewish Observer*, Professor Aaron Twerski wrote "An Open Letter to Dr. Norman Lamm," president of Yeshiva University, in response to a *New York Times* article on a "major public address" delivered by Dr. Lamm in Manhattan's Fifth Avenue Synagogue. In his "open letter," Twerski faulted Dr. Lamm for attacking "Right Wing" Orthodoxy and for giving the appearance of dealing with Conservative and Reform leaders with deference and dignity.

In the pages that follow, Dr. Lamm responds to Professor Twerski's letter, and Professor Twerski, in turn, replies.

AN OPEN REPLY TO PROFESSOR AARON TWERSKI

Dear Professor Twerski: In the April 1988 issue of *The Jewish Observer* you take me to task for a lecture I gave on March 22, reported in *The New York Times* the following day. While I would have preferred the courtesy of your checking the report with me, I do appreciate the respectful and relatively moderate tone of your polemic. And I am grateful to the editors of *JO* for the opportunity to set the record straight and correct the erroneous inferences and unfortunate misinterpretations, many of which are reflected in your "open letter" to me.

First, a word about nomenclature. The words "ultra-Orthodox" and "fundamentalist" were not and are not part of my vocabulary. Indeed, in the lecture I explicitly rejected the use of such pejorative epithets. I referred to "the Right" (which I consider a relative term) and *Haredim*. Moreover, the only mention I made of Hassidism was to bemoan the absence of adequate Hassidic enthusiasm in my own "Centrist" community.

Second, I fail to understand why you brought up the matter of *mechitza*, other than to question whether my views are at variance

with those of my own *rebbe*, Rabbi J.D. Soloveitchik שליט"א. If so, may I inform you that some thirty years ago I wrote what was probably the longest and most widely disseminated defense of *mechitza* and critique of Conservatism. I spoke about it across the country, and risked my own rabbinic position on its account. And my views have not changed.

Third, regarding the attitude to secular culture, your response is disappointing. It is insulting to ascribe to me the view that those who do not subscribe to *Torah Umadda* are "know nothings and

When I recognize heterodox groups as "valid" I mean that not only do I treat their leaders humanly as individuals, but I relate to them as leaders of religious groups within the Jewish community who must and should be worked with respectfully.

country bumpkins." *Has mi-le'hazkir!* Most of my *rebbeim*, whom I adored and revered, lacked secular education and yet were the paragons of wisdom. Would you accuse the advocates of *Torah im Derech Eretz* of such contempt for East European Jewry which opposed them?

Your assertion that because "right-wing" Jewry is "setting the agenda in so many areas," it somehow proves the high level of openness to the environing culture, is incomprehensible. One does not need an education of any kind in order to advance his or his group's agenda successfully; all he needs is political insight, will, and muscle. *Mah inyan shmitta eitzel Har Sinai?* It should be understood that *Torah Umadda* sees itself as a vision that issues from Torah itself, and is not reducible to technology or vocation or political effectiveness.

I shall not react to your insinuation that all Zionists define Am

Yisrael such that the centrality of Torah is displaced by nationalism, save to ask if anyone has remembered the name of Rav Kook, z"l.

But I shall forego other such inaccuracies and ignore all the rhetorical barbs that are ultimately inconsequential, and concentrate on the main thrust of your article—which entirely misconceives my point of view.

**"SPIRITUAL DIGNITY"—YES;
"LEGITIMACY"—NO**

In my lecture, I advocated acknowledging non-Orthodox groups as "valid" and stated that "if they are sincere in their convictions they possess spiritual dignity," but that we can never accord them halakhic "legitimacy." In your letter, you ask what I mean by "valid groupings," whether it means that they are to be dealt with the way we relate to leaders of secular Jewish

groups, and you offer your opinion that this would hardly pacify Conservative and Reform leadership.

Now, in a footnote on the same page (7) you make reference to an address reprinted in *Moment Magazine*. In that very article I made it abundantly clear what I mean by these three terms. I defined them carefully (if idiosyncratically), specifically to avoid the kind of obfuscation to which they have now fallen victim. So I shall try again.

"Valid" derives from the Latin *validus*, "strong." It refers to an objective fact, irrespective of my approval or disapproval. "Legitimate" comes from the Latin *lex*, "law," and hence, where Jewish matters are concerned, falls within the province of Halakhah.

When I recognize heterodox groups as "valid" I mean that not only do I treat their leaders humanly as individuals—presumably we do not disagree on that—but I relate to them as leaders of religious groups within the Jewish community who must and should be worked with respectfully. This *de facto* recognition is not qualitatively different from the way we deal with secular groups, except that they happen to head groups which identify themselves as religious. The Torah refers to pagan priests as *Kohanim*. That is the fact, although we do not go to them for a *brakhah*. Our *Rishonim* spoke of *chakhmei ha-Kara'im* ("Karaites rabbis"), yet no "Orthodox" Jews ever asked them a *sh'elah*. Should we deny the same appellation—leaders of Jewish religious groups—to those who are indeed heads of religious Jewish groups who, it so happens, are far more numerous than we are? Neither of us is happy with our contemporary non-Orthodox groups. But you prefer to withhold the acknowledgment of such facts, while I cannot see the point of denying the facts which I cannot wish away. It has nothing to do with "pacifying" anyone. I suppose that if I had to do it all over again, I would have chosen a less equivocal and ambiguous word than "valid."

Which brings me to the legitimacy

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issue. It was clear in my article, and you quoted the passage in your footnote that no Orthodox Jew can legitimate groups which are clearly anti-halakhic including those which are so elastic in their semantics as to make most of their writing on Halakhah meaningless and befuddling. There are, I gather, no differences between us on this point—the most important of all.

With regard to "spiritual dignity," you ask whether the "spiritual dignity" that I confer upon Conservatives and Reform is such that I would not give it as well to a devout Jesuit priest or to a Tibetan monk. But of course! (See *Rambam, Hilchos Shmitta VeYovel* 13,13.) I simply say that if they are religiously sincere—a tautology perhaps, but one that is necessary in light of the fact that so very much of the Orthodox Right takes it for granted that such spirit dignity is non-existent in the Reform-Conservative camp, and that their sole purpose is to undermine Torah. That they are undermining Torah I of course agree, but that they are *all* insincere or *all* have as their overriding ambition to destroy Torah—with that I disagree. Not everyone in this age of opportunism is devious even if in error. That is why it is necessary for me to say so. And I might add that insincere people in our own camp do *not* possess spiritual dignity.

I therefore categorically reject your conclusion that my ascription of spiritual dignity to deserving deviationist Jews "implies granting rabbinic legitimacy" to them. The conclusion does not follow from the premises. Acknowledging integrity is not the same as giving *Semikhah*.

PLURALISM—A SACRED COW

The *Times* report was clear that my objection on the "Who is A Jew" issue was to its treatment in the political-legislative arena. For your information, in 1970 I wrote what I believe was the first rationale for our point of view, and it was distributed in the thousands

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That they [the Reform-Conservative camp] are undermining Torah I of course agree, but that they are all insincere or all have as their overriding ambition to destroy Torah—with that I disagree.

by the Lubavitch movement. I have not changed my mind one whit about what I said there and what is now the standard view of all Orthodox groups. My only objection now is to the political fixation on the issue as the single greatest priority on the agenda of Israeli public debate, and on the self-defeating endeavor to push the issue in the Knesset at a time when it has incurred disastrous defeats for us, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, for what is relatively a minor gain in the *practical* sense.

Why, you ask, do I not speak up clearly on the substantive issue and come against religious pluralism? But I did—in the CLAL lecture (reported in *Moment*) which you cited, in the presence of several hundred leaders of the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist Movements, and even some Left Orthodox individuals. I referred to pluralism as a “sacred cow,” and explained why I cannot accept it within the religious community. I declared it as a disguised and discredited ethical or religious relativism which leads to spiritual nihilism. “If everything is kosher,” I said (and wrote), “nothing is kosher.” I did not criticize it from

a comfortable distance, but went into the lions’ den, and confronted them with a point of view that they fully understood. But they would not even have considered it worthy of their contempt if I had shouted at them, stamped my foot, and called them all “*shkotzim*.” Is there anything wrong with what you so contemptuously call “the silk language of diplomacy” if it proves effective? Or must I prove my *bona fides* by outshouting everyone else?

I admire your brave assertion that, “Torah practiced with integrity and conviction need not be diluted to win over others.” Of course I agree! But who is to say that it is rejectionism only that is endowed with “integrity and conviction,” whereas inclusivism is a “dilution”? I do not regard Jewish laymen or clergy as outside the purview of *Klal Yisrael* so that we may not recognize their existence or cooperate with them on matters pertaining to our mutual welfare. The *Chazon Ish*, in two separate passages, decides halakhically that *moridin v’ein maalin* is inoperative today: because we are in a state of *hester panim*, and because we are *ke’lifnei tokhachah*. Is not this post-Holocaust period, where we again are painfully aware of our

isolation in the world, a time to seek out reasons and sources to justify *kiruv* instead of *richuk* and inclusion instead of rejection to the maximum degree possible?—to recall the *peshat* of *RaMaH* (to *Sanhedrin*, 52) that *ve’ahavta le’reiakha kamokha* refers not only to *re’im* (friends) but also *ra’im* (evil-doers)?

**A DISPUTE
LESHEM SHAMAYIM**

I am saddened that the *Times* report, because of its terseness and infelicitous choice of names, caused so much distress and anger in Agudah circles. But I plead with these circles not to be hypersensitive to criticism or differences of opinion. There have *always* been a multiplicity of approaches and, provided our intentions are genuine and our attitudes respectful, such diversity should be encouraged. On the Mishnah in *Avot* (5:17) that every controversy *le’shem Shamayim* will endure, Rabbenu Yonah comments happily, “such disputes will last forever—today on one issue, tomorrow on another—enduring for all time. And the reward will be long life and many years.” to continue such differences. This is tolerance in the authentic Torah spirit. The Agudah has never been overly bashful in criticizing others. It should be willing to accept the right of others to propose constructive differences. Let criticism be welcome—it is the way of life.

You close with the words, “Dr. Lamm, are you there with us?” Yes, Professor Twerski, I am there with you (and possibly before you), together with all Orthodox, G-d fearing, Torah-studying and Israel-loving Jews, whether Centrist or Rightist, whether of one orientation or another. And I shall be there with you and with all my Agudah friends, even when I disagree with you, with *ahava* and *kavod*, whether reciprocated or not.

My hand is outstretched. Will you grasp it?

Cordially yours,
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A REJOINDER

Dear Dr. Lamm: עמייש I am delighted that you have taken the time to respond to my open letter to you. It was written to elicit a response and a clarification of your views. However, your letter leaves me with gnawing and troubling concerns. I hope that you will not misinterpret the sharpness of my comments as a personal attack. Indeed, only by honestly confronting the issues can we come to grips with the rather serious repercussions that followed upon *The New York Times* article reporting your Fifth Avenue speech.

By now it is clear that in my open letter to you I faithfully ascribed to you the views that you truly embrace. It is also clear that, from beginning to end, *The New York Times* article was a misrepresentation of the truth. In fact, it would be accurate to describe it as a caricature of the views that you so dearly hold.

Professor Twerski, a musmach of Yeshiva Ner Israel-Baltimore, also studied in Beth Medrash Elyon in Monsey. A leading national authority on products liability and conflict of laws, he is currently a professor of law in Brooklyn Law School, formerly acting dean of Hofstra Law School, and has been a visiting professor at Cornell, University of Michigan (at Ann Arbor), and Boston University.

You have made it clear that you are deeply offended by both the terminology and the false image that the *Times* created . . . Yet, you sat idly by and did nothing to set the record straight.

You criticize me for not "checking the (news) report" with you, to determine what you really said. *Chaval!* Why did you not "check the news report with you"? You spoke to an audience of four hundred. But for the world, and posterity, "your words" will be those that were reported by the *Times*. It is to those words that you and I had to respond.

RESPONDING TO THE TIMES

Let me briefly recapitulate:

1. *The Times* attributed to you to such terms as "ultra-Orthodox" and "fundamentalist" as references to the "Right." It further intimated that the "Right" was not open to secular culture. This image of the Orthodox "Right" as fundamentalist, Bible-belt know-nothings is one

that the *Times* generally has portrayed. Your own view is diametrically opposed. You have made it clear that you are deeply offended by both the terminology and the false images that the *Times* created. . . .

Yet, you sat idly by and did nothing to set the record straight.

2. *The Times*, you say, reported the "valid groupings and spiritual dignity" remarks out of context. In order to understand them, you refer me to your CLAL lecture of March 1986. As to "valid groupings," that is to be understood by your "idiosyncratic" definition of the term to mean that they are "strong." And for that we are referred to Latin for an appropriate definition. In any event, it means nothing more than recognizing that there is a group out there with power and strength. As to "spiritual dignity," you quite agree with my characterization that the "spiritual dignity" you would confer upon them is comparable to that conferred on a Tibetan Monk. But, not *chas veshalom*, that of a rabbinic leader.

What was published in *The New York Times* was thus taken out of context. They are neither "valid" in the sense that the word is used by the overwhelming majority of those

who speak the English language and who are not conversant in Latin (see footnote below for entry from American Heritage Dictionary)¹, nor does their spiritual dignity—removed as it is from *Mesora* and *halacha*—have Torah meaning. They are usurpers and falsifiers of the title “*Rav*” as used for generations.

Clearly, no one but an omniscient G-d could so have read *The New York Times* report of your speech. It was a gross misrepresentation of your views. . . .

Yet you sat idly by and did not lift your pen to place your views in their true light.

3. You say that the *Times* report on your objection to the “Who is a Jew” issue was clear. But that simply is not so. May I suggest that you take the relevant paragraph² and place it before people who are

1. val-id (val-id) adj. 1. Well-grounded: a *valid* objection. 2. Producing the desired results: efficacious: *valid* methods. 3. Legally sound and effective: incontestable: *valid* title. 4. Logic, a. Containing premises from which the conclusion may logically be derived: a *valid* argument b. Correctly inferred or deduced from a premise: a *valid* conclusion. 5. Archaic. Of sound health: robust. [Fr. valide < Latin *validus* strong < *valere*, to be strong]—va’id-ly adv.—validness n. American Heritage Dictionary

2. The *Times* article says: “Dr. Lamm said he hoped that the ‘Who is A Jew’ legislation. . . . which has been defeated in the Israeli Knesset. . . . does not come up again.” (*The New York Times*, March 24, 1988)

If the problem of slander and deep offense were an isolated one, *volt noch gevain tzu derleiden*. But your speech was not made in a vacuum, and your words thus assume impact beyond your avowed intent.

not intimately familiar with your views. I question whether anyone would read it but to say that you were taking issue with the “*Mihu Yehudi*” question in a manner diametrically opposed to your true position.

Yet you permitted the matter to rest without correcting this misconception.

4. Whatever is to be said for the *Times* article itself and your initial reading of it, there is another painful truth that must be put on the table. On the morrow of the article, you knew what the article had wrought. There was a veritable explosion over it in all Orthodox circles. For example, respected

Roshei Yeshiva and *talmidim* in your own institution reacted in deep anger to the *Times* rendering. And yes, Alexander Schindler apparently understood it to mean that a Conservative or Reform rabbi was finally being acknowledged as a rabbi by the prestigious president of Yeshiva University.³ No, he did not have Jesuit priest dignity—he had rabbinical spiritual dignity. Maybe not “*Yoreh—Yoreh, Yodin—Yodin*,” but close enough so that no one would ever know the difference.

And throughout this all, you did not lift your pen to write a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* or to any other medium of communication to reveal the truth.

Was it necessary for Aaron Twerski to do it? I wonder: had the *Times* mischaracterized your words to portray Yeshiva University in an unfavorable light, would you not have written somewhere to set the record straight? In short, is it proper that the lie will have been told to millions and the truth limited to the readers of *The Jewish Observer*?

NOT IN A VACUUM

Ask these questions because what seems to be the inevitable answer disturbs me to the depth of my being. Forgive me if I misjudge you. But wasn't the *Times* article left to stand because, though it played badly in Borough Park, it played well in Peoria?

Does the thinking go something like this?

—*The Orthodox “Right” will be angry with me; but they are already alienated from Torah Umadda anyway. To tell the harsh truth to the “left” in the mass media is unthinkable for me. That task I will leave to the Agudists.*

If so, then hasidim and *bnei yeshiva* were slandered and deeply offended by such terms as “fundamentalist and ultra-Orthodox,” while you kept intact your creden-

3. Rabbi Alexander Schindler wrote in a letter to you [Dr. Lamm]: “This is the kind of voice that I and many others have been longing to hear. You express the kind of Orthodoxy that I was taught to revere.” (Quoted in *JTA*, March 28, 1988)

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tials with the left as a non-judgmental leader of *Klal Yisroel*.

If the problem I describe were an isolated one, *volt noch gevain tzu derleiden*. But your Fifth Avenue speech was not made in a vacuum, and your words thus assume impact beyond your avowed intent. For the last five years, the attack from the Conservative and Reform movements against "Right"-wing Orthodoxy has been unrelenting and vicious. . . . They have sought to portray the "Right" as fundamentalists, as divisive separationists, as bigots, as *Khoumeinis*, who have no claim on historical Jewish truths. . . . They are waving the "unity" banner as a means for legitimating deviationist groups, which happen to be responsible for more divisiveness and disunity than has ever before threatened *Klal Yisroel*—what with Reform recognition of patrilineal descent as a basis of Jewishness, and countless *mamzeirim* resulting from second marriages that take place *with* Reform blessings, *without* benefit of a *halachic* divorce. . . . They have attempted to project "pluralism" in the manner that you personally find so unacceptable, as the true tradition of Judaism. . . . They have sought with considerable success to have Jewish Federations throughout the length and breadth of this great country implement this pluralism in a wide array of educational activities.

JOINING THE CLAL CHORUS

Giving inspiration and direction to this endeavor is a leading self-proclaimed "Centrist" Orthodox spokesman, Yitzchak Greenberg, a member in good standing of a "Centrist" Orthodox rabbinic organization. His influence, especially through his organization, CLAL (the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership), has been devastating and destructive. You are keenly aware of the CLAL agenda. Indeed, you lent your name and your personal participation to a major CLAL conference with the speech that you refer to in your letter.

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There is no question whatsoever that CLAL's views on pluralism and other matter central to *emunas Yisroel* are sacrilege; indeed, the word is simply *kefira* (heresy). For example, Greenberg likens the differences between Orthodoxy and other groups to the disputes between "Hillel and Shammai, (about whom the Talmud says: 'Both are the words of a living G-d') and Hasidim and Mitnagdim" (-Greenberg). In line with this approach, Greenberg calls for an interchange of pulpits between Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis "to clarify ideology and values of their movement to a new constituency." (See the footnote below⁴ for a fuller quotation on this view from CLAL literature.)

Thus, the Conservative and Reform leadership has been writing the music of "pluralism"; Greenberg has furnished the orchestration; and, sadly, you wrote the lyrics. In short, if I take you to task for permitting the misinformation to continue to linger, it is because your voice is now being perceived as

**How one can be
"personally observant"
while identifying with a
religious movement
that denies *Ikrei
Hayahadus:
Torah MeSinai?***

having been added to a chorus that has been heard nationwide and which is deeply and essentially hurtful to the Torah community—"Right" and "Centrist" equally. There are Orthodox rabbis of "traditional" (no *mehitza*) synagogues in outlying communities who have reproduced and distributed the *Times* article as a vindication of their "accommodationist" attitudes and pluralistic programs.

CLAL has even gone further. In a paper on "The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity: Toward a New Organic Model," published and widely distributed by CLAL, Rabbi Greenberg demonstrates why

Orthodox rabbis—Rabbi Yoseif Dov Soloveitchik prominent among them—have always opposed interfaith dialogue, mainly for courting confusion and trouble. Greenberg's paper exceeds these conventional objections by actually flirting with apostasy. Indeed, he says, "In conclud[ing] . . . that Christianity was an alien growth . . . the rabbis perhaps erred. . . . The rabbis confused a 'failed' messiah (which is what Jesus was) and a false messiah. . . . A failed messiah is one who has the right values but did not attain the final goal . . . [similar to] Bar Kochba. . . ." (We quote below more fully from his statement on Christianity⁵.)

**NOT YOUR VIEWS,
BUT YOUR IMPRIMATUR**

In this connection I want to make something absolutely clear. I do not attribute the views of Yitz Greenberg to you. From everything I have read by you and know about you, I would venture to say that if one were to put a gun to your head and say: "Utter these words or else I shoot," you would say, "Go ahead and shoot." You would agree that they are the stuff of "*yehoreig ve'al ya'avur*. . . ." Yet in some ways you do carry responsibility for his statements.

At Fifth Avenue you spoke in the name of "We Centrists." The intellectual and religious leader of a group has not only the right, but the duty, to speak for the entire movement. (In passing, I would like to add that I'd have preferred that the term "Centrist" would never have seen the light of day. If you are at the center of normative Judaism, just exactly who occupies the Left? . . . *Ober man hot nisht bei mir gefregt*.)

You created the term "Centrist"—or at least bear the responsibility for popularizing it—and I am afraid that it is here to stay for awhile. Isn't it time that a stand be taken as to who may speak for the "Centrists"? Should one who preaches vile *kefira* be allowed to travel throughout the United States as a consultant to over

4. In a National Conference of CLAL—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership—held in June, 1987—the Am Echad (One People) Department—proposed the following:

MODELS OF COMMUNAL COOPERATION

CLAL encourages rabbis, rabbinic organizations and communal groups to conduct a wide array of programs designed to promote Jewish unity through greater understanding among the movements. . . .

1) Seminar on Jewish Unity

. . . CLAL can assist in the development of innovative study programs exploring the issue of religious diversity, and currently offers two four-part seminar models utilizing CLAL scholars and local rabbis.

The first format includes sessions on the dawn of modernity, the four major movements [i.e. Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstruction]. . . . The second format studies historical cases of communities in conflict, i.e., Hillel and Shammai and Hasidim and Mitnagdim. The focus is to understand how other Jewish communities dealt with powerful ideological conflicts in order to locate the threads of commonality and unity, within diversity, that can serve as models for the contemporary Jewish scene. [In other words, Conservative versus Orthodox, which is in effect *kefira* versus *Emuna*, is comparable to Shammai versus Hillel!—A.T.]

2) Rabbinic Pulpit Exchange

Local rabbis visit congregations of other denominations. In this model, rabbis speak from the pulpit in an effort to clarify ideology and values of their movement to a new constituency. . . .

5. Christianity triumphed among the Gentiles. No Jew would fall for that fairy tale of a virgin mother. If you were pregnant from someone else, what would you tell your husband? This is fundamentally how medieval Jews handled Christianity. . . . So, if a few Jews followed Jesus, it proved nothing. The rabbis concluded that Christianity was an alien growth, developed by those who followed a false messiah.

The rabbis perhaps erred here. . . . Out of defensiveness, the rabbis confused a "failed" messiah (which is what Jesus was) and a false messiah. . . . A failed messiah is one who has the right values, upholds the covenant, but who did not attain the final goal . . . [similar to] Bar Kochba, the great Jewish freedom fighter who led a revolt against Rome that temporary drove Rome out of Jerusalem. . . . He was hailed by Rabbi Akiva and many great rabbis as the messiah. . . .

Calling Jesus a failed messiah is in itself a term of irony. In the Jewish tradition, failure is a most ambiguous term. Abraham was a "failure". . . . Moses was a "failure". . . . Jeremiah was a "failure". . . . All these "failures" are at the heart of divine and Jewish achievements. . . .

The unfinished agenda of the Jewish-Christian dialogue is the recognition of the profound interrelationship between both. Each faith community experiencing the love of G-d and the chosenness of G-d was tempted into saying: *I am the only one chosen*. There was a human failure to see that there is *enough love in G-d to choose again and again and again*. Both faiths in renewal may yet apply this insight not just to each other *but to religions not yet worked into this dialogue*. (italics mine—A.T.)

three score Jewish Federations preaching "pluralism" and heresy in the name of Orthodox "Centrism," and remain unchallenged by the prime spokesman for "Centrism"?

Isn't it essential that someone declare that "the field" begins and ends with unquestioning *emuna*, and that denial of *Ikrim* (basic tenets of faith) *does not* render someone into the "left-wing," but totally out of the ballpark? ⁶

By the same token, shouldn't the head of the world's leading "Centrist" rabbinical seminary reject all vestiges of pluralism, once and for all? The position you articulated at Yitz Greenberg's CLAL conference dedicated to pluralism two years ago was not a ringing rejection of pluralism, as you set forth in your response. The image of Daniel in the lion's den is belied not only by your active role in the

6. As the JO is going to press, the most recent issue of the *National Jewish Law Review* has come to my hand. It contains an article by Rabbi Emanuel Rackman (a member of good standing in the "Centrist" Rabbinical Council of America) entitled, "The Case of the Sotah [indiscreet wife] in Jewish Law: Ordeal or Psychodrama" (3 *National Jewish Law Review* at pp.49-64, 1988). Once more I am constrained to question whether he too is a legitimate spokesman for Centrist Orthodoxy or whether you would reject him as unsuitable for that role.

The thesis of Rackman's article is that the *mai sotah*—the mixture of water in which the ink from the oath of the *sotah*, including the name of *Hashem*, was dissolved—did not have the miraculous power to kill the guilty *sotah*. Instead, he argues that it was all a psychodrama used either to cause her to confess or to reconcile her with her suspicious husband. Rackman claims that a significant group of the rabbis in the Talmud held this view but "were not free to verbalize why they did not accept the supernatural approach for they feared that public criticism of the supernatural approach would have vitiated the *sotah* ceremony as they perceived it." In other words, the Torah prescribed a psychological hoax and the Talmudists engaged in a conspiracy of silence not to let the cat out of the bag.

Rackman's article is contrary to everything recorded in the Talmud on the topic: in other words, simply blatant *kfira*. In another note in this letter I have set forth Rackman's warm and fulsome embrace of both you and your Fifth Avenue speech. He said that he "has always known" that you and he "shared the same ideology" and differed merely whether "our cause should be called centrist or modern."

I believe that Rackman is dead wrong; that you are repulsed by his views, as expressed in the *Law Review* and on numerous other occasions. Isn't it time that you deny him the right to characterize his Torah *Weltanschauung* as yours, and to present himself as a spokesman for Modern Orthodoxy—or Centrism, as you prefer to call it?



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CLAL conference, but also by the position that you staked out—half-way between rejection and embracement of your own home-made brew of pluralism. Permit me to explain:

A PLURALISM OF "SANCTITY"

It was at that CLAL conference that you publicly granted the Conservative and Reform "validity" (in accordance with the word's Latin root *validus*, of course). And it was there that you bestowed "spiritual dignity" upon them, *without* the qualifying explanation that appears in your letter to me in this issue of *The Jewish Observer*—an explanation that would not have endeared you to Alexander Schindler (Reform) or Wolfe Kelman (Conservative), as the unexpanded version did.

And now, in your letter to me, you confuse things further. In the very same paragraph where you respond to my challenge, whether you confer the same "spiritual dignity" upon Conservative and Reform rabbis as you do on a devout Jesuit priest or Tibetan monk, you make an extremely troubling reference. You reply: "But of course!" and refer the reader to *Rambam, Hilchos*

Shmitta VeYovel 13,13. And here I am at an absolute loss to understand you. The *Rambam* in that famous, oft-cited passage compares honest searchers of truth to the Tribe of Levi, as being *Chail Hashem*—G-d's chosen ranks. For the sake of the reader, permit me

If you are to deal with the Conservative and Reform rabbinate as the functional equivalent of secular Jewish groups, as you suggest, and no more, than it will have to be spelled out with excruciating clarity.

to quote the *Rambam*: "Not only the Tribe of Levi, but every man, from all who come into the world, who is so inspired and understands on his own to separate himself and stand before G-d to serve Him . . . to know G-d, and to walk upright as G-d created him, and renounces the many concerns that people pur-

sue—he is sanctified to be holy of holies and the L-rd is his portion. . . ." (Original language of the *Rambam* appears below.⁷)

Of course, "*kol bo'ei olam*—all who come into the world"—even in Tibet—have this potential for spiritual greatness. But is one supposed to assume that the *Rambam* also means that an idolatrous monk, or a "rabbi" who denies *Torah MiSinai*, is walking "upright as G-d created him"? The *Rambam* makes some unforgiving judgments against those who reject the Seven Noahide Laws; and he is no less harsh with *meisisim umeidichim*—Jews who disavow the Thirteen Principles of Faith, and knowingly lead others similarly astray (see *Moreh Nevuchim*, Section III, Ch.41). You surely don't mean to suggest that the *Rambam* confers "spiritual dignity" on pagans and on Conservative and Reform rabbis! (See *Rambam's* commentary on *Mishnayos Chelek*—excerpted below⁸). Nor could one ever study the *Rambam* in its entirety and conclude that he is describing any "rabbi" who is *marbeh mamzeirim beYisroel* as "הרי זה נתקדש קודש קדשים—sanctified to be holy of holies." To read such interpretation into the *Rambam* is nothing less than *ziuf haTorah* (falsification of Torah)!

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7. ולא שבת לוי בלבד אלא כל איש ואיש מדעו להבדל העולם אשר נזבה רוחו אותו והבינו מדעו להבדל לעמוד לפני ד' לשרתו ולעבודו לדעה את ה' והלך ישר כמו שעשהו האלקים ופרק מעל צוארו עול החשבונות הרבים אשר בקשו בני האדם הרי זה נתקדש קדש קדשים ויהיה ד' חלקו ונחלתו לעולם ולעולמי עולמים ויזכה לו בעה"ז דבר המספיק לו כמו שזכה לכהנים ללוים.

8. The *Rambam* discusses three classes of thinkers who differ in their interpretation of the words of *Chazal*. In his second category, he describes people that " . . . call these (rabbinical assertions) foolish, and deprecate them and slander that which should not be slandered. From time to time, they deride the words of the Sages and imagine that they are more intelligent and have more penetrating minds than the Sages. . . . those who stumble into this type of belief consider themselves to be intellectuals and wise philosophers but how far removed they are from humanity when they are compared to true philosophers. These (thinkers) are even more stupid than the first class, and more foolish. It is an accursed class because they oppose men of great worth whose wisdom has already been established before scholars." See Maimonides, Commentary on the *Mishna*, Tractate *Sanhedrin* (translation by Dr. Fred Rosner).

What is one to say, then, to your reference to the *Rambam*? At this point, I can only repeat the final line of my previous letter: "Dr. Lamm, are you there with us?"

**NATIONAL BETH DIN—
A FANTASY**

Coming back to your CLAL address, it contained a deeply distressing and confusing proposal, which served to further put the question mark on your claim to opposition to pluralism: that a national *Beth Din* (rabbinical court) be formulated to deal with the issues of *gittin* and *kedushin* in a format that will be accepted by all—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist. As part of that, you boldly propose that "rabbis who are expert and personally observant, no matter what groups they formally belong to, may be authorized to serve."

I fail to understand how one can be "personally observant" while identifying with a religious movement that denies *Ikrei Hayahadus: Torah MeSinai!* We all know that not only Reform, but the Conservatives also reject the binding character of codified *halacha*. Hence your proposal was unacceptable, and will remain unacceptable. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל made it clear beyond doubt in a responsum in *Igros Moshe* that a rabbi who is connected with a Conservative synagogue cannot be counted among the members of a *Beth Din* for *geirus* (conversion) because of his affiliation. Do you think for a moment that he, or any *halacha* authorities, would have decided differently regarding a *Beth Din* for *gittin*? Do you think that there is any basis for pretending so?

You and I know that such a National *Beth Din* will never be. In fact, it is *unthinkable*, unless one

would grant Reform and Conservative rabbis more validity and dignity than your response to us would indicate. The suggestion serves only to send further mixed signals about "legitimacy," which I find so dismaying.

The problem that I and others like me confront in attempting to understand your position is that we find it incomprehensible that you do not understand the national currents in which both your words and your silence find themselves. In that context, you are not making yourself understood at all. Yes, there is nothing wrong with diplomacy, but

there is a good bit wrong with confusing ambiguity, especially when one of the gravest problems befalling our people today is lack of clarity on fundamentals of *emuna*.

UNITY, WHERE IT COUNTS

In your quest for unity for *Klal Yisroel*, there is another unity with which you must concern yourself, and that is the unity of *Shomrei Torah*. Nothing, in my opinion, would more lead to a full and formal schism between the "Right" and the "Centrists" than continuing to needlessly violate the

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9. בגרות שלא כדין... ואף שלא נקבל עדות עליהו הוא כאנו שהדי שכל מי ששם הבווי קאנסערוואטיוו עליו הוא בחזקת מופקר להרבה איסורין ולכפירה להרבה עיקרים... ולכן פשוט שאין הגרות שעשה הרבני של הקאנסערוואטיוו כלום.
אגרות משה יו"ד חלק א' סימן ק"ס

sensibilities of the yeshiva community—by such statements as proposing the establishment of a *Beth Din*, which would include those who have formal affiliations with the Conservative or Reform movement.

I might relate to you that when Agudath Israel's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action undertook to formulate the New York *Get* Bill, I met with outstanding constitutional lawyers (e.g. Nathan Lewin) and a host of rabbinic leaders. The dictate from the leading *Roshei Yeshiva* was to arrive at legislation that would have the *heskem* of all Torah authorities within the Torah community. That was done. The entire spectrum, from the Satmar *Dayan* to Rabbi Soloveitchik, was contacted. The directions were clear. On matters that effect *kedushas Yisroel*, no action can and should be undertaken if there was valid halachic objection from any quarter. (Similarly, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski זצ"ל of pre-war Vilna, undisputedly the *Rabban Shel Kol Bnei Hagola*, dealt with a proposal for a lenient approach toward a specific kashrus problem for starving Jews, but would not concur on such a ruling without the consensus of other *gedolei poskim*. As long as he suspected in advance that the

answer would be negative, he would not issue a tentative *psak*. Such is the way of responsible Torah leadership.)

“Centrism” is a term that places your group in the center. In the center of what? Avoiding excessive zeal to the right, in which area? Embracing what degree of deviation to the left?

UNHYPHENATED TORAH ACTION

I have only a few remarks with regard to your true views as expressed in your response to me. You defend your approach of using “the silken language of diplomacy” because “it proves effective”—moreso than our approach, which you characterize as “worthy of their contempt if I [i.e. Dr. Lamm] had shouted at them [Reform and Conservative leaders], stamped my foot, and called them ‘shkotzim.’”

How does one determine effectiveness in reaching our brothers that are so distant from us? By gaining coverage in the *Times*—even when the story distorts your views? By winning kudos from Schindler? Does that really accomplish *kiruv* of the hearts of *rechokim*, or does it perhaps tell them that they're okay the way they are?

People today are in desperate need of clear guidance, and they respond to it when they get it; and we endeavor to give it to them—without name calling, without apology. Are our efforts effective? Witness the innovative publishing of original Torah thought, and the translation of classic Torah literature, in the vernacular. Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, an avowed spokesman for Modern Orthodoxy, gives the credit for pioneering such ventures to ArtScroll-Mesorah Publications¹⁰—among others, we are quick to add. “Black-hat” outfits, for sure. . . . And take note of how “Right-wingers” have also been blazing trails in high-tech communication to bring recorded Daf Yomi classes and numerous Torah lectures to the telephones of thousands of subscribers across the map . . . in bringing Torah to Russian Jews in America and abroad . . . in helping Jewish Ivy League collegiates discover the Judaism they never knew . . . in operating a massive program of rescue, shelter and religious education of young refugees from Iran . . . in initiating the remarkable Hatzolah volunteer ambulance program. . . . Yes, “Right-wing” yeshiva graduates and *hassidim* are in the leadership of all of these endeavors.

10. “Thirty years ago, I wrote: ‘In the area of English publications . . . Orthodox Judaism must meet new challenges. Its *halachic* and scholarly journals . . . have a limited circle of readers, while most American Jews have only the vaguest notions of the nature of Orthodoxy and its spiritual and intellectual vitality.’

“Now, it can be said that Orthodox Judaism is coping with that challenge very effectively, and much of the credit is due to those who conceived and are executing the program of the ArtScroll Series. . . . The translations of the ArtScroll Series are felicitous, the expositions abundantly clear and the art work truly sophisticated. All in all, the series is a historic contribution to the advancement of Torah study in English speaking countries.”—*Focus*, by Rabbi Emanuel Rackman The Jewish Week, Inc., N.Y.C., March 4, 1988.

HAGAON HORAV MOSHE FEINSTEIN ZT"’L’S PSOKIM ON THE THREE WEEKS AND TISHA B'AV

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by: Rabbi Yosef Yisroel Grossman

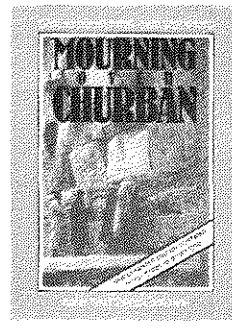
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By the same token, your dismissal of "Right-wing" Orthodoxy's accomplishments in other areas as a matter of political push is surprisingly simplistic. Besides lobbying for legislation to protect the kosher consumer, and the unfortunate *aguna*, we wrote the laws in a way that stand up well under the courts' unforgiving eye. And yes, Agudath Israel was alone among Jewish groups to challenge Mayor Koch's Executive Order 50, and led the successful battle to stop the Gay Rights order in the courts.

These are the areas where one would expect exponents of *Torah Umadda* to be in the forefront, but somehow the fires of conviction—which inspires all this creativity and spawns these innovative, effective projects—burn strongest where an allegiance to Torah is not splintered or diluted (or "enriched") by a broader ideological framework.

WISE IN OTHER WAYS

In your letter to me, you note that the Torah refers to pagan priests as *kohanim*, and that *Rishonim* speak of *chakhmei ha-kara'im*, and that those titles were not intended to, and did not, confer halachic status upon them. Come now. Those titles referred to "position," but did not bestow honors by any means. Nobody ever confused pagan priesthood with halachic legitimacy. They were of different religions. And the rabbinic split with the Karaim could not have been more complete. No one to my knowledge ever accorded them "spiritual dignity." Nor should anyone today confer "spiritual dignity" on those who by definition are leading vast numbers of Jews away from Torah and *mitzvos*.

It is well-known that "Right-wing" rabbinical leadership has not always been in full agreement with the views of the leading mentor of Modern Orthodoxy, Rabbi Yoseif Dov Soloveitchik, *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Rabbi Isaac Elchonon Theological Seminary, yet there is no disagreement among them in this regard. As Rabbi Soloveitchik wrote: "From the

point of view of the Torah, we find the difference between Orthodox and Reform Judaism much greater than that which separates the Pharisees from the Sadducees in the days of the Second Commonwealth, and between the Karaites and the traditionalists in the Geonic era. Has Jewish history ever recorded an instance of a joint Community Council or a joint Rabbinical Council which consisted of Karaites and Torah-true Jews?" (translated from an article in *Der Tog-Morgen Jour-*

nal January 18, 1954).

If you are to deal with the Conservative and Reform rabbinate as the functional equivalent of secular Jewish groups, as you suggest, and no more, then it will have to be spelled out with excruciating clarity. The analogies that you draw are simply historically inappropriate to our present day dilemmas and dangerously confusing to the groping masses, especially at a time when the Torah's authenticity is being questioned by so many.



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WE ARE NOT ENGAGED IN "MORIDIN"

Your reference to the Chazon Ish is puzzling, as well. The Chazon Ish's view that *moridin v'ein maalin* is inapplicable today is, in truth, irrelevant to our discussion. We do not and never have even remotely suggested a *moridin* plan of action. But there is a vast difference between *ein moridin* (do not lower into a pit) and *mechabdin* (bestow honor). And in an age when extraordinary pressures towards the legitimization of "three co-equal branches of Judaism" exists, the *ein moridin* concept has no meaning whatsoever. But *ein mechabdin* most certainly does.

Indeed, the Chazon Ish speaks very clearly on this. In a letter to Rabbi Avrohom Wolf, the late founder of Beth Jacob of Bnei Brak, he calls for "education toward extremism." Doesn't the Rambam

prescribe a Golden Mean of Moderation? Yes. But that refers to *midos*—character traits, such as anger as opposed to indifference, frugality in contrast to squandering—areas where one should avoid the extremes. By contrast, commitment to *emuna* and *bitachon*—faith and trust in G-d—must not be tepid or moderate. It *must* be full-hearted, even "extreme," says the Chazon Ish.

As we said before, "Centrism" is a term that places your group in the center. In the center of what? Avoiding excessive zeal—to the right in which area? Embracing what degree of deviation to the left?

"YES, BUT . . ."

In the closing line of your letter to me, you ask: "My hand is outstretched. Will you grasp it?" Of course the answer is yes. But, not

one hand. I want to grasp both. If the other hand is simultaneously to be used to send mixed and incomprehensible signals to those whose goals are so foreign to us, our relationship will ultimately shatter on the shoals of disappointment and bitterness. The *Times* article caused pain not only in Agudah circles. It caused pain over the broad range of Orthodox communities. It caused pain in your own yeshiva. It was a symptom not merely of disagreement but of a lack of forthrightness on matters that go to the very heart of the *kiyum* of *Klal Yisroel*.

But it is a time for rejoicing when brothers speak openly to each other. I believe we have made a significant start. And I take your offer seriously: Both of my hands are outstretched for yours to grasp. . . .

Cordially yours,
AARON TWERSKY ■

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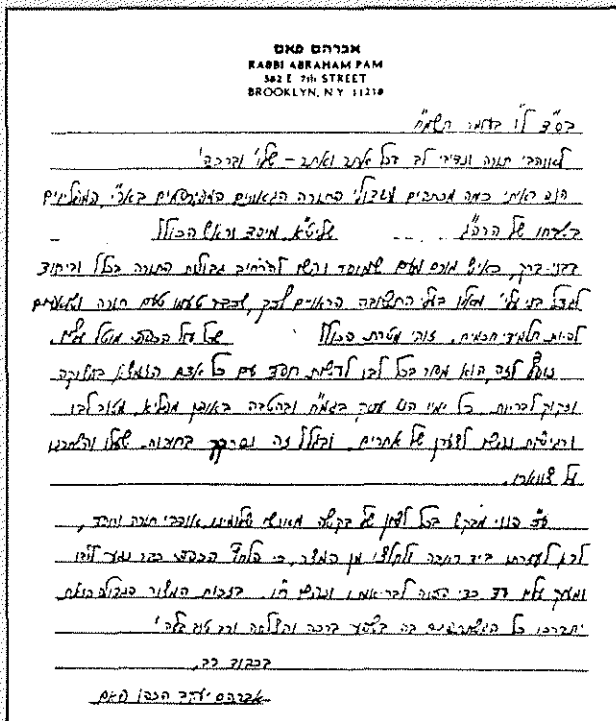
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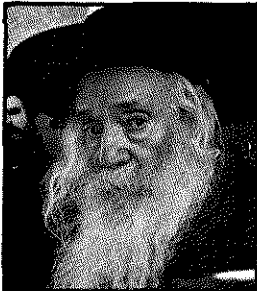
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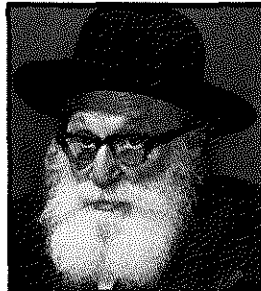
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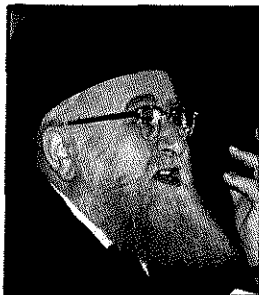
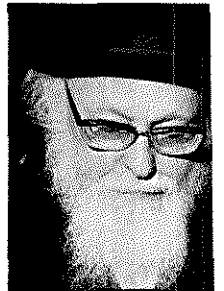
"Undoubtedly, the Klausenberger Rebbe שליט"א is a descendent from the בנסת הגדולה. For the Talmud states that those of the בנסת הגדולה were called such because they restored the crown of Torah. So has been done... with MIFAL HASHAS."

— HAGAON R' YAAKOV LANDAU שליט"א



"Given the severe financial pressures that threaten the existence of MIFAL HASHAS, I urge all those who entrust themselves to Torah to join forces in seeking the means to ensure the continuity of this most significant undertaking."

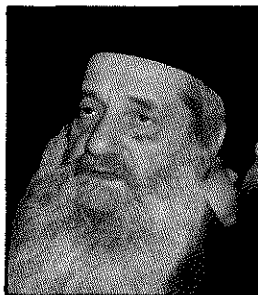
— HAGAON R' YOSEF SHALIC ELYOSHIV שליט"א



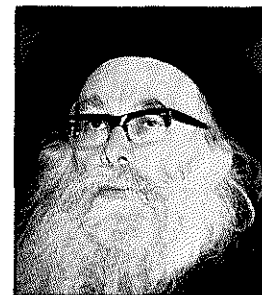
"Blessed are the eyes that have seen this"
— R' SHIMON SCHWAB שליט"א during a recent visit at a test site.



"It is our duty to give due recognition to the Klausenberger Rebbe שליט"א for the wonderful gift he has bestowed upon K'lal Yisroel - MIFAL HASHAS."
— HAGAON R' MORDECAI GIFTER שליט"א



"Only failing health keeps me away from joining the MIFAL HASHAS supporters at the Annual Dinner. Your work has already made an overwhelming impact in the desire for and knowledge of Torah. Participants and their supporters undoubtedly reap rewards that are uplifting as well as influential. May they all be blessed."
— HAGAON R' SHMUEL HALEVI VOZNER שליט"א



"It is the responsibility of us all to respect, honor, & support the MIFAL HASHAS participants. That is true honor for Torah. In merit for their great strivings may Hashem grant them the spirit and strength to continue their already notable accomplishments."
— HAGAON R' NISSIM KARELITZ שליט"א



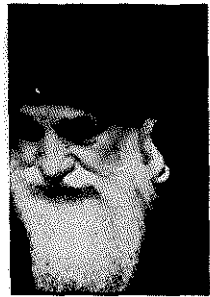
"MIFAL HASHAS, under the leadership of the Klausenberger Rebbe שליט"א has bestowed a kindness on the Jewish People by virtue of its nurturance of Torah depth and knowledge. Their fruits are most praiseworthy. May they continue to grow."
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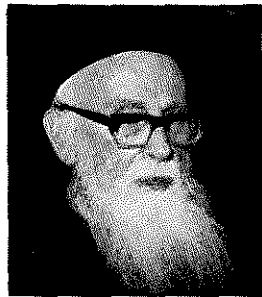
...MIFAL HASHAS, who are mastering all Torah, including those who have rarely learned in America. May all the Torah giants and their outstanding supporters (Talmudists) in particular, be blessed with the means to continue their outstanding

שלטי"א רבי אברהם ניטצער



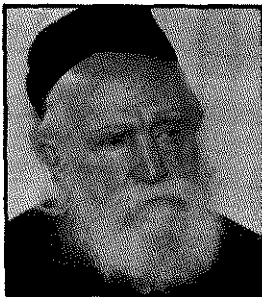
"Place me at the right side of MIFAL HASHAS, developed by the gaon and tzaddik Klausenberger Rebbe שלטי"א, whose holy mission is to develop true Talmudei Chochomim and Shas Masters. All supporters should be blessed with all Torah blessings."

— HAGAON R' SHLOMO ZALMAN AUERBACH שלטי"א



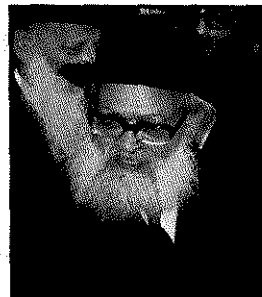
"Include me in the call of those Torah giants who encourage American participation with their colleagues in Eretz Yisroel who learn in the MIFAL HASHAS program."

— HAGAON R' MOSHE FEINSTEIN זצ"ל



"I am truly envious that you merited the privilege to initiate this spectacular program of Torah enhancement!"

— HAGAON R' YAAKOV KAMINETZKY זצ"ל (speaking to the Klausenberger Rebbe שלטי"א)



"We must give thanks to the Klausenberger Rebbe שלטי"א who rejuvenates the ideals of previous generations through MIFAL HASHAS. May Hashem grant him the opportunity to continue leading K'lal Yisroel in the proliferation of Torah and Kedusha."

— HAGAON R' AVROHOM PAM שלטי"א



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In the May issue of *The Jewish Observer*, Dr. Bernard Fryshman presented a case for using Yiddish in teaching the children in our *yeshivos ketanos*: "A Little 'Mamme Loshon' About . . . Yiddish." There is another side to the coin, as presented by Rabbi Yaakov Bender, principal of Yeshiva Darkei Torah, in Far Rockaway, NY:

"Mamme Loshon" Is Precious,



To teach—or not to teach—in Yiddish in our yeshivos has been a burning subject for the past few years. It is an issue laden with emotion, nostalgia, and commitment to traditional values. After all, what could be more heartwarming than to witness young *Yiddishe kinderlach* swaying to and fro, repeating *pesukim* in the same vernacular that was employed by the Vilna Gaon, the Sanzer Rav, and the Chofetz Chaim? Over the years, throughout our wanderings, our distinct language has always been one of our main tools for banding us together, keeping ourselves separate from alien nations and their cultures. Why should today's schools in America be different?

Before challenging the relevance of this sentiment to our present-day situation, we should make it clear that our discussion focuses on the classical Lithuanian-type of *cheder/yeshiva ketana* as it currently exists in America, where 90% of the children (a conservative estimate) come from English-speaking homes. We are *not* discussing the Chassidic yeshivos, whose children

But Is It Talking To Us?

speak Yiddish long before entering school, and have every reason to continue doing so.

HOW LANGUAGE AFFECTS THE SITUATION

Since the topic is an emotional one, the reader might tend to reinforce cherished pre-judgments on the issue before examining any argument that may challenge his long-held views. There are, however, some conditions that prevail which one may not be aware of—conditions that just could make a difference in the way one would decide.

There are a number of traditional *yeshivos ketanos* that teach their children *Chumash* by translating the words into Yiddish. Yet most of these elementary schools switch to English for *Mishnayos*, or at the very latest, for *Gemora*. In fact, *shiurim* in most of the *Mesivtos* throughout the New York metropolitan area are conducted in English. And those few that do translate into Yiddish still resort to English for discussion. Furthermore, nearly all of the conversational learning

among *chavrusos* on the *Mesifta* and *Beis Medrash* level is in English.

How do children fare in *yeshivos* where the primary language of instruction is Yiddish? I have spoken to principals and *rabbeim* from schools throughout the Metropolitan area, and one can safely generalize that the lower third of the class—and to some degree, even the lower half—struggles to keep up with the studies. In some *yeshivos*, a change in language of instruction was made from Yiddish to English; a majority of these struggling students emerged as solid, or even excellent, *talmidim*. Not only did the academic standing of these children dramatically improve, but also, all classes were able to improve appreciably in *chomer hanilmad*, the amount covered.

Change of language has had salutary results in other settings as well. *Mechanchim* throughout the country who also teach in summer camps bear witness that many children who have a difficult time with their *limudim* (studies) in traditional *yeshivos* that use Yiddish, do very well in their summer

studies. These *Rabbeim* attribute this success to the fact that the children are translating into English in the summer camps. On the other hand, children who transfer from an English-translating *yeshiva* to a *cheder* where Yiddish is used have an extremely difficult time adjusting—in the lower grades.

WHICH GOALS ARE PRIMARY?

Were there only a methodology for all the children to learn in the "*Mamme Loshon*" that has been used all these hundreds of years, without any downside, then—beyond doubt—it would be the preferred approach. However, as *mechanchim*, educators, and parents, we must first determine: What are our goals in educating our children? Which goals are primary and which are secondary? How can we give our children the best possible education, to which they are entitled? Once we successfully answer these questions, then—and only then—can we see just exactly how Yiddish fits into the picture.

We put little children through a most difficult routine, translating the unknown into the incomprehensible, rather than making learning understandable and enjoyable for them.

As a parallel to this, the *Shulchan Aruch* discusses in detail the qualifications of an ideal *shaliach tzibbur*, to lead the *tefillos* (i.e., married, with a family, a *talmid chacham*, bearded, etc.). Obviously, the major prerequisite is that he *daven* with a pleasant voice and that he be a *merutzah l'kahal*, that the congregation be pleased with him. These two points are so crucial in making him into a *chazan* that they hardly bear mention. If he has them, then we investigate further to ensure that he also has the other qualifications. In teaching, too, we must first determine our primary

goals and see to it that they are met. Then we can proceed to enhance the education of our children with all the desirable nuances and trimmings.

All would agree that the primary purpose of the yeshiva is to teach our children Torah. In greater detail, our objectives are to give the children a *geshmak* in learning (what a lovely Yiddish expression!), to imbue them with a will to learn, to kindle within them the desire to *shteig* and grow, and, most of all, to do our best that they know and understand Torah. If a child consistently finds the challenges too great, and fails

repeatedly, he will surely develop a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, a condition inimical to successful learning.

As a rule, children enter school fired with zeal, itching with curiosity. Is it comprehensible that we take these bundles of enthusiasm, and start teaching them in a language that is, literally, foreign to them? To be sure, the stronger half of the class can learn in Yiddish. But what about those who cannot and are "turned-off" at a young and tender age because they encounter frustration and failure? They must struggle constantly just to keep their heads above water. And even the children who do handle the Yiddish often do not understand much of what they are learning. We put little children through a most difficult routine, translating the unknown into the incomprehensible, rather than making learning understandable and enjoyable for them. Many of these same children have no problem keeping pace and succeeding with their secular studies. Is it truly essential that we make them miserable for three years—at which point the curriculum switches to English for *Mishnayos*, which after all has comprehension, not translation of the text, as the bottom-line criterion for success?



MORE LOVE, LESS GUILT

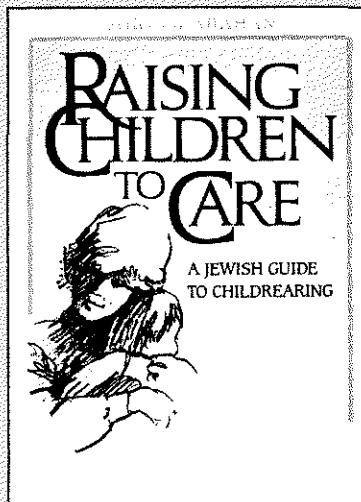
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THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF COMPREHENSION

Indeed, *havana*, a clear understanding of the subject matter, is crucial for our children to grow in their *limudim*. It is critical that they understand what they are being taught, that they turn over and examine the concepts in their heads. Most children in America today think in English. They do not think in Yiddish. For a child to be

taught successfully by rote in Yiddish, we are asking him to first take unfamiliar words and phrases, say them in Yiddish, mentally translate them into English, and then try to comprehend them.

Why do people demand that we teach six-, seven-, and eight-year-olds in Yiddish, and yet accept that ten- and twelve-year-olds may learn in English? Obviously, the feeling is that the children are not familiar enough with Yiddish to learn *Gemora* and *Tosafos* in that medium. Is it not absurd to teach smaller children in a language that is foreign to them?

We do not maintain that Yiddish *per se* is burdensome or that our children are incapable of learning another language, but we must realize that Torah itself is a new and "foreign" subject to the beginner school child, who must work hard to master it. We are throwing in an additional factor of difficulty without sufficient justification.

Over the years, I have heard many suggestions as to how yeshivos should teach Yiddish. We must understand that most of the methods have been tried—unfortunately, without appreciable success, even though many *menahalim* (principals) will be reluctant to admit it. If teaching of Yiddish had worked, why would we change to English in the fourth and fifth grades?

I recently had occasion to speak to a prominent *mashgiach* of a *Yeshiva Gedola*, who told me that he had asked three *menahalim* of renowned Torah institutions in Brooklyn as to why they insisted on teaching in Yiddish. All of them answered, that while they fully sympathized with the requests to change to English, no one was willing to be the first one to do so. "Get someone else to be first, and I'll be second."

MAKING YIDDISH WORK

The only possible way that Yiddish can succeed in the schools is if the children speak Yiddish at home, and con-

verse with their *Rebbeim* and *Menahalim*, and even with the secretaries—in Yiddish. (Unfortunately, not all *Rabbeim* are fluently conversant in colloquial Yiddish.) The child must be in a total Yiddish-speaking environment. In some Chassidic yeshivos, parents of entering kindergartners are told that all conversation among the children, even during recess, is

exclusively in Yiddish. Then he will think in Yiddish and comprehend his translations rendered into Yiddish, and Torah learning will not be sacrificed. But, realistically speaking, this approach is not going to happen in our yeshivos.

If Yiddish is going to be taught in the classrooms of our yeshivos, as currently structured, without affecting comprehension, then it

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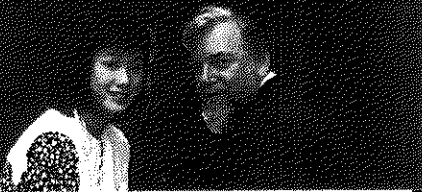
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must be accompanied by a literal translation of the *passuk* into English, which has been done with some success in several yeshivos. While the gains are obvious—both knowledge of Yiddish and comprehension of subject matter—there is an inevitable loss in the amount of material that is covered. Before embarking on such a program, a school must come to terms with a basic question: Is it worth learning in Yiddish at the expense of more and better *Yedias HaTorah*—greater knowledge of Torah?

WHAT YIDDISH-SPEAKING GEDOLIM THOUGHT

Many *Gedolei Yisroel* of the previous generation were emphatic in their opinion that children should be taught in their own mother-tongue, as illustrated by a few cases in point:

- When Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, זצ"ל, was approached by a *mechaneches* from Lakewood, in reference to teaching boys in Yiddish, the *Rosh Hayeshiva* responded that children who come from English-speaking homes should learn in English, and that in their case, time lost in learning in Yiddish constitutes *bitul Torah*. Reb Yaakov added that he firmly believes that they should learn in English, "*ober, ich bin an alter Yid. Zei vellen zich nischt tzu herren tzu mir* (but, I am an old Jew—they will not listen to me)."

- In a meeting with the faculty members of Mesifita Tifereth Jerusalem, eighteen years ago, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל told them that instruction should be in the language that the children are familiar with, English. As for meeting the parental desire for Yiddish, he suggested using occasional Yiddish expressions in the translations.

- A yeshiva run *al taharas hako-desh* (purity and sanctity), in a large Eastern seaboard city, was founded on the premise that instruction would be in Yiddish. After consultations with a *Gadol Hador*, the school switched to English. The

menahel has reported major improvements in terms of curriculum covered and comprehension.

- Rabbi Avrohom Fishman, *menahel* of Mosdos Ohr Torah, which has a large proportion of the children of the *Bnei Torah* in Cleveland, consulted with numerous *Gedolim* about learning in Yiddish. Notably, Rabbi Mordechai Gifter שליט"א, *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Telshe in Wickliffe, urged him to teach in English. Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, זצ"ל, concurred, commenting rather strongly that teaching bilingually in Yiddish and English was "*shtuss v'hevel* (foolishness and nonsense). *Vi a kindt tracht, azoy darf er teitchen* (as a child thinks, so should he translate)."

When Rabbi Fishman asked Reb Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל, he responded, "*Es is nischt k'dai tzu lernen in Yiddish, afilu oib men vet lernen ein posuk veiniger* (it is not worthwhile to learn in Yiddish if it is at the expense of even one *passuk*)."

- In a letter, Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler זצ"ל advises that in spite of the value of the *kedusha* associated with traditional methods of teaching, the deciding consideration in setting up an educational system must be whether the children matriculate to further study, or drop out from lack of interest or accomplishment (*Michtav MeEliyahu* III p.362-4).

To reach their countrymen (who were not literate in Hebrew), the *Rambam* wrote some of his classical works (*Moreh Nevuchim*, *Pirush le Mishnayos*) in Arabic, and Rabbi S. R. Hirsch in his time wrote his masterworks in German. Shall we not remove obstacles of language, instead of erecting them, to engage the hearts and minds our children?

SOME MORE CONSIDERATIONS

In *Eretz Yisroel* today, the overwhelming majority of non-Chassidic *chadorim*, and many Chassidic *chadorim* outside of inner Jerusalem, are teaching in *Ivrit*, a radical departure from a generation ago. At first they also

tried to continue teaching in Yiddish, as they had in the past, but too often failed in the attempt. One should bear in mind that there was strong ideological opposition to *Ivrit*, quite aside from the value of Yiddish, yet these same schools adjusted the language of instruction to reality. On a recent trip to *Eretz Yisroel*, I encountered few *Chareidische* children who were at all familiar with Yiddish. There are some *chadorim* that still teach in Yiddish, but the majority of the children in these *chadorim* speak Yiddish fluently at home. The vast majority of children in comparable schools in the States do not.

A case in point: In Petach Tikva, a cheder was founded al taharas hakodesh by a group of Ponovezher Yungeleit. No decision, major or minor, was made without consulting the Steipler Rav זצ"ל. In fact, when the Steipler was niftar (passed away), the school was renamed Birkas Yaakov, in his memory. ... The Steipler had insisted that the children be taught in Ivrit, since the children came from Ivrit-speaking homes. Comprehension was the prime concern.

A child who mastered Yiddish and has the skills to understand a lecture given in Yiddish by a *Gadol* is no doubt at an advantage over those who do not know the language. Can this be a good enough reason to sacrifice the primary years of maximum learning absorption; especially in view of the fact that the vast majority of our *Roshel Yeshiva* today are American-educated and will adjust language to their *talmidim*? Additionally, many Sefardi and Iranian *bachurim*, who never spoke a word of Yiddish in their lives, enter Ashkenazi *Yeshivos Gedolos* and adapt very quickly to the Yiddish *shiur* of the European-bred *Rosh HaYeshiva*; this also holds true for many *baalei teshuva*. It is obvious, then, that our children can indeed cope with the rigors of adapting to Yiddish, but only when they are older and have already begun to taste the sweet savor of Torah learning, thus having gained the self-confidence of subject mastery and drive to learn more. Dare we risk—for any reason—a child

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never gaining that self-confidence?

We must always remember our objectives. Nothing will help make a better student than demonstrating to him that he can be successful, which is a primary objective in our children's earlier years' education.

As for those parents who want their children to learn Yiddish, no matter what, perhaps it is incumbent upon them to teach and talk in that language to their children at home, and not "dump" on the schools. If that is too difficult or impractical, then I would suggest that just as ambitious, caring parents enroll themselves and their children in classes for art, calligraphy, cooking, and piano for the sake of enrichment, so, too, should parents who truly desire that their children learn Yiddish, also organize for themselves and their children courses in Yiddish, taught by *Ba'alei Ruach*, in a yeshiva-type atmosphere. If spoken Yiddish is truly important to them, then they can converse with their children in

normal colloquial Yiddish, which will be much more practical for understanding a Yiddish Torah address than relying on skills gained from cumbersome translations, employing archaic terms rarely used in daily conversation or even in Talmudic *shiurim*.

Our yeshivos could play a productive role on this level by introducing a few Yiddish words or expressions every week, teaching the children a hundred or so such expressions every year, amounting to an appreciable vocabulary by the end of elementary education.

THE BURDEN OF SWEET MEMORIES

I remember with particular fondness my days—my years—in 206 Wilson Street, home of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath in Williamsburg, where as a child, my classmates and I *shuckled* to the melodies of "Chumash geteitted of Mamme

Loshon." So much warmth, so much *Yiras Shomayim*, passed between the *Rebbe* and us during those hours. I always thought that someday my own children—and then our *talmidim*—would benefit from the same experience.

But I must face it. My sweet memories must not become the burden of my children. With great reluctance, and a measure of sorrow, I have come to recognize the necessity of changing our policy toward Yiddish in our *yeshivos ketanos*. It seems that we must resort to the harsher English tongue, replete with phrases gleaned from the civilization around us, to convey the lessons I learned in 206 Wilson Street to the new generation. Yet, as long as the corridors between the classrooms ring with vibrant sounds of accomplished Torah learning, comprehended and loved, then the common goal we share with earlier generations—preserving our sacred heritage—ultimately will be realized. ■

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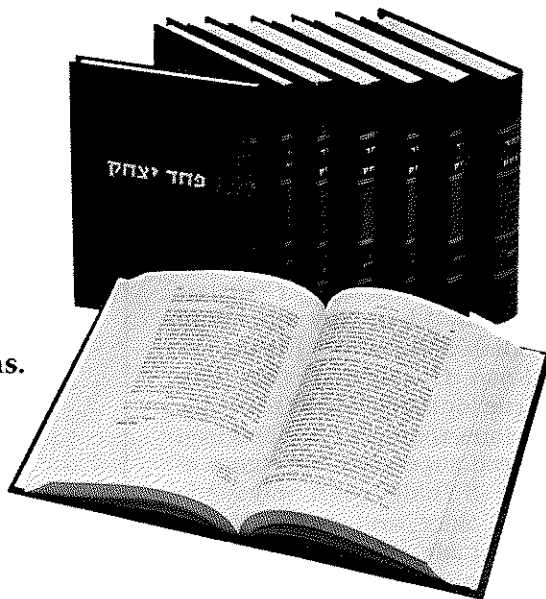
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JOSEPH LOEBENSTEIN

2180 Oak Road

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Dear Friends,

It is remarkable how things have changed over the years!

A generation ago, the Gedolei Yisroel called for **recruitment**; today the call is for **classrooms**.

A generation ago, Chinuch Atzmai needed financial support to help fund recruitment. With more funding, representatives could knock on more doors, and convince more parents to register their children in a Torah School, instead of one of Israel's public schools. It was, after all, a matter of spiritual life or death.

This has now changed radically. Today, there is a new awareness sweeping across the length and breadth of Israel. **Recruitment isn't necessary!** From Kiryat Shmone in the Upper Galil, all the way to Yerocham in the Negev, parents are rejecting the prospect of raising their children to a Jewishness without Torah.

Parents who are **chozrim beteshuva**--newly observant-- even parents who are not yet observant--are looking with dismay at the product of Israel's public schools. Many of them are begging existing Chinuch Atzmai schools to accommodate their children. Others are pleading for additional classrooms, or for new schools where there are none.

The time is unusually ripe for opening our treasure houses of Torah for all these children, who are actively seeking a chance to pick up where their grandparents left off, and to become part of the Am HaTorah.

Yet, Chinuch Atzmai's expansion is crippled because of an appalling shortage of funds. The government is cutting back on its subsidies. And--tragically--world Jewry has not been forthcoming in its generosity to pick up the slack. Would the Chazon Ish and Reb Aharon Kotler have **dreamt** that Jewish children would come knocking on Chinuch Atzmai's doors and we would say that we have no room for them?

But this is not the end of it all. At the same time, **Hashem Yisborach** has showered us with unprecedented blessings. When before, in the history of our people, have so many of us been so eminently successful in our businesses and professions?

Doesn't this mean that this is a rare opportunity to reverse the downhill slide of the spirituality of our People? In fact, isn't this really **more** than an opportunity, but a challenge, or (dare I say it) a pressing obligation?

I, personally, was deeply moved by the words of Hagoan Rav Avrohom Pam, Shlita, on the topic, as published in the pages of **The Jewish Observer** last January.

And I am convinced that there are others who share with me the unusual urgency of this rare hour in our history--an hour that may not repeat itself in our lifetime.

It is for this reason that I publish this letter, to call your attention to this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change the course of history . . . in the hope and expectation that the Rosh Hayeshiva's words grabbed you just as they grabbed me.

Won't you demonstrate your understanding of this historic opportunity by joining me in doing something **tangible** and **meaningful** for the children of today, for the future of our People?

With Torah Greetings,
Joseph Loebenstein

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Dear Mr. Loebenstein,

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Dear Friends,

Unfortunately, all of us are flooded with news about many varieties of tragedy.

This is a story that **would** have been different, that **would** have been heartwarming, that we **would** have wanted to hold up as an example for others:

Two young people married. Both were from large struggling families. They didn't want their parents to go into debt for them, so the young **chosson** learned to be a sofer, and they moved to an out-of-the-way town in Israel where apartments are cheap. Yes, they were lonely. But they were self-supporting, and they were not a burden on their parents or anyone else.

A beautiful story. If only there were more like it.

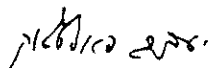
But then, tragedy struck. The first baby came and the mother fell ill. She requires private medical treatment for an extended period of time and -- her doctors feel -- she requires the emotional support of a warm, concerned family. In other words they will be forced to move to Jerusalem. Clearly tens of thousands of dollars will be required to save this family. The financial burden only compounds an already desperate situation. The distinguished rabbis of their former home - **Rabbi Yitzchok Dovid Grossman** of **Migdal Ohr** and **Rabbi Nachman Bulman** of **Kiryat Nachliel** - have testified to the caliber of the people and their need.

Has the dream exploded?

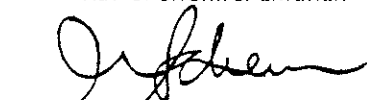
Not really. If we provide our generous support NOW then with Hashem's help and with the warm care of doctors and family, the young mother will recover. She and her devoted husband will be able to raise their young family through their own labor, and they will be able to help others, as well.

Please, join in making this happen by contributing very generously to this worthy cause.

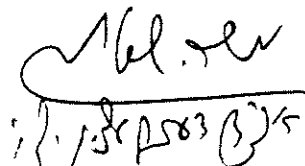
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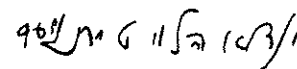
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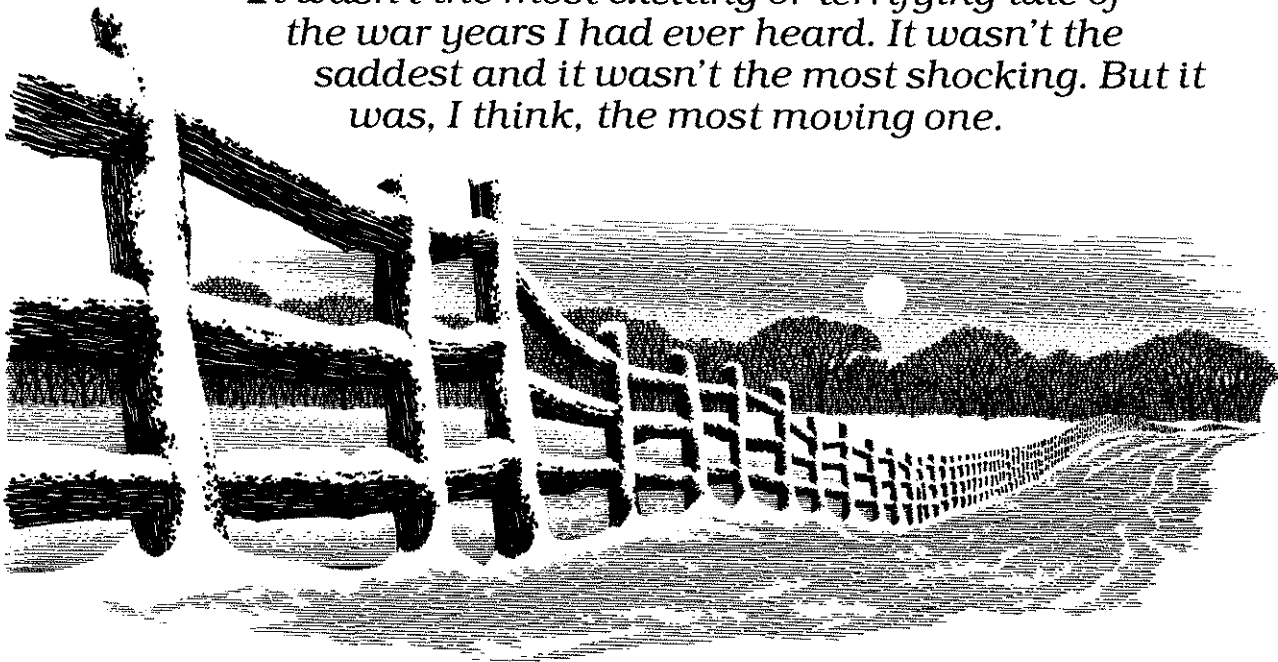


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FIRE AND ICE: Another Wartime Story

It wasn't the most exciting or terrifying tale of the war years I had ever heard. It wasn't the saddest and it wasn't the most shocking. But it was, I think, the most moving one.



It Was Only a Tape Recording

It was only a tape recording, but somehow the **feel**, the atmosphere of the gathering, came through.

The speaker began as just that, a speaker, carefully choosing his words and duly reciting them. Soon enough, though, he subtly shifted gears, and began to speak spontaneously, to no audience in particular,

Rabbi Shafran, who is a Rebbe in the high school of the New England Academy of Torah in Providence, R.I., is a frequent contributor to *The Jewish Observer* and other periodicals.

to the air, in a sense to himself. I imagined the audience dissipating into nothingness before the speaker's clouding eyes, as he saw in its stead only the snow and ice, the endless forests and chilling vastness, of the Siberian taiga.

There are so many, so terribly many, war stories. Every survivor, by very definition, is one. And of course not one of them is redundant; no life is ever the same as another, and no one less significant than the next.

Sometimes a feeling insinuates its way into our consciousnesses, a

suspicion that there may be precious little to be gained from yet another description of a displacement, another *selektion*, another barbarism, even another survival.

But, like so many feelings, this one misleads, and perniciously. We never can stop listening and never will. As long as a survivor is left to talk, the rest of us will be—cannot *but* be—sponges for their words. Connection with the meaning of the past is, after all, the very essence of the Jewish faith and the Jewish people; we cannot help but eternally thirst for its every bequeathal.

It was ironic: though they ceased to exist for the speaker, the people in the audience. I had been told, were captivated by him. Weeks later and hundreds of miles away, in the casual comfort of my living room, so was I.

He had already spoken of unimaginable, surreal episodes, of the fourteen year old boy he had once

been fleeing his Polish *shtetl* with the German advance in 1939, of watching as his uncle was caught trying to escape a roundup of Jews and shot on the spot, of being packed with his Jewish townsfolk, by the Germans, into a *shul* which was then set afire, of their miraculous deliverance, of the long treks, of the dedication to *mitzvos* by

wandering refugees, of their eventual crossing over into Russian-occupied Poland.

But the part of the narrative that grabbed my somnolent *neshama* and shook it violently awake came later. It wasn't the most exciting or terrifying tale of the war years I had ever heard. It wasn't the saddest and it wasn't the most shocking. But it was, I think, the most moving one, and one, unquestionably, with much to offer:

"The Nights Were Terribly Cold . . . Sometimes Dropping to -40°"

In 1939 I was part of the Bialystok yeshiva, Beis Yosef of Novaradok, which had temporarily relocated, like many Polish yeshivos at the time, to Vilna. The yeshiva finally settled in Birzh, deep in the heart of Lithuania, and we learned *b'has-modo rabbo*, with great dedication, until 1941, when Russia occupied the country.

Everyone was required to accept Soviet citizenship, but no one in the yeshiva would, so those of us unable to secure visas to other countries were exiled to Siberia.

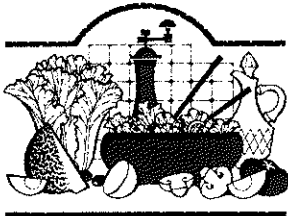
We were loaded onto rail cattle-wagons, nine of us, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Nekritz זצ"ל (the son-in-law of the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Avrohom Yoffen זצ"ל), and his family. We arrived by train in Novosibirsk, and from there were transported by barge to Parabek. Near there, we were all assigned to a *kolchoz*, or collective farm.

If we worked, we would receive our rations; if not, we starved.

I remember that our first winter was our hardest, as we did not have the proper clothing for working in the taiga, and didn't really know what to expect.

Most of us had to fell trees in the forest. I was the youngest and was assigned to a granary on a farm a few miles from our *kolchoz*. The nights were terribly cold, the temperature often dropping to forty degrees below zero, though I had a small stove by which I kept a little warm. The chief of the *kolchoz*

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Not far from the farm, I fell from the sled into the deep snow and the horse continued without me. I tried to shout to the animal to stop, to no avail.

would make surprise checks on me to see if I had fallen asleep, and I would recite *Tehillim* to stay awake.

One night I was so cold that I couldn't shake the chills and when I realized how hot my head felt, I knew that I had a high fever. I had a horse and sled at my disposal, so I managed to hitch them together and mount the sled in order to return to the *kolchoz*. It was very difficult for me in feverish state, but I succeeded. Not far from the farm, though, I fell from the sled into the deep snow and the horse continued on without me. I tried to shout to the animal to stop, to no avail. I remember crying and saying *Tehillim*, for I knew that remaining where I was, or even trying to walk to the *kolchoz*, would have meant certain death from exposure. I forced myself to get up and, with what little strength I had left, began running after the runaway horse and sled. Suddenly, as I was running, I realized that ahead in the distance the horse had halted. I ran even faster, and reached the sled. I collapsed onto it and we continued toward the *kolchoz*.

**"No Number of Blankets
Could Warm Me"**

Lying in the sled, looking up at the starry sky, I was *mispallel* with all my diminishing might to *Hashem* to enable me to reach the relative safety of the *kolchoz*. He answered my *tefillos* and I reached my Siberian home, though I was shaking uncontrollably from my fever; no number of blankets could warm me. The next day I was transported to Parabek, which had a hospital.

My first two days in the hospital are a blur, but the third day my fever

broke and I started to feel a little better. Then suddenly, as I lay in my bed, I saw a *chaver* from the *kolchoz*, Herschel Tshivitzer, before me, half frozen and staring at me. His feet were wrapped in layers and layers of rags—the best one could manage to try to cope with the Arctic cold, without proper boots. I couldn't believe my eyes—Herschel had actually *walked* the frigid miles from the *kolchoz*!

"Herschel," I cried, "what are you doing here?"

His answer I'll never forget.

"Yesterday," he said, "someone came from Parabek, and told us 'Simcha umar,' that Simcha was dead, and I volunteered to bury you."

The *mesiras nefesh*, such *mesiras nefesh*... had the rumor been true, there was no way he could have helped me. He had immediately made the perilous journey—just to see my funeral! The *mesiras nefesh* for a *chaver*... such an example!...

Just A Short Conversation, Really

Icut the power to the tape deck and waited for the shiver to subside.

In the midst of Siberian exile, I contemplated, in a situation as hopeless and demoralizing as I could imagine. In such circumstances, such dazzling friendship, such overwhelming *chessed*.

I felt like I had shrunk to the size of a clod of earth. Would I have even considered such a journey, felt such responsibility to a fellow Jew? In such a place, at such a time? Or would I have justified inaction with the ample justifications available? Would I have even been able to maintain my humanity in the face of so doubtful a future, not to mention my faith in *Hashem*, my



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very Jewishness ... ?

I was no longer even the size of a clod of earth.

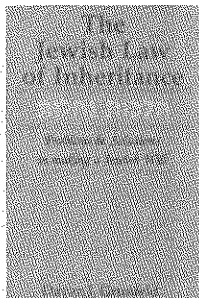
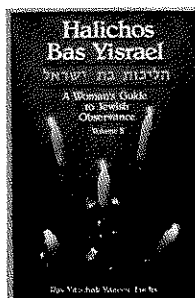
A wholly remarkable story, I forced myself to think. None of the violence, the tragedy, the horrors, the evil of so many tales of the war years. Just a short conversation, really. Yet I had come to understand so much from the story of Herschel Tishivtzer's selfless, unhesitating concern for little Simcha Ruzhaner, as the narrator had been called in those days, when he was a teenager. I had come to understand what it means to be part of a holy people.

I tuned the power back on and listened as the narrator concluded his story, as he described how Herschel Tishivtzer, among others, *baruch Hashem*, had eventually made his way to America and settled in New York under his family name, Nudel. And how he, the narrator himself, had ended up in Baltimore, where he married the virtuous daughter of a respected *rav*, Rabbi Noach Kahn, נח"ל. And how he had become a *rav* himself (changing many lives for the better, I know, though he didn't say so), and how his *rebbetzin* had raised their

children to be *bnei Torah* who were continuing to frustrate the plans of our enemies by raising Yiddishe families of their own.

And I wondered—actually, I still do—if the slice of Simcha Ruzhaner's life which had so affected me, had done so only because of its radiant, blindingly beautiful message—or if perhaps some part was played by the fact that he too, had taken on a shortened form of his family name, Shafranowitz, and had named his second child Avrohom Yitzchok, though everybody calls me Avi. ■

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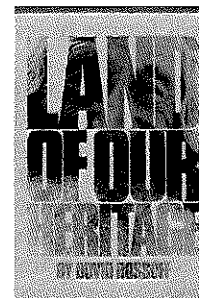
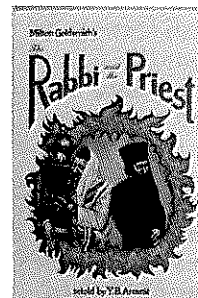
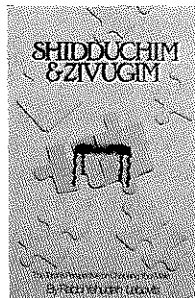
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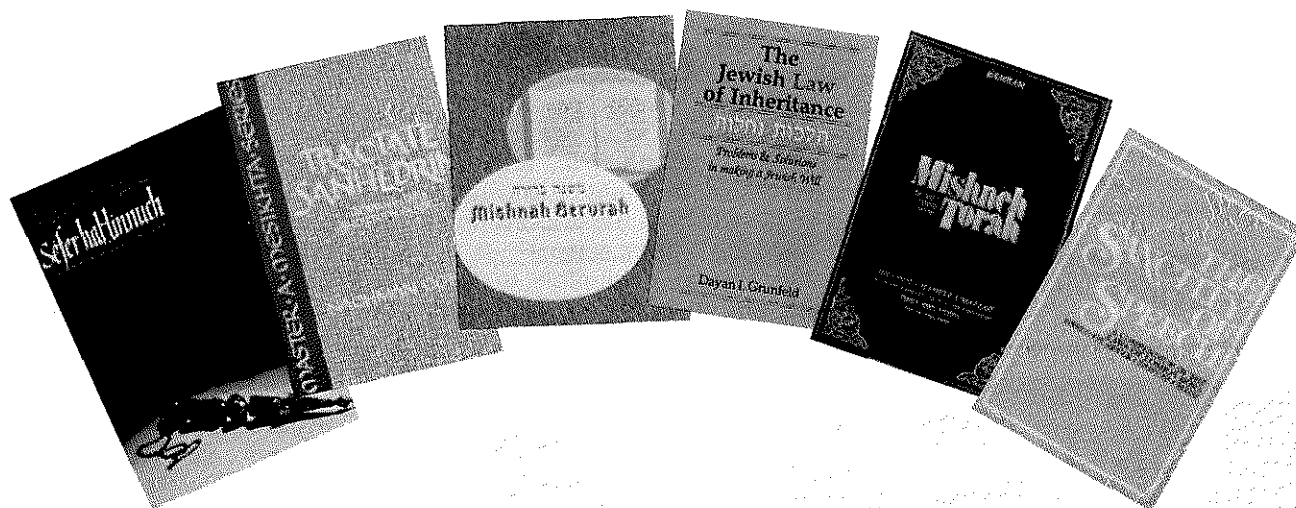
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There are the Judaica Nach series and the Artscroll works on *Tanach*, in the area of *Torah Shebichtav*, the Scriptures. In the field of *Torah Sheb'al Peh*—the Oral Law—there is the Artscroll *Mishnayos* series, of which we have reviewed earlier volumes; the latest ones to appear are **Sanhedrin** (Rabbi Mattis Roberts, ed. by Rabbi Y. Danziger, 1987 \$17.95 hc, \$14.95 sc) **Makos** and **Shavuos** (Rabbi A. Y. Rosenberg, ed. by Rabbi G. Finkel and Rabbi Y. Danziger, 1987 \$17.95 hc, \$14.95 sc), and **Avodah Zarah** and **Horios** (Rabbi Y. Danziger and

Rabbi M. Rabinowitz, ed. by Rabbi N. Kempler, 1988, \$17.95 hc, \$14.95 sc). These maintain the same standards of excellence and extreme usefulness that the first volumes set, by their combination of clear translation, basic exposition, and advanced *lomdus*. As in previous volumes, the introductions are of particular value.

Feldheim Publishers are pushing ahead with their pioneering edition of the **Mishnah Berurah** with English translation; having completed the publication of volume III (**Hilchos Shabbos** in four volumes), they have now turned to what the editor calls "the laws of daily conduct," beginning with a volume covering *simonim* 157-201 (laws dealing with the washing of hands, the meal, and the blessings involved). Particular attention should be given to the excellent footnotes provided by the editor, Rabbi Ariel Orenstein (Pisgah Foundation, Jerusalem, 1987, \$16.95).

Another major publishing effort is the Hebrew and English edition of the **Sefer Hachinuch**, whose earlier volumes were previously reviewed and of which volume four has now appeared (Feldheim, Jerusalem, 1987, \$17.95). It covers *Bamidbar* and part of *Devarim*, with a fifth volume scheduled to complete the project. The *Sefer Hachinuch* occupies a special place among works on Torah *hashkafa*: focussing on each of the 613 *mitzvos* in turn, it covers the entire range of Jewish living with its emphasis on self-sanctification and service of G-d. The text of this edition has been critically revised and the translation is clear and readable. Particularly valuable are the footnotes which clarify difficult points (e.g. *mitzva* 437, concerning the seven names of G-d, and *mitzva* 410, concerning the saving power of the altar).

We had occasion to comment previously on the "**Master a Masekhta**" series developed by Rabbi Nachman Cohen, through

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his Torah Lishmah Institute. This series aims to aid the student by providing him with an outline of the Talmudic discussions, aided by charts and background material. There has now appeared the third *Masechta*, **Sanhedrin**, and the usefulness of this volume has been greatly enhanced by the inclusion of the Hebrew text of the *Gemora* (Torah Lishmah Institute, Yonkers NY, 1987, \$27.95). The student will inevitably be struck by the clarity of the presentation and the wealth of information drawn from the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*. There are also very useful introductory chapters on the legal system as presented in *Sanhedrin*, and on related issues. Perhaps a question can be raised about the brief section on "meta-legal perspectives"—it is too short to be intelligible to the layman and is likely to leave him puzzled, and a larger treatment

would be out of place in a volume devoted to "straight learning" rather than kabbalistic concerns. On the other hand, the treatment of the *Aggadah* in this *Masechta* will be of the greatest value to the student, particularly since Rabbi Cohen provides background data that are essential to an understanding of the topics. Further volumes are in preparation and will surely also prove most useful study-tools.

Moznaim Publishers have undertaken to publish *Rabbi Eli Touger's Mishneh Torah* series, of which the first volume was previously reviewed. Two new volumes—**Hilchos Teshuva** (1987, \$13.95) and **Hilchos Chometz Umatzah** (1988, \$13.95)—follow the pattern of the series: clear translation and a concise commentary, pointing out the sources of the *Rambam* as well as any problems raised by his statements and the solutions provided in later rabbinic works. A wealth of ideas is here presented to the student, and particularly **Hilchos Teshuva**, with the commentary, can well serve as a fundamental *hashkafa* text. As the commentary is necessarily concise, the reader must read attentively if he does not want to miss fine points (e.g. in explaining the *Rambam's* definition of an *apikores*, Rabbi Touger briefly alludes, without elaboration, to the alternative interpretation of an *apikores* as one who denigrates the rabbis). *Hilchos Chometz Umatzah* also includes the *Rambam's* text of the *Haggadah* and points out the minor and variant readings, a valuable contribution to one's preparation for the *Seder*.

HALACHIC MANUALS

Another trend in Torah literature is the outpouring of halachic texts—specifically works that deal with particular areas. Outstanding among them is **The Jewish Law of Inheritance, Problems and Solutions in Making a Jewish Will** (Targum Press, Southfield, Michigan, 1987, \$11.95), the last work of *Dayan Grunfeld* זצ"ל. It is not generally known, but

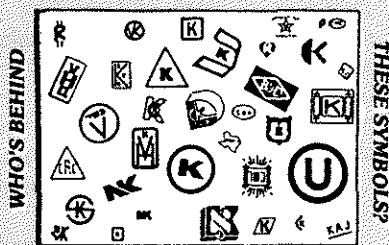
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the drafting of a will to assign one's estate to someone other than those designated by the Torah as heirs, raises serious *halachic* questions. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל upheld the validity of ordinary wills in Jewish law; as did, even more outspokenly, Rabbi H.B. Padwa (head of the *Beis Din* of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of Great Britain), insofar as English law is concerned. However, a number of noted *poskim* have ruled differently. It would certainly appear that there is an advantage to drawing up wills in a way that would be consistent with the Torah's provisions, according to all opinions. Hence the importance of Dayan Grunfeld's book. The author states that when a will is in accordance with the law of the land, if such a will distributes an estate in a different way than indicated by the Torah, it is an actual violation of Torah law and the beneficiaries of the will receive money that does not belong to them.

He therefore undertook in this work clearly to set out the provisions of the Torah's law of inheritance, to demonstrate that, in this area, *halacha* does not consider the law of the land valid law for us; and to suggest a way in which a testator can distribute his estate at his discretion without transgressing Torah law. The book masterfully traces this subject through Jewish history and the voluminous responsa literature; and he concludes by offering the text of a "gift document" (in Hebrew and English) which can be used in conjunction with a will to validate the latter's provisions. Three noted rabbinic scholars—Rabbi I.J. Weiss, Rabbi E. Schlesinger and Dayan Grossnass—assisted in the preparation of this volume. The urgency of the subject is highlighted by the fact that the very year that saw the publication of Dayan Grunfeld's work (originally completed in 1975) also saw the appearance of another work on this topic, **Kuntres Midor Ledor**, Laws of the Torah relating to the writing of a will and the distribution of one's estate, by *Rabbi Feivel*

Cohen (Brooklyn, 1987, \$10.00). The author refers to the responsum of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein but also suggests that, "the best approach to take in the matter is that of writing a special document" similar in halachic principle to that devised by Dayan Grunfeld. There is, however, considerable difference between the two volumes. Dayan Grunfeld's book is indispensable for its clear explanation of the Torah's law and its basic treatment in the responsa literature. In contrast, Rabbi Cohen's work (whose text is both in Hebrew and English) focusses in detail on the practical procedure to be followed (thus e.g. he deals with the special problems of a wife's will); and his book comes complete with the requisite forms, which only need filling in according to the author's instructions.

Some major works on halachic topics are translations. Thus there appeared recently the second volume of the translation of **Hali-chos Bas Yisroel, A Woman's Guide**

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to **Jewish Observance**, by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Fuchs, translated by Rabbi M. Dombey (Targum Press, Southfield, Michigan, 1987, \$12.95). The bulk of this volume is taken up by the laws of *Shabbos* and *Yomim Tovim* with particular reference to women, and there is also a chapter on miscellaneous *mitzvos* and blessings. The treatment is outstanding in its comprehensiveness (it should be noted that Rabbi Fuchs added new material to this edition for the benefit of those living outside *Eretz Yisroel*); and the concise statements of the text are explained in the footnotes in detail and by reference to the rabbinic sources, down to the latest responsa collections, so that it is indeed hard to think of any additional material that could have been included. The only instance that came to the reviewer's mind was in connection with footnote 93, on page 31, which talks about the *Kiddush* tendered upon the naming of a daughter—it would perhaps

have been worthwhile to include here the statement of the *Prisha* that the naming of a daughter corresponds to the *mila* of a boy. A glossary and a very complete index add further value to this important work.

Another welcome translation from the Hebrew is **The Sanctity of Speech** (Chevra Shemiras Hala-shon, Lakewood, 1986, \$6.95), a compendium of the laws of *lashon hara* compiled by Rabbis Y. K. Krohn and Y. M. Shain, adapted into English by Rabbi H. Danziger. The laws of *shemiras halashon* are many and complex. While the original Hebrew work made their study much easier, the present volume should remove any last obstacle to familiarizing oneself with the basics of the law. Furthermore, the last chapter, suggestions for improvement, focusses on the deeper reasons for our weaknesses in this area and on remedies for coping with them. This is truly an essential work.

THE WORLD OF PAMPHLETS

A long similar lines, Rabbi Moshe Goldberger has issued a booklet, **To Say or Not to Say**, a concise review digest of the laws of proper speech (Eichler Publications, Brooklyn, 1986, \$4.95). We have previously reviewed some other pamphlets by the same author, and noted his ability to condense complex ideas and laws in a manner that makes it very easy to absorb and remember them. Some recent pamphlets of his: **Prescription for Health: Tehillim Therapy** (1986) seeks to show how to pray for health based on a study of a number of chapters from *Tehillim*; **The Wine Connection, A Guide to Self-Discipline** (1986), based on the laws of *Nazir* and outlining a practical training program for self-control; and **How to Achieve Wealth the Torah Way, With Birkas Hamazon** (1987), which provides a word-by-word commentary on *Birkas Hamazon* and its meaning, as well as a deeper understanding of wealth and our striving for it.

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Of special interest is Rabbi Goldberger's most recent publication, **(K)not(s) on Shabbos** (Yeshiva Fund, Box 82, Staten Island, 1988, \$3.00), which presents the complex rules about making knots, tying shoelaces, etc. on *Shabbos*. While the public may have some vague general conceptions (and misconceptions) on the subject, few are really familiar with it—yet it involves an *av melacha*, one of the thirty nine types of activity forbidden on *Shabbos*. The fine illustrations by Aaron Hahakien greatly help to grasp the intricacies of the topic. As an appendix, the author has included some relevant extracts from *Igros Moshe*, as well as a responsum by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל concerning the printing of halachic decisions without giving the reasons for them, and the translation of Torah works into English.

Two valuable pamphlets have been published by Rabbi Chayim Krauss, (Brooklyn, 1947): **Kuntres Hahalachos** and **Kuntres Hashivah Nekiim U'Bedikos Yom Haveses**, with approbations by the Satmar Dayan, Rabbi J. Roth. The *dinim* involved in these aspects of Family Purity are presented lucidly and in fullest detail, in the form of concise statements; for each of them the sources are given, so that the subject can be pursued further. It is to be hoped that the series of which another pamphlet has previously been reviewed will be continued, so as to cover the entire field of *Taharas Hamishpacha*. An older pamphlet on its laws, **The Code of Jewish Family Purity**, by Rabbi E. Blas, originally published in Hungarian, has now appeared in its twelfth edition (Committee for Jewish Family Purity, Monsey, 1987). Designed to spread the knowledge and observance of the laws involved, this booklet provides in simple and clear language the basic laws, including guidance on proper record keeping and the calculations involved. It does not give sources and, for more complex issues, urges the reader to consult competent rabbinic advice. Its usefulness is

shown by the fact that it has been distributed in tens of thousands of copies not only in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English, but also in French, Rumanian, Spanish, Hungarian, and Persian, with German and Portuguese editions about to appear. It can be obtained free from the publishers (27 Maple Terrace, Monsey, NY 10952).

On the subject of *Shabbos*, an interesting publication, with a novel approach, is **Laws of Cooking on the Sabbath and Festivals**, by Ehud Rosenberg (Haladrot Meirot Publications, Tel Aviv, 1986, \$4.95, distributed by Feldheim Publications). This is a practical guide (based on *Shemiras Shabbos Kahilchoso* by Rabbi Neuwirth), which presents the complicated *dinim* involved by means of pictures, diagrams, and charts. Even the most complex points become remarkably simple when explained step by step in a series of pictures. Just to make sure that the reader

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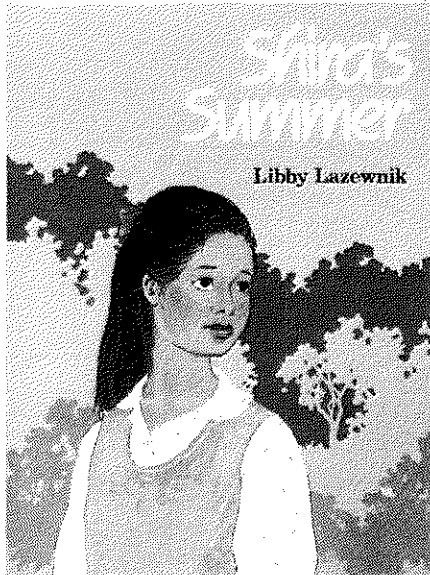
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has mastered the subject, the author provides review question to test his knowledge (and, to make sure, also gives the correct answers). This is an altogether admirable book that should serve as a model for the preparation of such works on other *halachic* topics, and as a guide to teachers on effective teaching of *halachos*. To add to the usefulness of the book, the author provides a chapter on heating installations and their use on *Shabbos*, and a concise statement of the laws of cooking on *Yom Tov*.

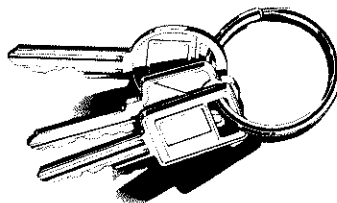
Another very useful booklet is the new, revised and enlarged edition of Rabbi S. Wagschal's **Care of Children on Shabbos and Yom Tov** (distributed by Feldheim, NY, 1985, \$4.95). There are many aspects to this topic, from the preparation and warming of food to the cleaning and dressing of the child, from the problems raised by toys to the treatment of illnesses. The author has also added chapters on children and the dietary laws and on the education of children, character training and the beginning of *mitzva* observance. Comprehensive references to the sources, and a full index round off this valuable work.

Rabbi Wagschal has also published a new, revised edition of his

Practical Guide to the Laws of Yom Tov and Chol Hamoed (distributed by Feldheim, 1985, \$8.95). This is a larger work and represents a major undertaking, dealing with all the ramifications of a subject on which there is a great deal of confusion and ignorance. What differences are there, exactly, between *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* as far as the thirty-nine types of work are concerned? The author not only provides detailed guidance but also lengthy footnotes in Hebrew to point out the sources and to discuss points of controversy. Topics too long for a footnote are dealt with in a Hebrew appendix. There is no index but a very detailed table of contents, and *dinim* are easily located.

The Radiance of Shabbos, by Rabbi Simcha Bunim Cohen (Mesorah Publications, Brooklyn, 1986, \$11.95 hc, \$8.95 sc), is likewise a larger work. It is dedicated to the positive obligations connected with *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*: candle-lighting, *Kiddush* and *Havdalah*, and the festive meals. These obligations are well-known, but not so the many details connected with them. The author deals with such specifics as candle-lighting in a hotel, how to distribute *Kiddush* wine, and drinking wine at *Seudah*

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Shlishis (this reviewer missed, however, any mention of *Zemiro*, or discussion of *Sholom Aleichem* and the blessing of the children). Four relevant responsa of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל are included and the author has also added a number of detailed halachic discussions, in Hebrew, of points touched on in this work; they are in addition to the Hebrew footnotes, which provide sources and explanations for the various *dinim* stated. The language is clear, and an excellent index is provided.

Kiddush L'vono, by Rabbi Chaim Uri Lipschitz (Moznaim Publications, Brooklyn, 1987, \$7.00) is a most attractively designed booklet devoted to the monthly blessing of the moon. It discusses the laws and customs connected with it, and provides the text as well as a commentary to it, but goes beyond this to explain the Jewish calendar, the concept of *molad*, as well as the philosophical and aggadic aspects of *Kiddush L'vono*. Of particular

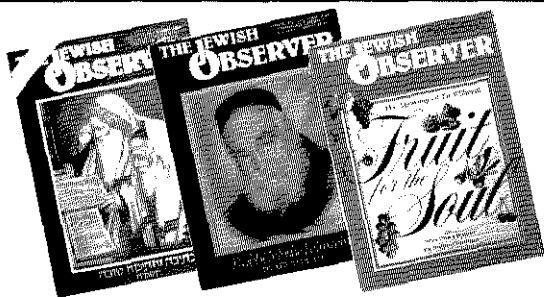
interest are some rabbinic responsa on the subject, which round off this interesting work.

The Complete Mezuzah Guide, by Rabbi Moshe Elefant and Rabbi Eliezer Weinbaum (Brooklyn, 1988, \$6.50) is a comprehensive guide to all aspects of the subject: where, how, and when to affix a *mezuzah*, and the many ramifications and questions connected with this *mitzva*, such as those that are raised, for instance, by partnership with a non-Jew. Footnotes, in Hebrew, provide sources and explanations, and a set of diagrams graphically illustrate the provisions discussed in the various chapters. The authors state all the pertinent measurements in cubits and handbreadths; a future edition should provide some guidance as to these measurements in feet and inches.

Mezuzos as well as *Sifrei Torah* and *Tefillin* require, of course, the most stringent attention to the way they are written. **The Shape and Forms of the Aleph Beth**, by Rabbi

Eli Teitelbaum (Vaad Mishmereth Stam, Brooklyn, 1981) is an illustrated guide, written in a lively style, intertwining the halachic specifications and aggadic explanations for each of the letters. A review quiz and a defective *mezuzah*, whose mistakes the reader is asked to find, complete this useful pamphlet.

How to Remember What You Learn, by Rabbi Reuven Biala (Monsey, 1986) is another instance of the value of pamphlets that address themselves to specific needs. Rabbi Biala has made a specialty out of time management and effective studying habits, and the present pamphlet applies the principles involved to Torah study. On hand of specific examples from *Limudei Kodesh*, the author points out basic rules for organizing in one's mind material to be remembered. There are unfortunately all too many people who are hampered by poor power of concentration and memory. This booklet should be a great boon to them. ■



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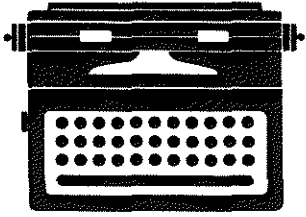
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Letters to the Editor

TEFILLA AS PART OF "TALKING" FOR RUSSIAN JEWS

To the Editor:

The article "Talking to the Russians" (JO Feb. 88) states the following: "This is not to say that every form of public expression has been ruled out. Seventeen years ago, when the Soviet Jewry movement took to the streets in a most dramatic, media-grabbing way, we abstained. But we did organize and participate in a mass public *tefilla* assembly that was convened on January 10, 1971."

The implication that it took a secular demonstration seventeen years ago for the Agudah constituency to mobilize a *Yom Tefilla* for our Soviet brethren is unfortunate. I don't believe that the plight of Soviet Jewry has been that good in the past seventeen years that such a *Yom Tefilla* was and is no longer necessary.

As a member of the Agudah's Vaad Hatzolah Commission, I am well aware of its good work being done in a clandestine manner on behalf of the *baalei teshuva* in Russia. However, as heroic as this undertaking may be, the people involved and the people served are limited in number. It is regrettable that the movement *by the masses* for the masses has remained in the hands of the secular leadership.

You close the article by saying, "Let those who chose to remain at home out of conviction...reinforce their own abstention as a conscious choice..." I am proud to say that my *shul* chose to say *Tehillim* the Sunday morning of the mass rally in Washington. I would have felt reinforced doing so had I seen encouragement from the Agudath Israel leadership to make that "conscious choice."

(RABBI) YOEL SCHONFELD
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TO WHOM THE SATMAR RAV REFERRED A "KVITTEL"

To the Editor:

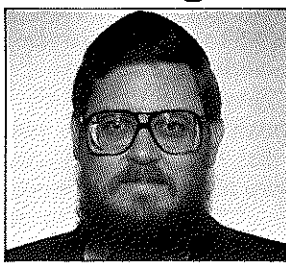
On the very day that I read Eliyahu Mayer's inspiring account of how davening next to a man with a concentration camp tattoo on his arm aroused deeper *kavonos* within him, I heard a striking story about Reb Osher Zelig Margolis who was very close to the late Satmar Rav, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum זצ"ל, when in *Eretz Yisroel* in 1946. When the Rav

decided to leave *Eretz Yisroel* for America, Reb Osher Zelig asked him, "Now that you're leaving, to whom can I give a *kvittel* (that he pray on my behalf)?"

Replied the Rav, "Go into one of the *shtieblach*, where people come in to *daven*. When you see a man rolling up his sleeve to put on *tefillin*—he doesn't have to have a beard—and there are concentration camp numbers on his arm, to him you can give a *kvittel*."

RABBI DOVID COHEN
 Congregation Gvul Yaavetz
 Brooklyn, NY

An Historic First: Agudath Israel to Open Washington Office for Gov't Affairs



An historic first for Orthodox Jews in the United States, signifying their emergence as one of the fastest growing groups in American Jewish life, was heralded by Agudath Israel of America, as it announced the completion of plans to open a full time office for government affairs in the nation's capital.

to obtain a man of Rabbi Kasnett's caliber to serve as the director of our permanent office in the nation's capital. He is an extraordinary individual who combines legal training and a pleasant personality with a keen intellect and total commitment to Torah scholarship and Torah values."

Heading the Agudath Israel Washington bureau will be Rabbi Nesanel (Stephen) Kasnett, a multi-talented individual who brings to his new position both Jewish scholarship and legal training. Himself a native of the nation's capital, Rabbi Kasnett is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the Cardozo School of Law, who studied at Yeshiva Bais HaTalmud in Jerusalem and spent years of advanced Talmudic study at the Kollel of the Mirrer Yeshiva in New York.

"The office in Washington," said Rabbi Sherer, "will serve as our eyes and ears, alerting us to developments affecting Jews at the earliest stages of the governmental process. It will help us communicate responsibly the sensitivities of the broad coalition constituency of Agudath Israel to an increasing number of public officials, and will serve as a conduit of their thoughts back to us."

"The Washington bureau will be of great significance to Torah institutions in this country, whose governmental interests Agudath Israel represents from kindergarten to Kollel."

Commenting on Agudath Israel's decision to open the Washington office, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, national president of the movement, observed: "Through a full time Washington bureau and representative, drawing on our experience of close to half a century on the Washington scene, we will now be able more effectively to present our unique approach to governmental and public issues as they affect the religious community. We are especially gratified that we were able

Rabbi Kasnett's appointment brings to three the number of full time attorney-advocates on the Agudath Israel executive staff.

David Zwiebel serves as Director of Government Affairs and General Counsel for the organization, and Mordechai Avigdor is Associate General Counsel and Executive Director of Agudath Israel's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action.

The new director of the Washington office, in addition to his legal training and Jewish scholarship, is a published author, whose writings include *A Future and A Hope* (1987) and the soon-to-be-released *Ancient Mountains, Timeless Hills*, both works on *Chumash* and Jewish thought. ■

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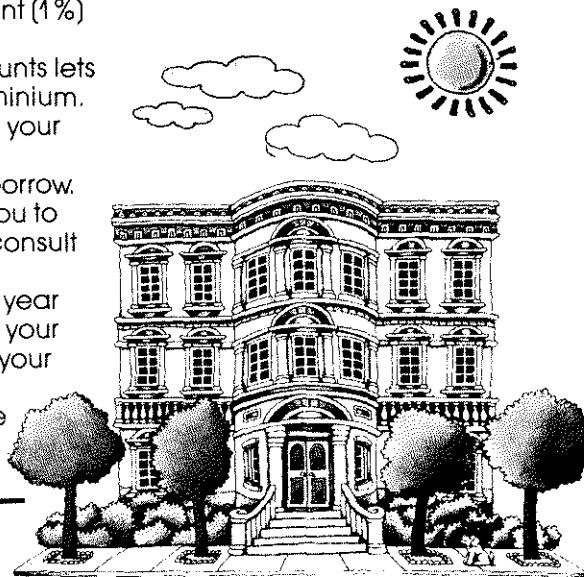
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