



THE JEWISH

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OB RIVER

**Churban Europe,
and the Spiritual Survival of the Jews**

*We Must Record
the Memories Now*

Media Watch,
Rabbi Avi Shafran

The Torah Challenge,
Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks

Purim Perspectives,
Rabbi Yaakov Feitman

WE INVITE YOU TO PARTICIPATE

Ashes to Renewal: The Story of a Nation's Immortality is intended to be a representation of the entire Torah community's struggle and victory over the ultimate evil that sought to destroy us. Every Torah Jew is invited and encouraged to take part in this monumental project through participation in the commemorative book.

Ashes to Renewal: The Story of a Nation's Immortality will be preserved for posterity in the National Orthodox Jewish Archives.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEDICATIONS

THE FAMILY ALBUM. Your family's story will be told through words and photographs that you provide on a per page design. Each page will include photographs, documents and/or short story.*

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MEGILLAS ZIKORON/SCROLL OF REMEMBRANCE. Everyone is invited to become a *Shomer Zikoron* and submit the names of relatives or friends who perished during the *Churban*. Participants who contribute \$118 to this section will receive a complimentary copy of *Ashes to Renewal: The Story of a Nation's Immortality*.

DEDICATIONS. Individual pages in the book can be dedicated in honor or in memory of persons, places or occasions.

Your name and dedications will appear in the *Churban U'Binyan* section. We cannot guarantee placement on specific pages or in specific sections.

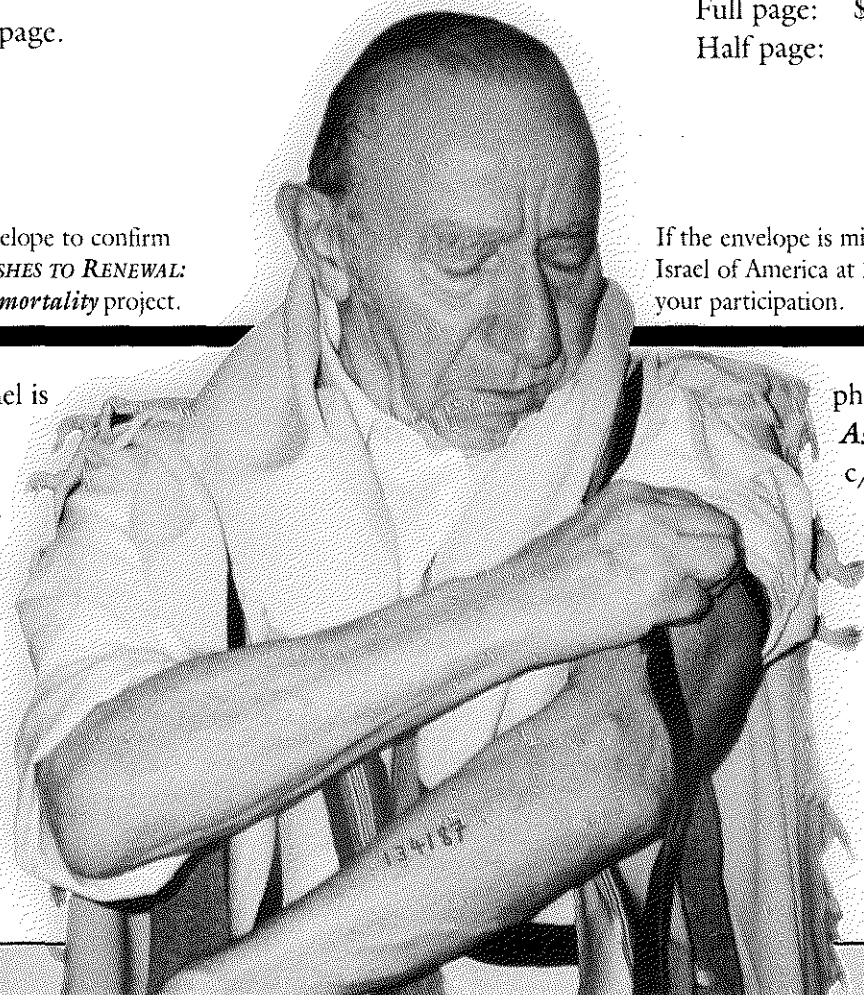
Full page: \$1,000

Half page: \$ 500

Please use the enclosed envelope to confirm your participation in the *ASHES TO RENEWAL: The Story of a Nation's Immortality* project.

If the envelope is missing, please call Agudath Israel of America at 212-797-9000 to confirm your participation.

Artifacts. Agudath Israel is seeking photographs, documents, artifacts and personal reflections of pre-war Europe and of life in the ghettos and camps — as well as of the early years of the rebuilding of Jewish communal institutions in the United States. Please send all documents,



photos and artifacts to: *Ashes to Renewal*, c/o Agudath Israel, 84 William Street, New York, N.Y., 10038. **They will be returned in the same condition within six months.

*Submissions may be edited for readability or to conform with space limitations.

**To protect your artifacts, we suggest they be sent to Agudath Israel via registered mail or FedEx.

ASHES TO RENEWAL

The Story of a Nation's Immortality

A project of Agudath Israel of America

For centuries, great Jewish communities flourished in Europe; communities that, together with their institutions of Torah and many of their inhabitants, were wiped out during the horrific years of *Churban Europe*.

Despite the destruction and the despair, the slaughter and the sacrifice, great *yeshivos* and *kehillos* were rebuilt in America after the war.

The courage of the survivors who emerged from the ashes to rebuild *Yiddishkeit* and change the face of American Jewry has never been adequately told. Now, fifty years after the end of that terrible tragedy, Agudath Israel is spearheading a major effort to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of V-E Day, to document both the destruction of Europe's great Torah centers and their renewal in the United States and Eretz Yisroel.

ASHES TO RENEWAL: The Story of a Nation's Immortality will tell the story of the *Churban* through the eyes of several families that survived the horror and devastation to build their lives and communities in the United States. It examines how the lives and words of their ancestors and Torah leaders were able to sustain and inspire them to rebuild and strengthen Torah in America.

A Three-Part Effort

ASHES TO RENEWAL: The Story of a Nation's Immortality encompasses three major undertakings, each designed to provide compelling documentation of the lives of Torah Jews before, during and after the *Churban*.

• A major audio-visual presentation will tell the story of *churban Europe* and the subsequent years of rebuilding through the personal struggles, challenges, and re-establishment of families in the United States. It will elicit a picture of the *Yiddishkeit* the survivors experienced during their youths before the war, and show how

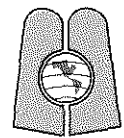
they were sustained by the lessons and images of their parents, grandparents and *rebbeim* during the darkest years of the war. Finally, it will follow these families to America, where they resisted the temptation to assimilate and instead built new *mosdos*

Hatorah and became ardent followers and supporters of the great post-war spiritual leaders. The film will be a resource for educational initiatives on the *Churban*.

• **ASHES TO RENEWAL: The Story of a Nation's Immortality**, the film's companion volume, will retell the story of that dark era in words and pictures through the eyes of Torah Jews. This coffee table-sized, hardcover book is intended to be an important addition to every Jewish home library. The book will include three major sections. The first, *Churban U'binyan*, will chronicle the destruction of the major Jewish centers in Europe and the inspiring rebirth of *Klal Yisroel* on new shores, through the prism of specific families' personal histories. The second, the *Family Album*, will focus on the stories and memorabilia of individual families who survived the horror and rebuilt their lives in America. The third, *Megillas Zikoron/Scroll of Remembrance*, will list the names of thousands of loved ones, friends and relatives, who were murdered during the years of the *Churban* and will be preserved in the National Orthodox Jewish Archives.

• *Siyum Mishnayos*

Individuals throughout the country will learn *mishmayos* in memory of the *kedoshim*, culminating in *Siyumim* during *Chodesh Iyar*. Learning participants will be recorded in the *Yovel Mishmayos Registry*.

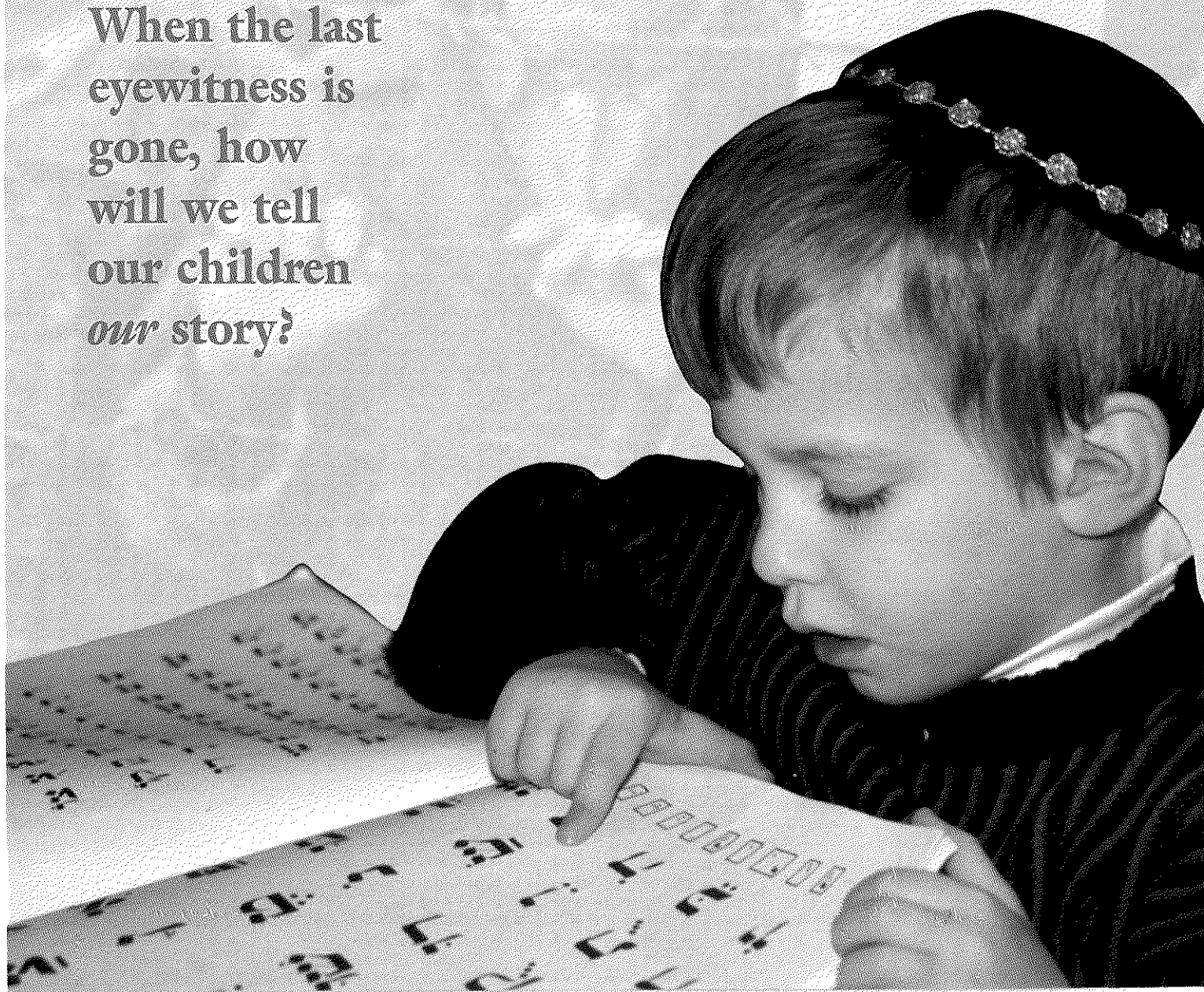


Agudath Israel of America
אגודת ישראל באמריקה

ASHES TO RENEWAL: The Story of a Nation's Immortality will be unveiled at the Agudath Israel of America's 73rd Anniversary Annual dinner on Sunday, May 21, 1995. A national *Siyum Mishmayos* will take place at the dinner. Dinner participants will view the premiere of the film and will receive a personal copy of the commemorative volume.

Fifty years
have passed
since the end
of *Churban*
Europe...

When the last
eyewitness is
gone, how
will we tell
our children
our story?



THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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 VOLUME XXVIII / NO. 2



5
Churban Europe and The Spiritual Survival of the Jews,
Joseph Geliebter, Ph.D.



9
They're Still Saying Those Things:
A Journalism Outrage Update
Rabbi Avi Shafran



17
From Government Oppression To American Freedom
Boruch Shubert

23
The Torah Challenge
Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks

26
Planting the Seeds of Joy: Perspectives on the Simcha of Adar
Rabbi Yaakov Feitman

33
SECOND LOOKS ON THE JEWISH SCENE
Like Yom Kippurim?—or Halloween with a Yarmulke?
Elimelech Metsels

34
It Almost Paid To Wait, *Avrohom Stone*

36
POSTSCRIPT:
An Open Letter to My Friend on the Slide

38
BOOKS IN REVIEW:
Iyou/Rebbetzin Grunfeld/To Vanquish the Dragon/Going Forward/Two Sides of a Coin/Aishel
Yisroel Yehuda Pollack, Miriam Margoshes, Laibish Becker

43
Letters To The Editor

RABBI SHIMON SCHWAB, זכר צדיק לברכה



As we go to press, we record with a profound sense of loss the passing on 13 Adar/February 13 of Rabbi Shimon Schwab, זכר צדיק לברכה, *Mora d'Asra* of K'hal Adath Jeshurun of Washington Heights, New York City, master teacher, prototype *Rav*, and articulate spokesman for uncompromising Orthodoxy.

Born and raised in *Kehilla Kedosha* of Frankfurt-am-Main—"an island in a sea of assimilation...rising above 100 years of Reform dominance," in his own words—he was a shining exponent of the teachings and ideology of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. In many ways, however, Rabbi Schwab was a transitional figure who bridged various customs and traditions within Torah Jewry. At fifteen, after studying under Rabbi Shlomo Breuer זצ"ל, he left Frankfurt to study in the Telshe Yeshiva—an unprecedented move in those days, but subsequently followed by hundreds of others of German upbringing who went to study in Lithuanian *yeshivos*. He then went to the Mir, where he developed a close relationship with the revered *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, and the *Rosh Hayeshiva*, Rabbi "Lazer Yudel" Finkel. During his years in Eastern Europe, he visited various communities and spent time with the Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski ז"ל, and Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman ר"ד, all of whom made indelibly strong impressions on him.

His first *Rabbanus* was in Darmstadt, then in Ichenhausen. In 1935, his rabbinical career in Germany was cut short by the Nazis. He moved with his young family to Baltimore, to become *Rav* of Congregation She'arith Israel, a position he maintained until 1957, when he was called by Rabbi Joseph Breuer to share the *Rabbanus* of K'hal Adath Jeshurun with him. Rabbi Schwab eventually succeeded Rabbi Breuer, as the symbol of integrity and eloquent exposition of the Hirschian ideal. He guided the *Kehilla's* *yeshiva* to a new plateau, and founded a *beis midrash*, *kollel*, and a teachers' seminary. The *Kehilla's* *beis din* stood out as a beacon of probity and its *kashrus* supervision was widely regarded as the last word in thoroughness and consistency. Eight years ago, Rabbi Schwab and the *Kehilla* invited Rabbi Zachariah Gelley, שליט"א, to join him in the *Rabbanus*, and then to serve as his successor.

Over the decades, Rabbi Schwab's cogent writings and forceful public addresses established him as one of the prime thinkers and guides in our times, articulating a clear Torah approach to the confusing issues confronting *Klal Yisroel*. His appearances at the national conventions of

Agudath Israel of America during this past decade were invariably one of the highlights of the annual gatherings. His subject matter would vary from year to year, from calls to integrity in business dealings, to condemnation of the invasive presence of television sets in Jewish homes, to analyses of current issues and trends in the broad context of Jewish history. His speeches at the Daf Yomi Siyum Hashas celebrations were also occasions of great impact. Rabbi Schwab also graced conventions of Torah Umesorah with his wise counsel and astute insights in *chiruch* matters.

He published *seforim* on *halacha* and *mach'shava* including *Selected Writings*, *Selected Speeches*, *Selected Essays*, and his monumental *Maayan Beis Hasho'eiva*.

Rabbi Schwab leaves a void that cannot be filled—on both the individual and the communal level, as well as in the broad Torah world as a whole.

We will אי"ה write a fuller appreciation in a future issue.

תנצב"ה

RABBI SHLOMO ZALMAN AUERBACH, זכר צדיק לברכה

These lines are being written on the evening after 20 Adar I, February 20, upon returning from the *levaya* of Hagaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, זכר צדיק לברכה, one of the most beloved and revered *Gedolei HaTorah* of our time, widely regarded as the *poseik hador*. His halachic responsa deal with the full gamut of Torah law as it inter-

faces with contemporary technological advances and modern-day situations. The vast sense of loss aroused by his passing was underscored by the huge crowd that followed his *aron* (casket) to its final resting place in Har Hamenuchos, a crowd estimated by the police to have numbered over 300,000 people.

Born to a prestigious family of the old *Yishuv* of Yerushalayim 84 years ago, he later became known as a leader of *Klal Yisroel* in many different areas. His father, Rabbi Chaim Yehuda Leib Auerbach, זצ"ל, was founder of the Yeshiva of *Mekubalim*, Shaar Hashamayim. He was a beloved *mechanech* to thousands of students in Yeshivas Kol Torah for close to half a century. During this time, he emerged as one of the leading halachic authorities of our generation.

As a well-known child prodigy, he studied in Yeshivas Eitz Chaim under the tutelage of Rabbi Issur Zalman Meltzer, זצ"ל, who expressed the highest praise for his young student. When in his early twenties,

he wrote a treatise on electricity and its halachic ramifications. The *sefer*, *Me'orei Eish*, received a glowing approbation from Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, זצ"ל. He later wrote a number of other *seforim*, the most widely acclaimed among them, *Maadanei Eretz*, on the laws of *Shmittah*, *terumos* and *maasoros* (tithes). The Steipler Gaon sent him a letter strongly praising that *sefer*.

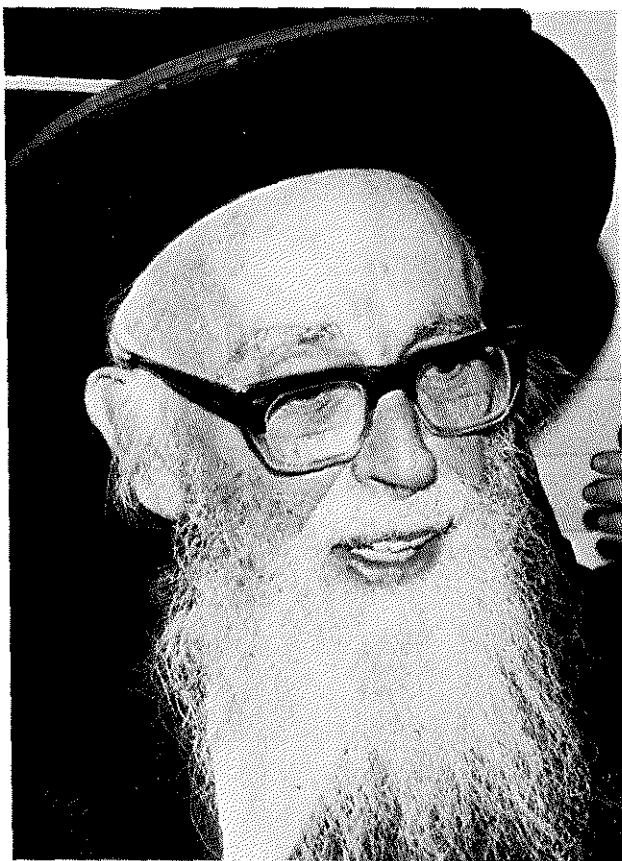
In 1948, after the passing of Rabbi Yechiel Shlesinger, זצ"ל, he was appointed to succeed him as *Rosh Yeshiva* of Kol Torah, a position he actively filled until five years ago. His students fondly recall his warm, engaging personality and the feeling they received that he genuinely cared for each and every one of them and was concerned over all their needs.

Besides being involved in almost all the major organizations of religious Jewry in Israel, including a leadership position in the *Vaad Hayeshivos* and the presidency of *Irgun Taharas Hamishpacha*, he also found time to advise and guide countless individuals, listening to them with seemingly unlimited patience and his inimitable, warm countenance. As one of his sons mentioned at the funeral, he was a personification of the *Chazal*: "Who is honored? He who honors the creatures."

Another son, in a moving *hesped* (eulogy), commented on Reb Shlomo Zalman's singular ability to walk the fine tightrope between *Emes* (truth), which entails no compromise whatsoever—especially in the area of *halacha*, where his expertise was universally acknowledged—and *Shalom* (peace), which involves being able to live in harmony with Jews of all walks of life. Thus an individual, born and bred in a cloistered neighborhood in the old *Yishuv* of Jerusalem—never leaving *Eretz Yisroel* during his entire lifetime—succeeded in having his authoritative opinion on the full spectrum of halachic matters accepted by virtually all factions of Orthodox Jewry, the world over.

A more detailed appreciation will appear in a future issue.

תוצב"ה



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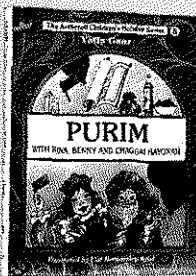
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Churban Europe, and the Spiritual Survival of the Jews

We Must Record the Memories Now



Rabbi Yitzchok Isaac Herzog ז"ל, (center) first chief Rabbi of Israel, visiting the displaced persons camp in Zalsheim-Frankfurt in 1946. Rabbi Leib Geliebter, ז"ל, is second from right.

A LETTER FOR THE GENERATIONS

My father, ז"ל, never showed it to us when he was alive. It was while I was looking through his papers about ten years ago that I found it, a letter he had written to his sister's brother-in-law and hidden in 1943, in a work camp within the Chenstechov Ghetto, and retrieved after the war.

The letter describes in detail the travail and torture that befell his family in particular and the Jewish people as a whole. One paragraph about the loss of his two-year-old nephew Yitzchak'l is especially poignant for me:

"Every moment is a frightening experience. I write with great fear, because we are not allowed to stay in our rooms.... He could have grown up

Dr. Joseph Geliebter, a musmash of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, is a clinical psychologist. He served on the Oral History Committee of the Agudath Israel's Commission on Holocaust Remembrances, and is founder of the Rabbi Leib Geliebter Memorial Foundation.

to be a Gadol in Klal Yisroel. He was wise beyond his years. He spoke like a grown-up, with an extraordinary command of language. He was beautiful like the sun in the sky. He was a gifted child, an *illui*. He already knew the *Aleph Beis*. He had a very pleasant personality, like his mother. Whoever looked at this child could not take his eyes off him and bought him a gift. Such a talented child, lost. I regret all the losses, but especially of this child, who was dear to me as my own. From such a child, we would have gained great benefit. He was one in a thousand. This was the dear child of your brother Hirsch and my sister Rochel.

"I am writing all this with tears, not ink. How could one forget such a great *neshama*? All our dear ones were torn away by the roots, in the bloom of their lives. Our fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers—taken away from us....

"Remember us and say *Kaddish*; see to it that *Mishnayos* are learned.... The dear souls should not be forgotten...."

Though I, as all of us, have read and studied much about the Holocaust, I had never understood in a deeper sense the anguish that my own father had experienced—until

reading of it in a letter in his own hand. Having read and re-read the eulogy of one child by someone close to both him and me, I can begin to recognize the pain of the loss to all of Jewry of one and one half million children.

But there was another document I found among my father's papers that I had not known about. It was a blueprint for a *mikva* near the Displaced Persons Camp in Zalsheim, Frankfurt, where he served as a *Rav* after the war.

I knew that at the Holocaust's end, my father's first instinct—as that of others—was to rebuild Jewish life. I knew that he saw to the production of *tefillin*, *taleisim*, and other *tashmischei kedusha*, and that he had written a history of the *Gedolei Torah* and Agudath Israel of his own city, Plotzk, out of the simple realization that there was almost no one else left to record the stories.

But I had scarcely appreciated what it had meant for him and others of the *She'aris Hapleita* (survivors) to go on with their lives while containing all their pain and rebuild the mag-

nificent structures of Torah life we enjoy today. Holding this blueprint in my hands somehow made it all much more tangible.

The realization drove home to me the importance of interviewing those of the *She'aris Hapleita* and recording their memories on videotape for their own families and for posterity. It was around the same time that I was privileged to be appointed to the Oral History Committee of the Agudath Israel Commission on Holocaust Remembrances, which produced—based on interviews it conducted with a representative group of survivors—the landmark video presentation, "Faith Amid the Flames: The Untold Story of Spiritual Heroism in the Holocaust."

It was an important start, but much, much more is left to be done. And the time is now. As our sage Hillel says: "Ve'im lo achshaw, eimasa?" If not now, when?

It is for this reason that, working closely with Agudath Israel and others, I founded the Rabbi Leib Geliebter Memorial Foundation, in my father's memory.

TIME TO CONFRONT THE LOSS

My father himself, לר, passed away twenty-one years ago, his papers still waiting to be taken out and shown to his children. Until that point, he had not yet been able to fully disclose to them what—I am sure he realized—eventually had to be told. The wounds were yet too raw for him, as they were for so many who survived.

Had these survivors fully con-

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fronted and dwelt upon their losses in those first decades, they likely would have been unable to go on with life. They needed to keep busy, to work hard. They needed to re-establish everything—their families, their *kehillos*, their livelihoods—to restore for themselves a sense of stability and ensure a brighter future for their children.

Today, fifty years after the *Churban*, the wounds are still raw. Particularly from the perspective of *Klal Yisroel's* history, half a century is a relatively short span of time. We are still close to the Holocaust, and I believe that we have barely passed through the early stages of mourning: shock, emotional numbness, and a fear of losing control over one's emotions. But it is time, finally, to confront the loss if we are indeed to transmit the legacy of our parents to future generations.

It goes without saying that we must focus not just on the horror, but on the heroism—that of those who survived and that of those who did not. Children and teenagers need heroes, and may not be able to deal with

the pain. We need to speak of strength, not weakness; of pride, not indignity.

It is in this regard—as has been emphasized for years by Agudath Israel, and most recently, at this year's annual national convention—that we who are Torah observant have a special obligation. While others may emphasize physical resistance that took place during the Holocaust, our task is to highlight the spiritual resistance that was so common, the *Kiddush Hashem* that was manifest every day. (See sidebar on page 10.)

Moreover, we must retrieve a picture of the richness of Jewish life before the war. And we must reflect on the rebuilding of Jewish life in its aftermath. We must make our children feel the pride that after everything our survivors went through—after passing through a modern-day *kūshan ha'eish*—they did not lose their faith; that after all they endured, they sent their own children to *yeshivos* and set the example of Jewish living according to the *mesora* for yet another generation.

THE MISSION OF THE CHILDREN OF SURVIVORS

Children of survivors—deeply aware of the *Churban* but not having been traumatized personally by it—have a special responsibility of passing on this legacy. They need to encourage their parents to talk about what happened. It begins, of course, in the family; from father to son, from mother to daughter, *veshinantam levanecha*—and you shall teach them to your children.

It begins within the family, but it becomes more. It becomes the heritage of all *Klal Yisroel*.

Since we¹ began videotaping last year, more than 70 oral interviews with survivors have already been completed. Each has shared trenchant memories of Jewish religious and spiritual life in pre-war Europe and during the years of the *Churban* itself, as well as reminiscences of the rebuilding in the war's aftermath.

The interviews are professionally

¹ Referring to the Rabbi Leib Geliebter Memorial Foundation.

7/03

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recorded on the highest quality equipment, at the survivor's home or at another convenient location. A copy of the interview tape is provided to the family at no charge; other copies are archived for future study by scholars and students, and are also available to *yeshivos* for use in various educational projects.

At the Pesach seder, we read in the *Haggada*: "In every generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he personally left Egypt." We do not have photographs from Egypt, but the images of that experience have been successfully etched into our collective memory through the retelling of the stories from parent to child through thousands of years. In the case of the Holocaust, the memories are still alive with those who were there and those who participated in the rebuilding in its wake. Now is the time to capture them before they are lost forever. ■

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From the Interviews

▪ The Germans and their collaborators were well aware of the Jewish holidays, Reb Pinchas remembers, and would cruelly time many of their *aktions* accordingly. In 1944, a work-detail was transferred from Auschwitz to a neighboring work camp to begin labor on the first day of *Rosh Hashana*. People took turns reciting parts of the *Rosh Hashana* davening from memory.

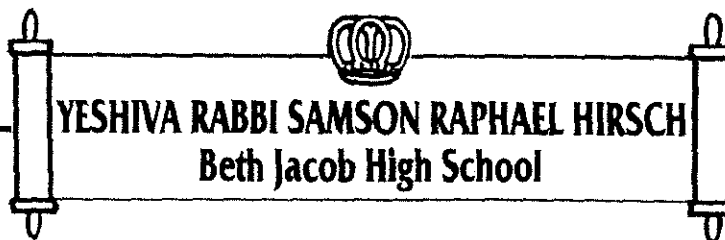
Reb Pinchas had hidden himself for part of the day to avoid the work because he had no strength left. On his way back to rejoin the detail, he passed a kitchen where Jewish women were working. One ran out to give him some cooked food, encouraging him to eat it and restore his soul. She did the same for others who were passing, although had she been caught, she could easily have paid with her life. The survivor had not eaten food of this quality in five years. He hid, spending half an hour savoring the delicacy. It seemed that the woman had wanted to provide fellow Jews with a special food in honor of *Rosh Hashana*, and Reb Pinchas says her self-sacrifice contributed greatly to his survival.

▪ In August of 1944, remembers a survivor from the Lodz Ghetto, indus-

trial equipment from a factory was being packed for shipment to Theresienstadt, where the workers were being transferred. Risking their lives, they hid a small *Sefer Torah* together with the equipment, considering it as essential to their survival as their bodies.

▪ In Russia, after all he survived during the war, Reb Yoseif and his group were drafted into the service of the Red Army, where religious practice was punishable severely, if not by death. For *Rosh Hashana*, he and his companions—who had no other writing materials—took bottles and plastered them with soap. With a stick, he etched the entire *Mussaf* from memory—complete with *Malchiyos*, *Zichronos* and *Shofros*—and from this "*Machzor*" the *shliach tzibbur* was able to lead all in a clandestine *Yamim Noraim* davening.

▪ The young girl, remembers a survivor of Auschwitz, was taken out to be hanged for an act of resistance. The entire camp was required to stand and watch. As she was brought to the gallows, her defiant scream pierced the air: "*Shma Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad!*" And they all listened in proud silence.



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They're Still Saying Those Things.

A Journalism Outrage Update

GREAT STORY, ONE PROBLEM

The scene, colorfully painted with words, fairly leaped off the news page: *Shabbos* at the *Kosel Ma'arovi*, people standing in *tefilla*, a paraplegic in a motorized wheelchair, a group of *Chassidim* approaching him....

"...like a big-league pitcher [one *Chassid*] cocked his arm and flung the rock at the man in the wheelchair. The rock hit him in the middle of his forehead, his neck reeled back and blood oozed down his face. Unable to wipe the blood from his eyes, the man was blinded.... Then the adorable little children, who only seconds ago were throwing candy [at a bar-mitzvah boy] turned into savages and started picking up rocks and hurling them at the man. Two of them grabbed the brightly colored prayer shawl from around the man's neck and cracked it like a whip in his face.

"Some Americans tried to intervene but were themselves stoned. Nearby guards stood by, apparently assuming that the man was getting just punishment for his crime: using electricity on the Sabbath."

This story is Exhibit One in this presentation of "journalism out-

Rabbi Shafran, who serves as the Director of Public Affairs for Agudath Israel of America, is a frequent contributor to these pages, including "In Challenge, Opportunity," (Mar. '94), on responding to media distortions of Orthodox Jewry.

When it comes to the Orthodox... the rules seem more... flexible.

rages." Coloration and telling modifiers play their roll; yes. But the biggest indictment of the misused power of the press is the very need to state that the above incident never happened. It is a total fabrication.

Running a close second, though, is the fact that the "report" was not only accepted by the chairman of the Arizona State University journalism department and deemed an acceptable entry for a course requirement, but that it was recommended by him, along with the director of the university's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, for publication in the university's daily newspaper, *The State Press*.

The story was published on November 15, read by thousands, and only retracted by the paper when a law student forced the issue by demanding corroborating facts and none came forward. It was a product of the fertile imagination of the writer.

The inventive journalism major who wrote the piece is now being threatened with expulsion. Maybe,

though, the school should not be so quick to target her. For while she clearly lacks some essential qualifications for a career in the press, her all-too-eager superiors are at least as much at fault in the recent, telling debacle.

HONEST REPORTING, COLOR ADDED

In truth, though, it is the more subtle lie, not the total fabrication, that does the greater harm to the Orthodox image and community. The modern equivalent of the blood libel is not what should concern us most, but the contemporary twists on the medieval Talmud-attacks. Wildly overambitious journalism academics and venomous demagogues like Leonard Jeffries might seem like suitable objects for justified outrage—indeed, they are—but we really should be more offended by *The New York Times*.

In an article dated one month to the day from the publication of the paraplegic-stoning fantasy, Clyde Haberman reported for the *Times* on the Kneset quarrel over a snide com-

ment Foreign Minister Shimon Peres made about *Dovid HaMelech*, and the resultant motion of no-confidence made by several religious parties.

The *Times* article did not content itself with recording a religious M.K.'s visible disapproval of Mr. Peres's remarks, or even with noting his anger; it describes his reaction as an "apoplectic rage," conjuring the image of a foaming-at-the-mouth madman to depict a feeling Jew who was anguished and deeply offended by the Foreign Minister's remarks. Two simple words, "apoplectic rage," but they say much to many.

Another Knesset member is quoted as "scream[ing] 'Shut up!'" when the Hebrew phrase he most likely used could more reasonably and more accurately be translated "Be quiet." A minor point, perhaps, but augmented further by describing his shout as a "scream."

In general, the *Times* article frames the picture it draws in pointed sarcasm and undisguised mockery. The tone of the piece not only insults

every Jew who accepts our *Mesora's* placing *Dovid HaMelech's* "displeasing of *Hashem*" into a very different context from the simplistic one, it betrays the essential journalistic mandate: objectivity. When it comes to the Orthodox, though, the rules seem more... flexible.

UNTOUCHABLY YOURS, COURTESY THE RABBINATE

Then, just over a week later, the same author in the same respected newspaper struck again, and again with his bias blatantly showing. This article, also datelined Jerusalem, was headlined "Rabbis Decide Some Israelis Cannot Marry," and its lead paragraph set the tone for the rest of the piece:

"The young Israeli woman learned suddenly this year that she could not lawfully marry her fiancé because his name turned up on a list of people whom the rabbinical authorities declared religious untouchables."

"Religious untouchables"? That is Mr. Haberman's way of referring to a

Jew who can marry, but is restricted by Jewish law in regard to whom he or she can marry—a Jew who, incidentally, our tradition teaches, is more deserving of respect if he is a scholar than a *Kohein Gadol* who is not.

The article goes on to refer to a "computerized list, held secretly by the Religious Affairs Ministry," as if the private records of Israelis' personal status were part of some nefarious plot instead of a sensitive (and therefore confidential) effort to preserve the "Status Quo" agreement and prevent problems of *issurei nesuin* (halachically unlawful marriages).

The piece then describes both the shock of people who discovered they were on the "blacklist" (Mr. Haberman's word) and the noble (mine, but his clear sentiment) efforts of a Reform rabbi in Israel who wants to "help these people... end the Orthodox monopoly." Though the article gives an observant rabbi the last word, it is in the form of a short and ineloquent statement. "We want to keep our tradition," goes the rabbi's quote, the last words in the article.

Nowhere in the piece's 800-odd words is there any note of the fact that the state of Israel, at its inception, made a decision, not to mention a wise one, to preserve its Jewish character by leaving issues of personal status and marriage to Jewish law, as agreed upon by the state's founders (David Ben Gurion and Yitzchok Greenbaum) and the leaders of the Agudath Israel World Movement. Nowhere does it point out the obvious fact that secularists, if unwilling to accept Jewish law's primacy in such issues for the sake of the state's unity and identity, can at very worst marry in one of the world's countries that does not aspire to being a Jewish one, and then return to live in Israel.

But that dearth of redeeming detail is, unfortunately, almost expected these days. Observant Jews are the press's new pincushions, a group that can be attacked without fear of charges of racism ("Hey, we're nice to other Jews!") or anti-religious bias ("Aren't there other Judaisms? Well, we like them!").



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**OPINION PIECE—
BRING IN THE BIAS**

The aforementioned examples are from news stories; you can imagine how things sound when opinion pieces, where bias needn't even be disguised, appear. An essay, for instance, penned by the Executive Director of the Association of Reform Zionists of America appeared in several Anglo-Jewish periodicals recently. In it, the Orthodox rabbinate in Israel was called "intolerant, anti-democratic, anti-modern...." In a bid to raise funds to fight

the "Ultra-orthodox religious establishment," the writer accuses it of receiving "illegal" state funding of Orthodox institutions and of "attempts to blackmail" the Israeli government.

In a similar vein, the Editor-in-Chief of *The Jerusalem Report*, an English-language bi-weekly, blames the Israeli Orthodox for everything from joblessness to high housing costs and taxes. He calls Yerushalayim "more and more...a place not to live—unless you burn the Israeli flag on Israel Independence Day...."

He goes on, incredibly, to accuse the Orthodox (who, incidentally, he

says in passing, "despise us"—"us" presumably being non-Orthodox Jews) of being on the verge of "achiev[ing] what Yasser Arafat and the imams of Gaza can only dream of doing—ending Zionist control over the city the Palestinians claim as their capital."

The writer's greatest fear, it seems from his words, is the implication of the fact that 52% of all Jewish children in the Holy City are "Ultra-Orthodox." He describes how observant Jews will, in "partnership with... the Arabs,... wrench control of the city from the Zionist usurpers...[when]



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today's 10-year-olds become tomorrow's voters." A columnist in the New York weekly, *The Forward*, seemingly caught short of fresh material, essentially copied the *Jerusalem Report* fulmination in an opinion piece she graciously entitled "Jerusalem—A Haredi Theme Park," adding a few phrases of her own, like "the Haredi and the rest of us"; and "the enemies of Jerusalem"—a gentle reference to the Israeli Orthodox.

Do we recognize ourselves in those portrayals? Is the political give-and-take of Knesset politics ever called "blackmail" when engaged in by the non-Orthodox? Do the Orthodox really covet an alliance with Yerushalayim's Arabs? (Wasn't that former Mayor Teddy Kollek's distinction, his strategy for maintaining con-

trol of the city council?) Do we really despise other Jews?

It makes no difference, of course. All's fair in the game of Orthodox-bashing.

CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING

A somewhat less inflammatory but similarly disturbing portrait of Orthodox Jews, this time American ones, emerged recently from a Jewish Telegraphic Agency article on "Haredim" in this country.

Eight-months-pregnant "Malkie D." is the lead-in for the story. She is described as a Lakewood resident who "can hardly fit behind the steering wheel" of the car she uses as a car-service driver. "Malkie" gets by on

welfare and food stamps, the result of her husband "Yankel"'s years in *Kollel*. Though he has now found employment, the article tells us, "nothing he learned in his years of study prepared him to earn a living."

While Malkie D. may well exist, her pathetic plight behind the "wheel for hire" is one of a kind among the 1000-plus *Kollel* wives in Lakewood. No matter. For the purpose of the article, she is a convenient point of departure to color the Orthodox world as impoverished and desperate. This is followed by a *de rigueur* quote from sociologist Samuel Heilman—who has long managed to see only clouds amid the Orthodox world's many silver linings—which speaks of the "seeds of failure" that exist in our community, the result of "keeping people in edu-

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cational institutions" for so long. Agudath Israel's own president, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, and its Director of Government Affairs and General Counsel, Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, are quoted as well in the piece — but, intentionally or otherwise, their quotes appear in a context that distort their intended meaning. Rabbi Sherer's declaration of pride in the success of the *Kollel* follows immediately after the writer's a description of the "large economic underclass of families" in the Orthodox world. The distortion of Mr. Zwiebel's comment is clear from his letter of protest and correction, published in several papers that had featured the JTA story. We quote:

"Most *Chareidim* regard it as an unparalleled privilege to see their children grow in Torah learning—and to help their children do so, often at considerable personal sacrifice, through tangible means of financial support. At the same time, they seek to inculcate in their children a sense of responsibility, an appreciation of the reality (and the *mitzva*) that when the time comes for them to support their own families, they must shoulder their obligation to do so.

"It is in that context, parenthetically, that the statement attributed to me in the article ("We don't want our

Observant Jews are the press's new pincushions, a group that can be attacked without fear of charges of racism

children to become a part of [a] permanent 'schnorer' class...") should be understood—not in the context in which it actually appeared, as support

for the article's alarmist contention that the 'financial crisis' in the *chareidi* community has created a 'sense of desperation,' but as an expression of the strong sense of familial responsibility that is so prevalent in *chareidi* circles.

At a time when the broader Jewish community appears at long last to be coming to the realization that Jewish learning is the key to Jewish survival, it would be unfortunate indeed if your readers were to take from your article the message that those committed to a life of learning are wallowing in material misery. It is a misleading message, an insidiously dangerous message that obscures far more than it reveals."

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Nowhere in the article, by the way, is there the slightest mention of "Haredi" companies or professionals, or of the wide network of Orthodox Chessed organizations like Tomchei Shabbos or Project COPE that provide assistance or job counseling to members of our community. Why point out how the Orthodox take care of themselves when one's agenda is the portrayal of quite the opposite?

DISPATCH LETTERS, NOT ROCKS

We may as well face the fact: All that we have for countering the public *hotzo'as sheim ra* (slander) is our own deter-

mination to try to set the record straight, our attempt to be heard above all the ill-will.

Agudath Israel of America responded to each of the two *Times* pieces; our letter on the second one (or, at least, most of it) was published, but it was the only one that appeared on the topic. One letter on the first piece, from a different party, was published as well. A large newspaper like the *Times*, to be fair, receives hundreds of letters a day and can only print a small handful. But if a particular topic elicits only a small number of letters, it is likely deemed of limited interest to readers, and letters addressing it, less likely candi-

Why point out how the Orthodox take care of themselves when one's agenda is the portrayal of quite the opposite?

dates for publication.

We dispatched responses to the other articles mentioned above, as well. There is no replacement, though, for thoughtful grass-roots reaction to the outrages of the press. Numbers count.

And so it behooves all of us who come across inaccuracies or misleading portrayals of Orthodoxy in the press to take the time and make the effort to respond. Local Jewish periodicals, all-too-often prime violators of the ideal of impartial reporting, should certainly be prime candidates for our responses to the same.

But even the folks at places like *The New York Times*, if made to realize that we Orthodox wield not rocks but pens, might be less inclined to portray us as cavalierly as they sometimes are wont to do. ■

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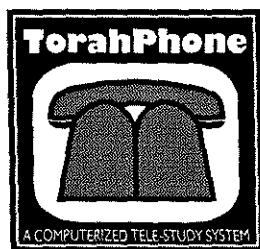
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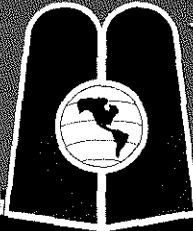
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A First-hand Report on Brooklyn's Recent Wave of Syrian Jews

EMERGING FROM DECADES OF ISOLATION

When the news came out this past October that nearly all of Syria's 4,000 Jews had emigrated from their native country, Jews everywhere breathed a great sigh of relief. For decades, these helpless victims of government persecution and societal anti-Semitism were an important focus of the Jewish community's concern. They had suffered through riots, surprise arrests and lengthy incarcerations on unfounded charges, severe restrictions on basic freedoms such as the right to travel and engage in business, discrimination in employment, and open displays of brutal oppression over religious activities. Years of behind-the-scenes negotiations with President Hafez Assad by American and Israeli leaders engendered official permission for Syria's Jews to leave beginning in April of 1992. Over 3,000 of them came to the United States so they could join their compatriots in Syrian communities such as the well-known enclave in Brooklyn's Flatbush section.

Boruch Shubert, a publicist and journalist by profession, lives in Brooklyn.

Baruch Hashem, our brethren from overseas are now able to enjoy the abundant personal and political freedom offered by a hospitable American society. But, as Torah-observant Jews, we are naturally quite concerned with their religious status. Have the new New Yorkers maintained their lifestyle of adherence to basic Torah tradition in the land of liberty and openness? Has their time-tested faith survived the transition from closely guarded Middle Eastern mores to America's unfettered pursuit of pleasure? Conversely, have years of isolation from the mainstream of Orthodox Jewry rendered them unable to adjust to a community dedicated to Torah study and meticulous *mitzva* observance?

THE STRENGTH OF THEIR COMMITMENT

According to Rabbi Dovid Ozeirey, administrator and *mechanech* at Yeshiva Ateret Torah in Flatbush (which serves the area's Sephardic population), these transplanted Syrian Jews are maintaining their commitment, and then some. "Two years ago, a fourteen-

year-old Syrian boy wearing jeans and a T-shirt, who only spoke Arabic, came to me and told me he wants to learn Torah," the rabbi recalls. "When I asked him if he had ever learned *Gemora* before, he told me that he had met a local Ashkenazi yeshiva student who taught him a page. *This was in spite of the fact that neither one spoke the other's language.* The *rosh yeshiva* tested him and the boy understood the content." Informed by the youngster that his father would not be keen on having him enroll in a school as "strict" as Ateret Torah, the two *rabbonim* met with the father to obtain his permission. Surprisingly, the man consented; in his words, "If somebody wants to do a *mitzva*, are you allowed to stop him?"

Another incident involves a mother who brought her son to be registered in the yeshiva. When asked if she had other children, she replied that an older daughter had been registered in a local co-ed yeshiva. Hoping to persuade the mother that the girl would fare better religiously under Ateret Torah's auspices, Rabbi Ozeirey asked to meet her. As they all sat together, the rabbi remonstrated with the mother - "Do you want your daughter

to end up during the summer in parties with boys on the beach?" And the mother indignantly replied, "I didn't allow my children in Syria to go mixed swimming; they went to the public pool with the Muslims - who don't allow mixed swimming."

The persistent allegiance to Torah behavior among Syrian Jews is even more impressive in view of the difficulties they faced back home in *mitzva* observance. In general, their confined circumstances created a vacuum of accurate Torah knowledge. *Tefillin* were typically *pasul*, having been unchecked for many years because of the absence of *sofrim* and appropriate *stam* (scribal) materials. During the 1980's, Chief Rabbi Avraham Hamra had to send two students to America to learn the specifics of *shechita*. *Yeshivos* and centers of worship existed, but due to Syria's isolation from the rest of *Klal Yisroel*, many Jewish residents had little awareness of routine *halachos*.

Syria's repressive atmosphere had some very practical impact on daily Jewish life. The government did not

permit a Jew to wear an item of clothing in public that indicated the Jewish religion. If someone wore a *yarmulke* or displayed *tzitzis* in the street, he would be severely beaten and taken to jail. In the synagogue, praying in Hebrew was allowed and the Torah could be read aloud—but they could not translate the Torah in school for learning purposes. The Mukhabarat (secret police) could come into the synagogue on Simchas Torah and send everybody home for no reason.

While living a full-fledged religious life in Syria may have been exceedingly problematic, Jews there were nevertheless devoted to the Torah's foundations. Everyone was *shomer Shabbos* to the extent of his or her knowledge; people did not ride in cars, shop, or go to work, and made sure to attend services in the synagogue. Children were trained—in *yeshiva* and at times by parents—to begin each day by reciting the morning prayer service and saying *Tehillim*. As the story about the girl who swam with religious Muslims indicates,

tzenius (modesty) was carefully guarded. All of this was a natural extension of Syria's glorious Torah-observant heritage; the *Rambam* wrote that Aram Sovah (Aleppo) was a city of *sofrim* and *talmidei chachamim*. Today—for the first time in over 2,000 years—there is no *minyán* in Aleppo.

The Jewish community in Syria had kept the flame of authentic Judaism burning throughout the centuries under a succession of sovereignties that included Roman, Byzantine and various Muslim empires. The heavy hand of oppression was felt most painfully beginning in the 1940's when military dictatorships antagonistic to the newly emerging state of Israel began to enact harsh decrees against their Jewish citizens. The chief aim of these governments was to prevent the Jews from emigrating to Israel, which they felt would strengthen Syria's Jewish nemesis. President Assad, who took power in 1970, eventually exhibited a willingness to negotiate the issue of Jewish emigration, leading to the 1992 exodus.

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**MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF
SMOOTH TRANSITION**

By all indications, the emigres were quickly assimilated into Brooklyn's Orthodox community. Seven hundred children were placed in Brooklyn *yeshivos*—not one child went to a public school. Once all the area *yeshivos* had been filled to capacity, however, there were still some 80 youngsters not placed. Word was sent out on a *Shabbos* among the local Syrian populace that whoever lacked a *yeshiva* for their child should come to Ateret Torah the next Sunday morning for open enrollment in an as-yet-unformed school. "It was like a scene out of Ellis Island at the turn of the century, with everybody waving passports and pleading that their children have to go to a *yeshiva*," Rabbi Ozeirey remembers. "We took some available space in a nearby *yeshiva*, borrowed a *menahel* and *rebbe'im* from our *talmidim*, and by Tuesday morning we had a new *yeshiva*."

The enormous responsibility of caring for the Syrian emigres upon their arrival in New York was handled skillfully by the Sephardic Bikur Cholim of Flatbush, under the close guidance of its First Vice-President, Dr. Mayer Ballas. The doctor suspended his practice so that he could oversee the resettlement with proper attention. "We picked them up at the airport, prepared cooked meals for them, put them in hotels...we even set up a big *minyán* at one of the hotels for the High Holidays," Dr. Ballas recalls. "NYANA (the New York Association for New Americans) had a temporary office at the Bikur Cholim to help us process them and deal with all their problems. We exerted all these efforts, including making housing arrangements, because we wanted the immigrants to stay with their contemporaries in Flatbush and keep their traditions."

For the most part, it appears that the Syrian Jews who have settled in Brooklyn since their arrival in 1992 have strengthened their religious commitment and become a thriving part of the surrounding Orthodox culture. On any given *Shabbos*, they can be found praying in Congregation Achiezer, a major Sephardic *bet haknesset* in Flatbush, where the re-

cent emigres constitute a majority of the membership. When necessary, individuals avail themselves of adult education outlets, which range from classes in Arabic that provide instruction in *taharas hamishpacha* to periodicals in the mother tongue that explain the fine points of *kashrus* and shopping for kosher food. The youth have largely remained in *yeshiva*, with many attaining laudable levels of success in *limud haTorah*. Lamentably, there are always exceptions to the rule. Some of the teenagers could not find their place in the *yeshiva* world

and have become more comfortable with Brooklyn's street life. A number of adults found the *nisayon* of *parnassa* too difficult and took jobs requiring them to work on *Shabbos*. Ironically, they needed less education to survive in Syria than on Kings Highway, in Flatbush; there, in a sense, the ghetto protected them.

Securing gainful employment has unfortunately been difficult for many of the newly resettled Syrian Jews. Their occupational backgrounds range from professional (doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, accountants,

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teachers) to blue-collar (tailors, simple laborers). Because of their immigrant status, some of the white-collar people have encountered limitations—doctors, for instance, have to be recertified, so some are working part-time in established medical offices until they receive their license. Some of those with skills useful to their neighbors have managed to earn a living by starting a new business. Two key factors have prevented many from duplicating the financial stability achieved in their native country. A sizable segment, particu-

larly older individuals, have not managed to master English, thus remaining separated from American commerce. And many blue-collar workers, such as coppersmiths, have discovered that their skills are worthless in the United States. Employment levels are high among the younger Syrians, though, since they find it easier to adjust to the local business scene. The community is working at providing assistance. The Sephardic Bikur Cholim, for example, runs English programs for them and NYANA is retraining many individuals.

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IN A NEGATIVE WORLD:
A Torah Outlook

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**AND SOME WENT ON TO ISRAEL:
CONTRASTS AND SIMILARITIES**

Of the 3,600 Syrian Jews who came to New York City, approximately 1,000 later went on to live in Israel. When they were brought to the absorption centers, they were greeted by Yad L'achim workers, whose diligent efforts proved quite fruitful—the Syrians were successfully integrated into religious neighborhoods and their children were placed in *haredi yeshivos*. But those who had escaped from Syria a few decades ago and went to their families in Israel are not observant today. The Jewish Agency unleashed its usual de-Judaizing program on them, and today Yad L'achim can not even gain entry into their homes.

By contrast, Sephardic Jews were in the forefront of those insuring proper absorption of the influx of Syrian Jewry into Brooklyn. An impressive \$21 million was raised by the communities of Mexico, Panama, Brazil and New York City to settle the travelers in suitable living quarters

and to allot substantial stipends to Brooklyn *yeshivos* to cover the costs of the Syrian students that were enrolled.

Rabbi Ozeirey's personal experiences with the Syrian families on a day-to-day basis reveal just how profound their *ternimus* really is. An older couple came to his yeshiva with a rather unusual problem. It seems that the man had come to the United States with two wives (as permitted to Sephardim by *halacha*), and now he was worried about the American law prohibiting bigamy. When the man, who still expressed love for both women, was asked which solution would make him comfortable, all concerned replied that they would abide by whatever the *chacham* would decide. Either woman was willing to give up her husband if the rabbi so decided!

On another occasion, a man who was not yet observant came into Ateret Torah's *beis midrash* and insisted that his children be enrolled there. When informed that certain processing procedures were required

beforehand, the man passionately declared, "I left behind four stores with all their merchandise in Syria and came to America because I want my children to learn Torah." A week later he was sporting a hat and growing a beard.

And then there is the woman who left Syria years ago as a teenager and is today both a religious parent of an Ateret Torah student, as well as a teacher of an adult class in *taharas hamishpacha*.

The Jewish people—*Klal Yisroel*—is a nation that has been exiled to the four corners of the earth. Each locale has its own particular brand of *golus*, its own set of spiritual and physical challenges. In this era of *Ikvesa D'Meshicha*—when we feel closer to *Moshiach's* arrival and experience the beginnings of *Kibbutz Goluyos*—those of us fortunate to dwell in benevolent societies are called upon to welcome *acheinu bnei Yisroel* with all available resources, as so many have done on behalf of the Jews from Syria. ■

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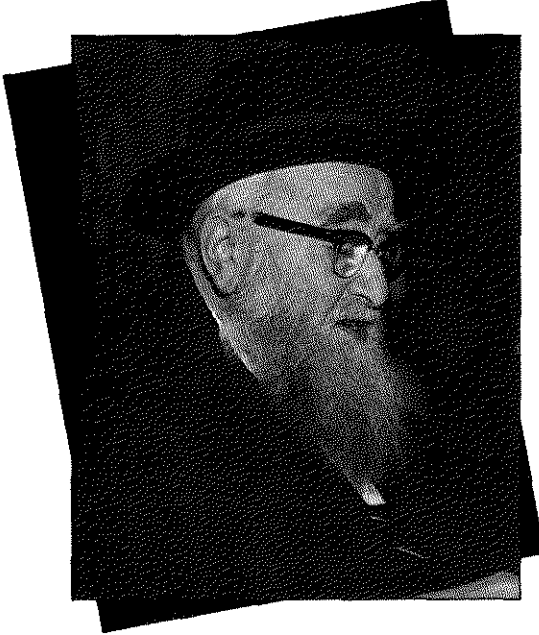
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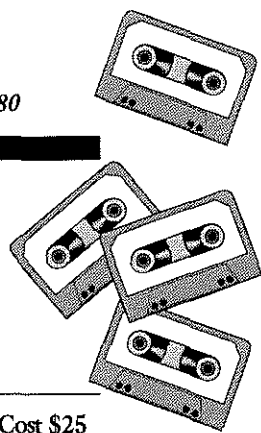
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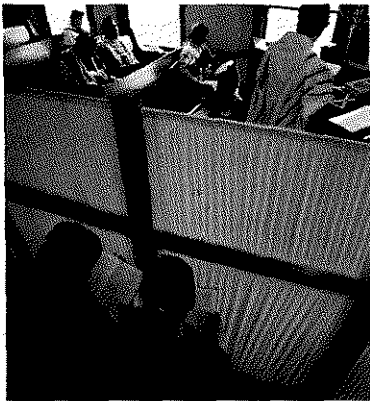
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Chief Rabbi Dr.
Jonathan Sacks



Anglo-Jewry has many weaknesses. But it has one great strength. Until now, the vast majority of its members have been Orthodox, if not always in practice, then in affiliation. They belong to Orthodox synagogues. They subscribe, at least in principle, to the tenets of our faith. Last year almost eighty percent of synagogue marriages took place under Orthodox auspices. This is not everything. But neither is it to be taken lightly.

It means that as a community we have standards, and those standards are Orthodox. The *Akeidas Yitzchok* says that there is a difference between a country whose citizens are at fault, and a country whose laws and standards are at fault. In the first instance,

then *mitzvos* are no longer *mitzvos*. They become instead mere customs or traditions without Divine authority, to be revised or discarded at will.

An individual who has not taken this step remains, as the *Rambam* explains in his *Commentary to the Mishna*, within the community of faith. He may not yet learn Torah but he believes in Torah. He may fulfill only some of the commandments, but he believes in the *mitzvos* and in the *Metzaveh*. A community which has stayed Orthodox is one in which Torah can flourish. That is what has happened in Anglo-Jewry in recent years. More young people are going to yeshivos. There are more

The Torah Challenge

We live in a time of ideological confusion. We are subjected to stirring calls for "Achdus" (unity) as a pretext for ignoring insurmountable barriers that separate those who live by the principles of our faith from the exponents of a Judaism without the basics of emuna.

On the pages that follow, we reprint a statement from Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain's United Synagogue, in which he clarifies his stance on this issue. This statement originally appeared in The London Tribune, the weekly publication of Agudath Israel of Great Britain.

the sins are sins of individuals. In the second, they are sins of the whole community. Once a whole community loses its standards, everyone within it suffers. Thus far Anglo-Jewry and the communities it has influenced—Australia, South Africa, Canada, New Zealand—have all stayed within the boundaries of our faith. They have remained Orthodox. And that is of fundamental importance.

It is important because, in these communities, Orthodoxy is looked up to by the overwhelming majority of Jews, not as a minority option, G-d forbid, but as the authentic, normative voice of Judaism. This is a powerful fence around the Torah.

It is important because, once an individual has taken the fateful step outside of Orthodoxy, the circuit joining him to something so much greater than him is broken, *rachmono litzlon*. An individual who does not believe in Torah *min haShomayim* has cut himself off from living connection with *Shomayim*. He has severed his links with the faith of his ancestors. He has cut himself off from what Rav Saadia Gaon declared made us a nation, our Torah, which alone unites the Jewish people across centuries and continents. And if Torah is no longer Torah,

shiurim than ever before. New *mikvaos* are being built at an unprecedented rate. Standards of observance are rising throughout most of our congregations. These are great achievements, and they are critical to our future as a people.

They are critical not least because of our concern—not only in Anglo-Jewry but throughout the Jewish world—for Jewish continuity. We know through long historic experience that there is only one way to secure Jewish continuity: through Torah and *mitzvos*. A few years ago a remarkable research finding appeared in the United States, where outmarriage had become an epidemic. It showed that of those who outmarried, 92 per cent of women and 99 per cent of men came from homes where religious observance was low to minimal. Fulfillment of the *mitzvos* remains the only effective barrier against outmarriage. Only a community that believes that Torah and *mitzvos* are "our life and the length of our days" will, in the long run, be granted life and length of days.

Rabbi Moshe Sherer of Agudas Yisroel in America is absolutely right when he says that programs of Jewish continuity based on a rejection of Torah are a contradiction in terms.

They are bound to fail, and they deserve to fail. But because the vast majority of Anglo-Jewry identifies with Orthodoxy it is still possible to launch, as I have done, a fund to resource programs for Jewish Continuity which will be based solely on Torah and *mitzvos*, a fund administered, distributed and kept entirely separate from the independent Jewish Community Allocations Board. What will emerge in

the coming years is a strengthening of Jewish commitment through programs of outreach such as those pioneered by SEED and other Torah based groups, through a yeshiva trained university chaplaincy, and other similar initiatives. There is no other way of securing continuity than through true Torah teaching and the power of genuine Jewish experience. Of that, I have no doubt.

Undeniably, though, Anglo-Jewry faces a danger. The Masorti (akin to the American Conservative movement—*editor*) movement is currently engaged in a country-wide campaign to start new branches, particularly in the Provinces. The specific danger is that it is being conducted with what seems to be a genuine attempt to mislead. Unlike its American counterpart, the Masorti movement in Britain has claimed to be "orthodox," "traditional," "halakhic," and the true heir to *minhag Anglia*. It has even claimed that the late Chief Rabbi J.H. Hertz, זצ"ל, one of the most forthright defenders of Orthodoxy Anglo-Jewry has known, was a Conservative Jew.

Chazal said that there are seven kinds of *ganovim*, but the worst of all is *gonev daas habriyos*. The worst kind of dishonesty is intellectual dishonesty. None of these Masorti claims is true, and over the past ten years I have devoted, through my writings and speeches, more effort than any other Orthodox writer known to me to showing in detail how and why they are untrue. The attempt to mislead Anglo-Jewry into thinking that a movement can abandon its faith in *Torah min haShomayim*, adjust Jewish law to the secular fashion of the times, and still be counted within Orthodoxy is disreputable and unforgivable. I have said this consistently and publicly. Masorti know this, which is why I have always been attacked by their spokesmen.

Alone amongst Orthodox rabbis, I published a detailed refutation of the Masorti position in the Jewish press ten years ago. Since then I have continued to publish extensive critiques of the Masorti position, alongside expositions of Orthodoxy, which can be drawn on by all those who are called on to defend our faith.

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Let me say explicitly that there has been no covert "deal" between the Chief Rabbinate and Masorti: none discussed, none proposed, none formulated, none contemplated. The position of the Court of the Chief Rabbi (London Beth Din) on Masorti marriages and conversions has been a matter of public record since the early 1980's and there has been no change, nor will there be. Neither marriages nor conversions performed under non-Orthodox auspices are valid in Jewish law. Any suggestion to the contrary is pure fiction, put forward by Masorti spokesmen, presumably with the intention of misleading Masorti members and potential members that theirs is a credible alternative to Orthodoxy. It is not, as I have made repeatedly clear.

For those who seek clarity, let me make my position absolutely clear. My task is at all times to strengthen *emuna*, to increase the fulfillment of *mitzvos*, to articulate in all contexts and constituencies the values of Torah, to oppose those views which are in contra-

diction with it, and to maintain as far as lies within my power and with *siyata diShmaya*, the position of Orthodoxy as the affiliation of the majority of the community.

The present moment is full of possibilities for the Torah world. In a generation of confusion, people are seeking clear guidance. In an age of cynicism, people are searching for genuine belief. The Jewish world is slowly coming to realize that it can only sustain itself into the future by turning back to what Torah Judaism has always proclaimed. Now is not the time to defeat ourselves by self-inflicted injuries and internal dissension. Instead it is a time to strengthen one another, each according to our particular contribution. May *Hashem* send *bracha* and *hatzlacha* to the work of our hands.

An individual who does not believe in Torah *min haShomayim* has cut himself off from living connection with *Shomayim*. He has severed his links with the faith of his ancestors. He has cut himself off from what Rav Saadia Gaon declared made us a nation, our Torah, which alone unites the Jewish people across centuries and continents. ■

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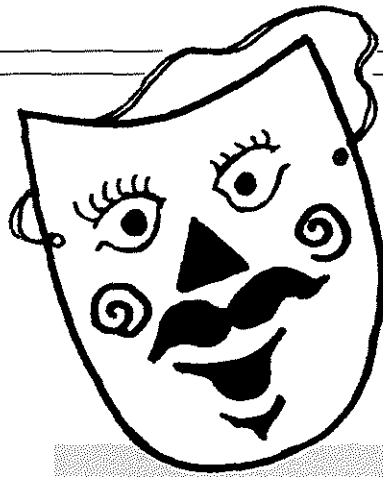
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“Rebbi planted something joyous on Purim” (*Megilla* 5b). *Chazal* teach us with this statement that on Purim we can plant the seeds of joy in our heart so that we will always serve *Hashem* with *simcha* (*Chiddushei HaRim; Sefas Emes, Purim* 5646, 184).



Planting the

Perspectives on th

Motherhood. Apple Pie. Simcha. Some things are just above criticism and beyond reproach.

Or perhaps not. The passion for joy as a way of life is certainly embraced by the Chassidim as a leitmotif and mainstay of their approach to life. They follow the dictum of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov מצוה גדולה להיות בשמחה תמיד—“It is a mitzva to be constantly joyous.”¹

On the other hand, one of the major halachic authorities of Reb Nachman’s own time, Rabbi Yaakov Lorberbaum of Lisa, author of the Nesivos Hamishpat, warns in his Ethical

A CELEBRATION, WITHOUT HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Even the most casual reference to Purim gladdens the heart and brings a smile to every Jewish face. The sheer intensity of the *simcha* of Purim is demonstrated by the fact that it is the only *Yom Tov* that changes the complexion of the entire month in which it is celebrated. Succos may be the Biblical *Z’man Simchoseinu*—the Season of Joy—but Tishrei remains profoundly somber during its entire first half. Adar, on the other hand, is irradiated with the joy of Purim from its very first moments.³

On the surface, this certainly makes a great deal of sense. Purim was an outstanding triumph for the

People of Israel. We were saved from annihilation at the hands of a powerful and ruthless enemy. We had a spiritual as well as physical revival.⁴ The sanctity of the Jewish body as well as its soul was verified for all eternity.⁵ Surely these victories naturally result in a day of joy which overflows to affect an entire month.

But there is another side to this sacred coin, which would seem to moderate our celebration and perhaps even cast a pall over our festivities. In three different areas, we find that the Purim events concluded with a less than fully satisfactory result.

• Why don’t we recite *Hallel* on Purim? One of the answers given in the *Gemora* (*Eirachin* 10b) is that “*Akati avdei Achashveirosh ninhu*”—at the end of the *Megilla*, we still find ourselves in servitude to Achashveirosh. Rava teaches that, unlike Pesach, when we rapturously sing that we are servants of G-d, no longer of Pharaoh, on Purim it appears as if

everything has returned to the way it was. It is true that we have been saved from a horrible death and for that we are surely grateful. It would appear, however, that the level of elation required for *Hallel* is absent on Purim.

• The final verses of the *Megilla* tell us of the fame and glory Mordechai has achieved. He is now second to the king, revered and honored by all. Well, almost all. It seems the group whose opinion might mean the most to Mordechai—his own colleagues—was not as impressed as the general populace. The *Megilla* records that Mordechai was—“popular with the multitude (*larov*) of his brethren.” The *Gemora* (*Megilla* 16b) reads the word *larov* literally, meaning “Mordechai was popular with a majority of his brethren.” Some of the members of the *Sanhedrin* (the High Court), however, forsook Mordechai. *Rasht* explains that they separated themselves from him because he no longer

Rabbi Feitman is the *Rav* of the Young Israel of Beachwood (Cleveland), Ohio. He is a frequent contributor to these pages, most recently with “The Sword and the *Sefer*—The Life and Legacy of Rabbi Mordechai Weinberg, זצ”ל,” April ’93.

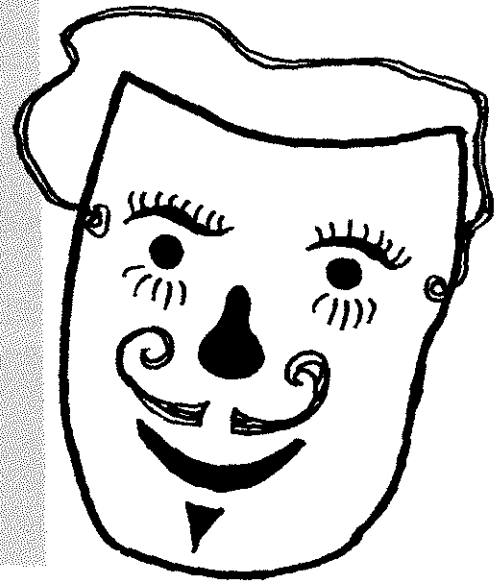
Seeds of Joy

Simcha of Adar



Will, "My beloved children, you must distance yourselves from joy and laughter, for how can a person be happy when every day is full of sin.... And do not listen to those who counsel to be happy all the time, for this is the advice of the Evil Inclination.... Only when doing a specific mitzva or studying Torah should you be joyous in your heart."²

Obviously, there are various approaches to avodas Hashem—how to best serve G-d—and the degree and manner of appropriate simcha is a subject of some dispute. But when it comes to Purim, everyone is in agreement about the place of simcha in commemoration of this day.



was able to devote as much time to Torah study since he had become a powerful political figure.

• Finally, and in many ways most troublesome, the *Megilla* presumably ends on a sad note in terms of the private life of Mordechai and Esther. Although a superficial reading of the *Megilla* (2,7) presents Mordechai as Esther's cousin and adoptive father, our sages (*Megilla* 13a) reveal that they were husband and wife. The Talmud and *Rishonim* go to great lengths to explain the process by which Esther clandestinely returned regularly to Mordechai even as she reigned as queen. According to the overwhelming majority of commentators⁶, when Esther went voluntarily to Achashveirosh to plead for her people, she knew that the consequence would be her permanent estrangement from her husband. Thus we read the words וְכִאֲשֶׁר אֲבֹדֵי אֲבֹדֵי—"and if I perish, I perish"—in the mournful tones of the *Eicha* Lamen-

tations.

One can only conclude from all this that "they lived happily ever after" is not quite the appropriate epilogue to *Megillas Esther*. Our people remain under the heel of the same despot as before. The *Gadol Hador* who risks all for his people loses esteem amongst his beloved Torah scholars. And the heroic couple who lead us through the darkness into salvation have their own union dissolved forever. Are these the results which inspire us to celebrate eternally as never before? Are these the conclusions which lead to such a reservoir of eternal joy that the month of Adar is permanently bathed in the aura of ultimate bliss?

A JOY BEYOND REASON

One might suggest that my *Rebbe*, Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner זצ"ל, gave us a glimpse at the answer in a short in-

sight he once shared at his Purim *Seuda* table:

After the joy of Shemini Atzeres, Succos and Simchas Torah, what more do we want from the joy of Purim? The Rambam teaches (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah, 2.2), "What is the path leading to love and reverence for G-d? When a person contemplates...." One must practice hisbonenus—"contemplation" in every divine service. Ahava (love) has its type of contemplation, yira (reverence) has its form of contemplation and simcha has its own unique kind of contemplation. We have grown spiritually from the simcha of Succos, Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah, and we have learned from them how to properly contemplate that aspect of our avoda known as simcha. On Purim our most ardent wish is that the joy of "Ashreinu ma tov chelkeinu—We are fortunate, how good is our portion" (Shacharis liturgy, Korbanos)—should have its effect upon us even without contemplation.⁷

On Purim, there is a source of spiri-

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rescue work by reciting Chapter 130 of Tehillim* (שיר המעלות ממעמקים) upon hearing a Hatzolah siren or seeing a vehicle responding to a call.

Housewives in their homes, business people and professionals in their offices, drivers in their cars — each should, for a moment, take up the cause of whoever is riding in the

ambulance, urging Hashem to relieve the plight of a sick or injured Jew. Almost instantaneously, the prayers of five, ten or even more voices would join forces with Hatzolah's efforts.

Through these heartfelt words of Tehillim, we can create a vast wellspring of merit to benefit a fellow Jew at a critical moment. Each Jew who adds his voice to the cry "Mimamakim" strengthens our claim upon Hashem's compassion and helps bring healing to those who are suffering. Carried on the wings of pure Ahavas Yisroel, these are tefillos that would surely reach their destination.

*This familiar chapter is relatively easy to commit to memory. At night when the minhog is not to recite Tehillim, say words of בקשה (supplication) to Hashem on behalf of the sick or injured person.

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tual growth which is beyond intellect and beyond contemplation, which bypasses the realm of mind and the normative sphere of cognition. Its epitome is the *ad d'lo yoda* state of besotted incomprehension which is the defining state of the Purim commemoration.⁸ This concept has been explained and illuminated through the ages. But why is the result of this planned irrationality a newfound joy in our lot and portion?

The answer may be found in a remarkable teaching of the Gaon of Vilna. The *Midrash Tanna D'bei Eliyahu* lists among the *midos* of Hashem the attribute of *same'ach bechelko*—being happy with one's lot. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin asked his Rebbe, the Gaon, "How can this be? Surely, this trait, as understood in *Pirkei Avos* (4:1), refers to one who lacks certain things, yet is satisfied nevertheless. How could this possibly apply to the Master of the Universe, the Creator of all that is?"

In a conversation with his son, the Chofetz Chaim related the Gaon's answer to Reb Chaim. The Torah tells us "Ki cheilek Hashem amo—Hashem's portion is His people" (*Devarim* 32,9). Despite our deficiencies, regardless of the lowliness of a particular generation, Hashem is *same'ach bechelko*—happy with His people.⁹ If we extend this concept to Hashem's happiness with all His creations—*Yismach Hashem bema'asav* (*Tehillim* 104,31)—we will gain a fresh understanding of the entire concept of *simcha*. Many *Siddurim*¹⁰ with classic commentaries used to contain a section known as "Perek Shira," which was recited daily by many pious Jews. This Talmudic segment recounts the *pasuk* that represents the *shira*—or song of praise—uttered by many of G-d's creations. Some are obvious and easy to understand. The heavens recite the verse, "The heavens tell the glory of G-d" (*Tehillim* 19, 2), fish sing, "The voice of G-d is upon the water" (*Tehillim* 29,3) etc. But the *sh'ratzim*—the lowly reptiles—recite "Yismach Hashem Bemaasav." They, of all creatures, sing of Hashem's joy in His world. Why?

With the Gaon's interpretation, we can understand the song of the *sh'ratzim*. It is in the lowliness of cre-

ation that G-d expresses His greatest joy, for He accepts each creature for what it is and for what it contributes to His world. He alone is aware of the purpose of every one of His creatures and its place in His Divine scheme, and therefore He is able to rejoice with it even in its unassuming state.

From G-d's joy to our own. All that we are and have flows from Him. The essence of *simcha*, therefore, is not the happiness that comes from achieving perfection but the special satisfaction that comes from being part of the process that leads to that perfection. It is the joy born of acceptance of imperfection as a rung on the ladder to eternity. Thus, the Chassidim teach that *simcha* and humility are inexorably entwined:

Said the *Rebbe*, Reb Bunim, "The best of dejections is clothed in arrogance and the lowest of joys is clad in humility."¹¹ And the *Rebbe* of Alechsander added, "The lowly and downtrodden can be happy constantly because they are always grateful for even the tiniest benefit that comes their way. Not so the egotist who is always indignant because he has not received that which he feels is his due." Thus the Torah teaches: "*Vehayisa ach some'ach*—You shall be but happy" (*Devarim* 16,15.). The secret to happiness is the little "*ach*," which is a *mi'ut*. It teaches to diminish and reduce (*Pesachim* 5a); and that is the route to *simcha* as well.¹²

Seen in this light, *simcha* may be understood as a lifetime process of growth, energized by the dialectic between the constant pleasure of fulfillment and the ongoing search for new accomplishment. It is not surprising that Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch sees a profound connection between שמחה, which means joy, and צמחה, which means growth or "expansion...of progress in emotional development."¹³ *Simcha* comes not from the feeling that one has arrived but from the knowledge that one is on the road.

SIMCHA—A RELATIVE AND SUBJECTIVE PROCESS

S*imcha* is also a relative and subjective process. Everyone must learn to find the *simcha*

inherent in a particular moment and situation:

"He took note when they were in distress, when He heard their song (רנה)." Says Reb Yisroel of Ruzhin, "One can deduce someone's circumstances from what causes him to celebrate. If someone is ecstatic to have found two pennies, it is a sign of abject poverty. If someone is grateful even though he has lost all that he owns, it is indicative that his life was in danger and he was saved."¹⁴ The test of true *simcha* is to find the רנה, the song, when they were in distress. It is when tears can be transformed to dance that we know that the magic of *simcha* has been at work:

Reb Yosef Shareshevshsky could not believe his eyes. The dignified old *Gadol*, the *Ohr Same'ach* himself was dancing in a strange foursome. In one hand, he held the hand of a young boy, in the other he tightly clutched that of his father. The two held the hands of their mother and wife, and the strange circle went around and around with a joy rarely seen. When they finally sat down, the venerable *tzaddik* explained to his astonished guest: "Yes-

terday, this couple came to me to arrange a divorce for them. I asked them if they had any children, and they told me about this young man you see before you. As I pondered over what his fate would be, I asked them to bring him today. When he arrived, I put him on my lap and I began to cry, 'My son, my son, what will be with you? You will have neither father nor mother.' As I cried, he, too, began to wail, and soon the parents were weeping as well. After they had cried for a while, they looked at each other and resolved to stay together and give their marriage a new try. That is when we all began to dance out of great joy."¹⁵

What happened to this couple? Did they suddenly resolve all their marital difficulties? Did the *Ohr Same'ach* pull off a miracle? No, achieving *simcha* requires neither. The *Ohr Same'ach* helped the unhappy mates to look at their situation with fresh eyes. They learned to appreciate what they did have, not to focus on what they thought they had to have. And they realized that they had much to celebrate after all. Learning the art of *simcha* means finding a new perspec-

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tive upon what is, not acquiring more of what one thinks ought to be.

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otic page, the reader "sees" a new hitherto undiscovered world before him. The satisfaction of gaining that new perspective has sold thousands of sets of books. *Simcha*, too, is a new way of seeing the larger picture without changing the facts.

The hallway of Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital in Cleveland is adorned with drawings made by children who are extremely ill ל"ו. One of them is a rudimentary portrait of a scraggly, gaunt figure looking out upon a sunny seascape. The title of the painting is "Happiness: Me Standing." It may be that our sages

taught us this sense of perspective when they ordained the morning blessings we recite each day at the outset of *Shacharis*. Each day we remind ourselves of G-d's beneficence in enabling us to stand straight, walk, go about our business and so on. Would we not perhaps forget the joys of our most basic functions, if *halacha* did not mandate for us to recite and thank Hashem daily for them? No matter what else is going on in our lives, our gratitude for these abilities dare not go forgotten.

The joy in those divine gifts can get us through difficult days, if our outlook is clear and healthy.

Reb Nochum of Horodno had already been extremely ill during Rosh Hashana and many thought he would not live until Yom Kippur. Miraculously, Succos came and Reb Nochum ate in the Succa, although he was so weak he could barely move. Incredibly, on *Simchas Torah*, the great *tzaddik* tapped some hidden reservoir of strength and danced with abandon as if he were a healthy young man. When someone asked him how he could find such joy when he knew the truth of his medical condition, Reb Nochum taught a great lesson in Torah vision.

"Let me ask you a question, if I may," he began. "Suppose that I had died during the Ten Days of Repentance, when everyone thought I was going to, how would you have felt?"

The young man replied with some embarrassment, "Why we would have been very sad, of course, *Rebbe*."

"Fine," continued Reb Nochum. "Then how would you have felt if I would have come to life again on *Chol Hamo'ed*?"

"*Rebbe*, we would have been overjoyed to see you alive, of course," the *talmid* answered without hesitation.

"Well, then," concluded the Chofetz Chaim's *Rebbe*, "why is it so bad that I didn't die then after all?"¹⁶

The gift of life itself is so overwhelming that we often forget this most fundamental of facts. It takes an act of creative imagination to see each day as a rejuvenation so that we will celebrate it with the joy it deserves. Purim is the *Yom Tov* that commemorates the miracles of that which is hidden. It is the *Megaleh Hester* (revelation of the hidden) of *Megillas Esther*. Mordechai and Esther, in their private and their public lives, teach us a poignant lesson in proper vision. If your perspec-

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vision. If your perspective is eternity, temporal setbacks and disappointments pale in insignificance compared with the global picture. Neither popularity nor even personal tragedy are consequential when the fate of *Klal Yisroelis* is at stake. Even an entire generation's indenture to an Achashveirosh does not disrupt the incredible joy of a new acceptance of the Torah, of spiritual renewal and the discovery of collective mutual love.

As Rabbi Hutner ל"צ taught, ¹⁷ it is not that Purim is unworthy of *Hallel*, but that it has its own *Hallel*. The *Hallel* of Purim is hidden in the *Megilla*. It is the *Hallel* that teaches us to find joy in all that we are and all that we do. It is the *Hallel* of celebrating each step on the road to redemption and the privilege of being a part of the process. And it is the *Hallel* of self-sacrifice for a cause and future far greater than oneself or even one's generation.

INFUSING EACH STEP WITH JOY

This phenomenon may be rooted in the earliest stages of creation itself. The first sin on the face of the earth was that of the earth itself. *Hashem* commanded that the earth bring forth *eitz pri oseh pri*—a fruit-tree that bears fruit. But the earth instead produced *eitz oseh pri*—a tree that bears fruit, but not a fruit tree that bears fruit. *Rashi* (1,11) explains that *Hashem* had wanted a tree whose own branches would have a taste identical with that of its fruit, but the earth did not heed G-d's command.

The *Maharal*, in his commentary on *Rashi, Gur Aryeh*, explains this strange transgression in the following way.

The concept of "fruit" is identical with the concept of an end, or a goal. The tree corresponds to the means or process. *Hashem's* plan (*keveyachol*) for the world was that there be no differentiation between means and end. All means and process should be as holy, as "tasty," as the end itself. In an ideal world, the means do not justify the end; they are one and the same. For reasons beyond the scope of this discussion¹⁸, the earth did not produce this unity of means and end, of fruit and tree. But wherever possible, wherever feasible, our mandate in this world is to rectify the sin of the

earth for separating the fruit from the tree by sanctifying process and consecrating means.

Chazal (*Chulin* 139b) tell us that the place in *Chumash* where Haman is hinted at is in the words: "*Hamin ha'eitz asher tzivisicha...achalta*—

Have you eaten of the tree...?" Haman, the embodiment of evil, tempts Mordechai and Esther with the same enticement as his primordial ancestor:¹⁹ "Bow down to me. It's not really idolatry."²⁰ Mordechai and



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bowing to him as a means of luring them into actual idolatry, just as Achashveirosh had sought to use his banquet to lure the Jews into hedonism and sin. The food would be kosher; on the surface all would be well. But the seeds would be sown for subsequent spiritual decay and ruin.

Mordechai and Esther's antidote to this alluring plot was to strengthen the spiritual process. They gave up their ability to live together, and sacrificed Mordechai's stature as the unchallenged Torah leader, to engage in the incomplete process of *Ge'ula*.

They sanctified the *eitz* to atone for the sin of the *eitz*. Mordechai and Esther made the ultimate sacrifice knowing fully well that the result would be incomplete. This was not to be the final redemption, and the road ahead was still a long and arduous one. But Mordechai and Esther taught us the importance of seizing each stage along the way and infusing it with the satisfaction usually reserved for fulfillment and conclusion.

This is the source of the great joy that defines the *month* of Adar. Nothing happened in the early part of Adar

except the process leading to the Purim miracle. But this is the *Yom Tov* of process and that takes more than a day. Perhaps for this reason, too, Purim will exist forever. Even if other *Yomim Tovim* disappear, Purim is eternal.²¹ For Purim's very essence is that it is but a beginning, a step in the process, and so its eternity is guaranteed.

To be joyous on Purim one need not be perfect, one need not have arrived. One need only find the great joy inherent in every step, in every breath, in every heartbeat. For that, it may be best to go beyond intellect and comprehension and to feel instinctively the joy of contributing, in whatever small way, to *Hashem's simcha* in "His lot, the people of Israel."²² ■

ENDNOTES

- ¹ *Likutei Maharar, Tiryana*, No. 24, page 51.
- ² The entire *tzavaa* is printed at the end of Rabbi A.Y. Bromberg's biography of the *Nesivos* in his series *M'gedolei HaTorah V'chassidus*, and in Rabbi Moshe Shlomo Kasher's *Perakim B'Torah HaChassidus*, unpaginated introduction.
- ³ *Taanis* 29a and see *B'nai Yissas'char, Adar, Maamar* 1,8-9.
- ⁴ See *Shabbos* 88a, *Megilla* 7a and, for instance, *Ohr Gedalyahu*, pages 86-103.
- ⁵ See *Alei Shur*, volume 2, page 466.
- ⁶ The *Nodah B'yehudah* (*Mahadura Tiryana, Yoreh De'ah*, No. 161), the *Sh'vus Yaakov* (Volume 2, No. 117) and most other *poskim* conclude that Mordechai and Esther, in fact, remained forbidden to each other. To my knowledge, only Rabbi Yaakov of Tsozmir, in his *Responsa Bais Yaakov* (published 1693), No. 39, contends that Mordechai and Esther were permitted to live together once again after the Purim miracle.
- ⁷ *Pachad Yitzchak, Purim, Kurtras Reshimos*, No. 13.
- ⁸ See *Megilla*.
- ⁹ *Dugma Misichas Avi*, No. 29.
- ¹⁰ For instance, Rabbi Yaakov Emden's *Siddur* and the *Siddur Shaloh*.
- ¹¹ *Yecheven Pe'er, Parshas Kedoshim*, page 117.
- ¹² *Yismach Yisroel, Simchas Torah*, page 178.
- ¹³ Commentary to *Tehillim* 9,3.
- ¹⁴ *Ner Yisroel, Tehillim* 106,44.
- ¹⁵ Rabbi Yisroel Spiegel, *She'al Avicha V'yagedcha* (The stories of Rabbi Shalom Shwadron), volume 2, page 127.
- ¹⁶ *She'al Avicha V'yagedcha*, volume X, page X.
- ¹⁷ *Pachad Yitzchak, Purim, Inyan X*.
- ¹⁸ See this *Maharal* at length who discusses how such a "sin" could happen.
- ¹⁹ *Maharal, Chiddushet Aggados to Chulin* 139b. See also Rabbi Meir Bergman, *Shaarei Orah*, volume 1, page 137 who shows that Haman is the antithesis of the one who is happy with his lot.
- ²⁰ See, *Tosfos, Avoda Zara* 3a "Shelo."
- ²¹ *Rambam, Hilchos Purim* 3:18.
- ²² The author wishes to thank Reb Yitzchak Meir Stark, with whom many of these concepts were worked out during various study sessions.

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LIKE YOM KIPPURIM?— or Halloween with a Yarmulke?

Spring is coming. Although the mercury may not reflect it, there's no doubting its ubiquitous harbingers. King Achashveirosh glowers at us from store windows, alongside pint-size Queen Esthers, benevolent Mordechais, and (gasp) Batman and Robin. (How did they get in here?) Of course, in spite of sanctions, Saddam Hussein has once again found his way into our toy stores.

In every grocery, candy store, and health food store, are *shalach manos* baskets, veritable cornucopias of candy, chocolate, and everything else the dentist warns against. Yep, spring is definitely on the way. The entire frantic scene leaves me with just one question. Is Purim on the way?

Is this what Chazal meant by *mishloach manos ish l're'eihu*, and *yemei mishteh v'simcha*, or have we lost sight of the real intent of the *mitzvos hayom*? Is all this frenzied gift-giving just another symptom of "keeping up with the Berkowitzes"?

I would like to relate a story which occurred when I was a young boy. My family had a custom of gathering at our grandmother's home for the *Purim Seuda*. The men staggered around the dining room, the women sat in the living room, and the kids were everywhere. Discarded costumes were strewn all over the house. One of the highlights for us kids was a table in a sideroom where all the *mishloach*

Elimelech Meisels of Brooklyn is studying in a Yeshiva in Jerusalem. This is his first appearance in these pages.

I saw the delighted smiles on the children's faces and the pride with which they presented their wares, and I knew something marvelous had taken place. I just wasn't sure what it was.

manos goodies were arrayed. It was truly a child's fantasy land.

In the middle of all this, the doorbell rang. Thinking it was some more loot, I ran to answer the bell, and there stood two shabbily dressed children—a young boy holding a pot of soup, and his sister clutching a foil tin of *kreplach*. I recognized them as two of the Milstein children, a large family that had recently arrived from Israel. My grandmother had befriended them, and in many ways, financial and moral, helped them adjust to their new country.

I knew this, but I couldn't figure out where the *kreplach* came in, so I just stood in the doorway, looking at them dubiously. As soon as my grandmother saw them, however, she ran over, thanking them profusely, and invited them in for some nosh.

I was still puzzled. Where was the *shalach manos*? And what was Bubby going so crazy over? We didn't need soup, we needed fruit leather. But then I saw the delighted smiles on the children's faces and the pride with which they presented their wares, and I knew something marvelous had taken place. I just wasn't sure what it was.

Every Purim, while running around delivering our nicely packaged, store-bought *shalach manos* "clones," I think of how two poor children were made to believe they were delivering the nicest *shalach manos* in the world. It brings home to me a very salient point.

The purpose of sending gifts to one another on Purim is not to see who could create the most innovative wrapping, or the most original *shtick*. It is to create a spirit of unity among the Jewish people, as there was in the times of Mordechai and Esther. This can be accomplished with a pot of *kreplach* as easily as with a bottle of Chivas Regal, for what matters is the feeling with which it is given, and equally, with which it is received.

So, while nobody likes to look like a tightwad, or, *chas v'shalom*, unoriginal, it is worthwhile to keep in mind the *p'sak haRambam*, that, "one should limit his *mishloach manos* expenditures in order to give more *matanos l'evyonim*." There is, however, a *derech hamemutza*, a middle road. Nobody says you have to give chicken soup with *kreplach*.

Vegetable soup will do just as well. ■



It Almost Paid To Wait

I stood in front of the cash register, clutching two *cholov yisroel* double chocolate imitation Snicker's bars, and patiently waited to pay for my purchase. Three little girls peered around the end of the counter watching the store owner at work. Each girl held eight white cotton candies in her hands. The owner was busy creating cotton candy number 25. The father of one of the girls stood behind them, slightly embarrassed.

"They must really like cotton candy," I remarked to him, trying to be pleasant.

He looked at me with resignation. "Actually," he explained, "all this is for their *siyum* on *Parshas Bo*. You see, the white fluffy cotton candy represents the wool of the *korbon Pesach*."

"How symbolic," I replied, hoping my candy had not yet melted. Trying to sound excited, if only for the girls' sake, I added, "But boy, that cotton candy sure looks delicious!"

The owner had just finished making the 28th, and final, sugary treat. She stood up, schlepped herself over to the register to take my money, and entered the conversation.

"Not only does it look delicious, it tastes delicious too," she exclaimed.

A faraway look came across her face as she recalled an event from her childhood, years before.

"Don't you remember when you were a kid," she asked, "and you went to the circus, but you couldn't eat the cotton candy?"

Rabbi Avrohom Y. Stone, a *musmach* of Yeshivas Be'er Yaakov, studies in the *Kollel* of Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, NJ. He writes and lectures on topics of Jewish interest.

As I left the store and proceeded down the street, I popped a piece of Super Duper Gushy Banana Strawberry Watermelon Extra Juicy Gum into my mouth and thought about what the woman had said. She was right, I decided. The children of previous decades had been deprived of their childhood. They had been forced to go to the circus and forego the cotton candy that was so much a part of that experience. And that wasn't all.

Remembering back to the 60's and 70's, I considered the plight of the *mitzva* observant, Orthodox Jewish child. Imagine entering a grocery store with your parents and looking over the vast array of candy displayed at the checkout counter. Back then, none of it was kosher. If you were a Kashrus observant child, your choices were severely limited. Of course, there was always the stale peanut brittle bar, but that was about all. Why, in some places, you couldn't even find kosher potato chips or pretzels, much less rabbinically certified pizza-flavored falafel snacks. All you could do was stand at the checkout and gaze dreamily at the wonderful treats that were so near and yet so far.

Then came the 80's. Stopping to unwrap the double fudge multi-swirl chocolate coconut peanut butter dietetic cookie I had in my pocket, I pondered the enormous changes that decade had wrought. From almost out of nowhere, new vistas had emerged. Communal and private *hashgachos* expanded with a vengeance, leading to what has been described by some historians as the seminal event of the decade: the advent of the "*heimishe*" *hashgocha*. The market exploded. Sometimes, with just the flick of a sticker, products that had eluded our taste buds for years became available. Every trip to the store was a cause of excitement, for who knew which formerly forbidden artificially flavored fruit treat would now be graced with an acceptable entree into our community. It was a heady time. Suddenly, houses, lands and even entire worlds of candy sprung up in formerly vacant storefronts. For the *frum* child, it was a giant leap forward. He still lagged behind, but he was catching up quickly.





And now, the 90's. What could honestly be termed "The Decade of the Kashrus Observant Child." As I slowly chewed on a rum flavored strip of coated Viennese Crunch I had saved from a recent *milchig* Bar Mitzva with a Continental motif, I was filled with a sense of deep satisfaction. The Jewish child has finally achieved parity. Even some of the candies considered in the past to have no chance of ever becoming kosher now sport the most reputable *hashgachos*. For the *cholov yisroel* observant public, American, European and Israeli firms have duplicated the bars of their dreams. Almost every snack, candy, treat or trail-mix is available for munching *le'mehadrin*. It is a cause for celebration.

No longer will the *mitzva*-observant child have his natural birthright kept from him. No longer will he have

to forgo the pleasures of his youth. No longer will the Orthodox Jewish child be deprived of the full joy of childhood. No longer will the *kashrus* keeping child have to suffer the indignity and lifelong trauma rooted in go-

ing to the circus but not being able to eat the cotton candy.

Now, you can eat the cotton candy!!!

There's just one problem.

Now, you can't go to the circus. ■

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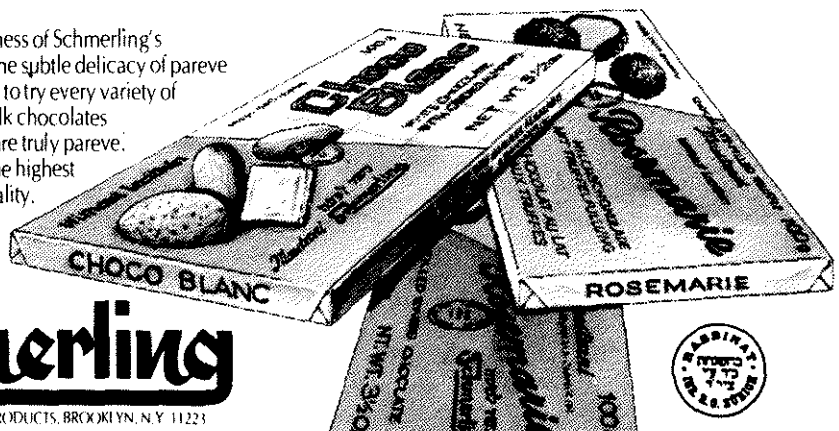
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The February '94 Jewish Observer featured a symposium on "The World Around Us: The Risks of Exposure, The Costs of Insularity," which included discussion of methods for extending the environment of the Yeshiva and Bais Yaakov to the "world around us," to protect the individual from the corrosive influence of the marketplace. The following article offers further ideas on the topic.

An Open Letter to My Friend on the Slide

Dear Friend, עמיר

I know you well, though you may not be able to identify me. You've passed me by quite a few times in *shul* on your way to *Shacharis*, when your eyes were only half-open. I'm usually there before you, finishing my *sefer* before *davening*, but I wasn't always there so early. I knew I could relate to you when I saw you fall asleep during *Kabbolas Shabbos*. I did that, too, for the first six months after leaving the "koslei beis hamidrash" to enter the workforce.

Many of us have gone through the same thing—schedules that have suddenly grown hectic, and adjustments to new responsibilities which throw people off the patterns of life they have so carefully cultivated. Rubbing shoulders with a very mundane world creates many new *nisyonos*. Now that you're working,

maybe the "keeping up with the Jones" syndrome has also set in. It must be very hard for you; I can see evidence of the frustrations you are experiencing. Your entire self-esteem as a *ben Torah* who toils in *Avodas Hashem* may just have evaporated. It may seem impossible, at this point, to establish a respectable *k'vias ittim l'Torah* (schedule for regular Torah-study). It is for this reason that I write to you through this very public forum—because I know that you are by no means alone in this difficulty.

Let me share with you some suggestions that you may find useful:

Firstly, realize that though your learning, in whatever quantity, will not be of the same depth as during your yeshiva years, it is equally, if not more, beloved to *Hashem*, because of the sacrifice entailed in its acquisition—ripping yourself away from

pressing responsibilities, desperately trying to clear your head, at a time when you may be both physically and emotionally exhausted.

I have found that keeping a *Daf Yomi* schedule on a simple *Gemora/Rashi* level sets a good minimum base of *k'vias ittim*, especially for *Mesechtos* that I learned in Yeshiva. Joining in a *shiur* is helpful in another way—being connected to a *maggid shiur* or *rebbe* can provide vital encouragement in difficult times.

Picking one *Mesechta*, even a small one, to review again, again, and again, on a simple *Gemora/Rashi* level has allowed me the comfort necessary to progress and expand to *Tosafos* and more, reviewing again and again. In the sixth *Perek* of the Chofetz Chaim's *Toras Habayis*, you will find encouraging, even eye-opening, words for undertaking such a project.

I hope that this letter will serve as an encouragement to you, and perhaps spawn further discussion within these pages regarding the many difficulties of entering the workforce, along with possible solutions.

Sincerely yours,
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Toras Habayis by the Chofetz Chaim

CHAPTER SIX (EXCERPTS)

Each person should be expert on a *Mesechta* or on a *Seder of Mishnayos* and commit it to memory. This would be beneficial in several ways:

- One would be fulfilling the passage from *S'hma*, "And these words which I commanded you today should be on your heart," in its simplest explanation—that the words of the Torah be engraved on his heart. Rabbi Chanina *S'gan HaKohanim* said: "Whoever carries words of Torah in his heart will be relieved of concerns of sword or famine" (*Avos D'Rav Nosson*). He will also be free of contemporary distractions, because the *yeitzer hara* only gains entry in a heart void of wisdom.

- Once he has learned parts of Torah by heart, it will make it easier for him to fulfill the words from the *Sh'ma*: "And you should speak in them [*dibrei Torah*] when you sit in your house, and when you go on the way." There are times when a person is unable to go to the *beis hamidrash*, and he does not have access to a *sefer*—especially when one is traveling. He will now be equipped to fulfill the words of that command: "*Uv'lechtechta Vaderech*."

- The *Zohar* says: "A man who takes possession of one *Mesechta* possesses a world." The term "possess" refers exclusively to someone who is truly expert in a field of knowledge. This should encourage a person to review what he has learned until he knows it verbatim.

- A person should recognize that even if he has learned but one Torah thought, he has fulfilled a *mitzvas asei* (positive command) and has acquired

for himself a "palace" [in the World to Come]. Should he learn more, his reward will increase accordingly. When he learns something several times, and has committed it to memory, this acquisition protects him, and saves him from *Gehinom* as well as from other evil forces that pursue a soul.

- All that we have written about the necessity for a person to be expert *baal peh* refers to someone in his youth. How much more so do these words apply if he is approaching his old age, when the shadows of evening grow longer.

- *Sefarim Hakedoshim* commend the study of *Mishnayos*. If a person gathers his Torah knowledge incrementally, a bit at a time, he will gain in the long run. Therefore, aside from one's regular *shiur* in a specific *Mesechta* or *Seder Mishnayos*, one should endeavor to master one *daf* or *perek* every week. Once he has learned it well, he should see to it that he does not forget it. When he has spare time

at home or when he finishes a meal, before *Birchas Hamazon*, he should review it once more. Besides reinforcing his knowledge, he will then fulfill the passage: "This is the table which is before *Hashem*." ■

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Books in Review



Iyov, by Rabbi Moshe Eisemann (ArtScroll/Mesorah, Brooklyn, NY, 1994, h.c. \$32.95, p.b. \$29.95)

Iyov is the latest volume in the ArtScroll Tanach Series. Of the sixteen volumes already in print, this is the third written by Rabbi Moshe Eisemann, who has authored the earlier volumes on *Yechezkel* and *Divrei Hayamim*. For accepting these most formidable challenges to enlightening explication, and meeting them resoundingly, he has earned our gratitude and appreciation. A foremost *hashkafa* thinker, Rabbi Eisemann is broadly respected and admired for an ever-growing number of eloquent contributions, incisively probing themes deriving especially from *Tanach*.

This work, comprising a translation and commentary, seeks to illuminate and elucidate the perplexing story and text of the *Book of Iyov*. Drawing on earlier commentators on this *sefer*, the author has elected to focus, in the main, on the interpretations of *Rashi* and the *Ramban*. He

Yisroel Yehuda Pollack's earlier Book Review appeared in JO, March '94. His translations of wartime-related statements of the Klausenberger Rebbe, זצ"ל, were featured in the Nov. '94 issue. A resident of Brooklyn, he is a former *Rebbi* in the New England Hebrew Academy, in Brookline, Mass.

discerns, among the *meforshim* generally, two separate lines of approach to the meaning of *Sefer Iyov*, with *Rashi* and *Ramban* as their chief exponents. It will be remembered that, in gist, *Iyov* is struck with immense disaster in a test of his faith. He is visited by a trio of friends who engage him in conversation, in the hope of alleviating his pain and lightening his burden. Their efforts proving futile and entirely misdirected, until Elihu appears, providing new direction to the encounter. This interchange takes the form of three rounds of speeches, in which the participants take turns in holding forth. The stage is thereby set for the climactic event: *Iyov's* revelatory experience of the Whirlwind.

With this much of the story as background, a key question of interpretation is already brought to the fore. Is any issue being debated in these speeches; are the discussants trying to resolve something in particular? According to Rabbi Eisemann, it is their respective positions on this question that set *Rashi* and the *Ramban* apart. For the *Ramban*, the answer is *yes*, and the subject of their debate is: How do we reconcile our conception of Divine Providence with the fact—constantly making itself felt on us—that "*tzaddik v'ra lo, rasha v'tov lo* (the righteous one suffers, while the evildoer enjoys bliss)"? Through a careful and thorough reading of *Sefer Iyov*, we are afforded a handle on this very vexing problem.

Rashi, however, takes the contrary position. The lesson of *Iyov* is not so much an intellectual one as a practical one. The speeches, in particular, are highly emotionally charged expressions of anguish (on the part of *Iyov*) and reciprocal responses of empathy. One comes away from a study of this Book with enlarged insight into the proper means of offering consolation to the grief-stricken. Much to its credit, the author's exposition remains throughout duly attentive to these divergent readings of the dialogue.

Debate-or-no-debate is just one of several well-articulated dichotomies that run

through Rabbi Eisemann's analysis. One finds in his effort a good deal of constructive synthesis—pulling together seemingly far-flung thematic strands—as well. Perhaps one other example will serve for illustrative purposes. As unraveled by the author, the *Book of Iyov* lends itself to interpretation on two separate levels: One is surface-based or literal—what is found on the face of the text. The other is below-the-surface or subliterate, a meaning for which the reader must search deeper to extract. Remarkably, he contends that *Sefer Iyov* tells different stories, depending on the interpretive level one is operating on. They differ in respect to a key question, namely, the true character of *Iyov* as a moral, G-d-fearing agent. By the literal version, he is looked upon approvingly and as having ultimately been vindicated. But on the sub-surface reading, *Iyov* is shown to have been beset by spiritual weakness.

Beyond developing this line of thought and substantiating it, Rabbi Eisemann's treatment integrates its elements into a spiraling web of in-

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sights and distinctions that cast enormous light on the intricacies of the Scriptural narrative. To gain a glimpse of this, notice how the claim just advanced cries out for further explanation: How can Iyov, at one and the same time, be deemed blameless and blameworthy? This is not the place to recount the details of the exposition, still its outline can be indicated:

Iyov is being blamed for something hidden from him, a fault he was not aware he had. In one stroke, this as-sua-ges multiple concerns. It recon-

ciles the conflicting accounts by imputing to Iyov a flaw that is ambiguous in terms of culpability. Also, it illuminates the use of a concealed interpretation to berate Iyov: to reflect the fact that his "transgression" too is hidden from (his own) view.

But the case does not rest here. For the question lingers: Why is Iyov subjected to such dreadful afflictions, if consciously he had intended no wrongdoing? The explanation of this is elegantly wedded to a larger elucidation of the role of suffering in the Creator's stewardship of the world.

One can easily see that the perspective Rabbi Eisemann has provided runs deep and is rife with far-reaching implications.

One other distinction, which figures prominently in the author's approach, separates the Torah-oriented outlook on the way things happen in the world from the non-Jewish viewpoint. Rabbi Eisemann posits that the surface level (i.e., literal) reading of *Sefer Iyov* relates exclusively to the perspective of the non-Jew.

Curiously, this flies in the face of the fact that *Iyov* numbers among the *kisvei kodesh*—it is a part of *Torah shebichsav*, intended for the *mekablei Torah*. What is there for us to learn from a lesson grounded in alien standards?

But perhaps this underscores the importance of keeping both interpretive readings in full view when learning *Sefer Iyov*. The *Sefer* is not ambiguous; it is not equally readable in either of two ways. Rather, its meaning is singular, although—in its totality and myriad aspects—it is revealed from disparate levels. The perspective of the non-Jew is relevant for us, insofar as it serves as a backdrop to the true view of things, bringing the contrast in sharp relief.

A reading, and re-reading, of Rabbi Eisemann's work will go a long way toward impressing us with this understanding. ■

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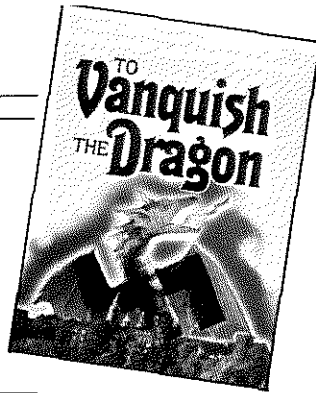
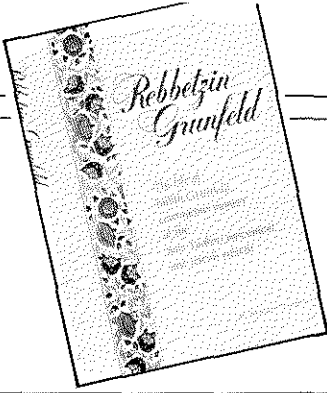
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Books in Review

Rebbetzin Grunfeld, by Miriam Dansky (ArtScroll/Mesorah, Brooklyn, NY, 1994, h.c. \$19.95, p.b. \$16.95)

Each phase of the life of Rebbetzin Judith Grunfeld is so interesting, so full of paradox, so openly directed by *hashgacha pratis*, that her story makes fascinating reading.

As a young *Fraulein Doktor* from Germany, Judith Grunfeld suddenly found herself in Cracow, Poland, just as the Bais Yaakov movement began to blossom. She became an adored teacher in the original Bais Yaakov Seminary and second in command to the saintly Sarah Schenirer ז"ל. Dr. Grunfeld subsequently served as headmistress of the Jewish Secondary School under Dr. Solomon Schonfeld in London for a number of years. To escape the *blitz* (German

Mrs. Margoshes, of Brooklyn, NY, is a frequent contributor to these pages, most recently with "Yonah Gedalia Comes to Kishinev," which she translated for publication (JO, December '93).

bombardment) during World War II, she moved with her school to Shefford, in the countryside, where she was known as "the Queen." To the hundreds of children evacuated there from London, many of them orphaned refugees from a Europe in flames, she served as guardian, mentor, confidant and cheerleader.

Fifty years later, in the 80's, the charismatic Rebbetzin Grunfeld came full circle, mesmerizing assemblies of thousands of Bais Yaakov girls around the world, their mothers, and their teachers, with her personal reminiscences of the movement's pioneering days. At those public appearances, packed auditoriums wept with her for the colleagues and students lost in the War whom she eulogized, and rocked with laughter at her unexpected wit. She turned staid Rebbetzins, great-grandmothers now, back into the giggling school girls they had once been in her classroom long ago. A whole new generation fell in love with that inspired educator, the still queenly and ever cheery Rebbetzin Judith Grunfeld.

Rebbetzin Grunfeld was not only a gifted *mechaneches* (pedagogue), but also (that is, until her recent illness) a wonderful writer and speaker; so her biographer wisely decided to cull Rebbetzin Grunfeld's journals, letters, and speeches and let her tell much of her story in her own words. The old photos reproduced in the book are a treasure in themselves. Mrs. Dansky has fashioned a fine *Lebensbild* (word portrait) of a remarkable lady.

To Vanquish the Dragon, by Pearl Benisch. Foreword by Reb. Judith Grunfeld. (Feldheim, 1991, h.c. \$19.95, p.b. \$16.95)

A Holocaust book isn't meant to be literature, it's a cry from the heart; to subject it to critical analysis is to risk trivializing it. Still, it should be said that even as books of the genre multiply (if not now, when?), *To Vanquish the Dragon* stands out for its impressive literary quality.

The book's *leitmotif* is a myth dating to the Middle Ages: The dragon of Cracow, so the tale goes, would emerge each day from its lair, breathing fire, not to be appeased except by consuming a maiden offered up for its meal. Just so were the young students and recent graduates of the Bais Yaakov Seminary in Cracow, together with their parents, sisters and brothers, and in some cases husbands and tiny children, sacrificed to the insatiable appetite of the Nazi beast whose fires raged until they consumed a continent.

The Bais Yaakov girls whose story this is—the author's close group of friends—were almost all doomed to fiery extinction. But what a transcendent life they managed to live on the road to doom—a life of faith, of morality, of tenacious *kiyum mitzvos*, and of the most ingenious kinds of *chessed*.

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And this is no myth. It is alluded to in other Holocaust memoirs, where the girls are simply called "angels." Here their exalted behavior is celebrated (if that's the word), by an eyewitness, in heartbreaking, awe-inspiring detail, not as peripheral to the experience but as the point.

It takes a strong stomach to get through this book. But there seems to be a shared feeling that that's the only way we have left to pay our homage to those who suffered so grievously and died so anonymously, yet left such a sublime legacy. With courage and with great skill, Mrs. Benisch has raised a *matzleva* for them in our hearts and minds.

Going Forward, by Peska Friedman with Fayge Silverman (ArtScroll/Mesorah, 1994, h.c. \$17.95, p.b. \$14.95)

While Mrs. Friedman (then Pesa Rabinowitz) evaded the worst of the Holocaust—the death camps—she did experience almost every other horror of those dark days: loss and grief, ter-

ror, flight, hunger and degradation. She ended up on that "special" transport (arranged by Kastner) which dead-ended in Bergen-Belsen, where she was befriended by the Satmarer Rebbetzin. She was finally repatriated to Switzerland and later reached *Eretz Yisroel*, a long-cherished goal. There she re-joined her brother, who had been Munkaczer Rebbe, and nursed his motherless children back to health. She returned once more to Europe, this time to marry Mr. Wolf Friedman, an old family friend who was then a rescue worker in the DP camps and later a prominent *askan* of Agudath Israel. The Friedmans emigrated to the US where they made a new home and raised a family.

Like their fellow survivors, the Friedmans were determined to give their children "normal" lives, and so they suppressed their memories and their pain for close to fifty years. Now Mrs. Friedman is finally sharing them, leaving us both appalled and grateful.

Going Forward is a beautifully crafted book, fast-paced and grip-

ping, full of telling details and striking similes. Written with a restraint that hints at volumes left unsaid, it is a poignant account of one survivor's crooked road to hell and back.

Two Sides of a Coin, by Miriam Elias (Targum/Feldheim, 1994, \$9.95)

Mrs. Elias has adopted an old and honored literary device, writing a whole book in letters and diary entries. It's a tricky approach as the points of view keep shifting, but in this well-plotted and well-crafted story, Mrs. Elias pulls it off splendidly. She writes of a crisis in the lives of two schoolgirl friends involving two highly sensitive areas—one girl's struggle to overcome her stuttering, and the other's dilemma in dealing with theft in her school. The crisis is finally resolved with the help of a wise and funny grandmother overseas. With lots of local color and natural sounding dialogue, this is a book that rings true and is altogether very appealing.

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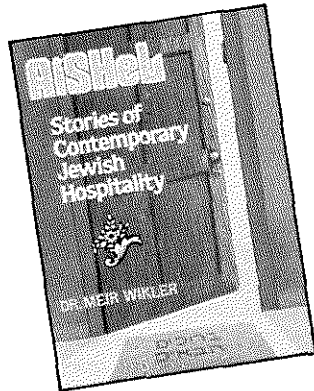
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Books in Review



Aishel, by Dr. Meir Wikler (Feldheim, Spring Valley, NY, 1994, \$15.95)

Mussar, the art of inspiring people to ever greater spiritual achievement and perfection of character, takes many forms, from direct exhortation to inspiration by example.

In his new book, *Aishel*, Dr. Meir Wikler brings inspiration by example to the written word. Reading *Aishel* instills in the reader a powerful urge to emulate the warm, friendly and intelligent *hachnosas orchim* practiced by "everyman" heroes.

Fourteen stories of *hachnosas orchim* and hospitality are recounted. Some involve Dr. Wikler himself, while others are firsthand reports. What they share in common is the intense emotion and spiritual bonding between Jews that *Chessed* brings about. It is essentially the story of the prime *mitzva* of Avraham Avinu, taking us through the trepidation, trauma and ultimate joy of having and being a guest.

Especially striking is "West Side Story," which chronicles Dr. Wikler's own introduction to the powerful world of *hachnosas orchim*, in which we join him on a hair-raising *Erev Shabbos* odyssey through a New England snowstorm to his eventual suc-

Rabbi Becker heads the Torah Projects Division of Agudath Israel of America. This is his first appearance in these pages.

cor by a family whose very lifeblood symbolizes the meaning of *Aishel*.

The relaxed and *shmoozy* style in which the book is written enhances its "you are there" impact. Another achievement is that each story and its lesson is different from the others, sharing only their uplifting quality.

This was definitely a fourteen-hanky book, for each story ended with tears of joy at happy endings and the beautiful feelings that *Klal Yisroel* is "*Goy echad ba'aretz*," united by a firm commitment to Torah, *Avoda*, and *Gemillas Chassadim*. ■

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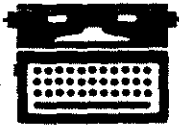
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Letters to the Editor

"WHEN CHILDREN HELP CHILDREN": LETTERS AND A RESPONSE.

The November, '94 issue of The Jewish Observer featured an article by Yaakov Astor, "When Children Help Children," describing a seventh grade class's program extending friendship and encouragement to girls who are stricken with cancer. The article generated a great deal of interest and a large volume of mail—mostly positive, some critical, a sampling of which appears below. While every letter submitted was signed, some correspondents requested that their names be withheld; considering the personal nature of their communications, the reasons for anonymity are obvious.

In the original article, the seventh grade teacher who trailblazed this project was identified as "Mrs. Breindy Winter." Since the appearance of the article, she has been contacted by many teachers and parents who expressed in-

terest in replicating her program; in addition, she is called upon to explain her actions in these pages. It therefore would be in place to refer to her by her actual name, Yenti Frost, of Monsey, NY. The 7th grade class project that she directed last year has now spread to a number of schools, and is called "Hands-On Program."

N.W.

WHEN CHILDREN NEED HELP—WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT, NOTES OF CAUTION

To the Editor:

As an avid reader of *The Jewish Observer*, I was deeply impressed with Yaakov Astor's article, "When Children Help Children." It brought to light the trials and tribulations of children and their families suffering from cancer, which need much attention and exposure in the Orthodox world. As the leader of Chai Lifeline, an international organization that helps children with cancer and other life-threatening illnesses, we annually help over 2,000 children a year through our international network of services. I can truly appreciate this article.

However, I must comment strongly both from the psychological and educational perspectives on the benefit of Mrs. Winter's project. Children with cancer suffer greatly—physically and emotionally. It takes a sophisticated

tailored program to help them cope with all their needs. Not each teacher and every classroom is qualified to deal with such a situation, though seemingly Mrs. Winter had some good results.

Clearly 7th graders are not equipped to deal with a sick child or unfortunately a dying child. True, classmates and friends of children with cancer have to deal with their peers, but why expose children *not* directly affiliated or in contact with a sick child with such a difficult situation?

Are we creating objects of *chessed* by using sick children? Are we taking note of the overall ramifications of such a *chessed* project? Children with cancer are individuals who need help themselves, their siblings and families. Only highly trained volunteers, professionals and *mechanchim* who are well equipped to deal with such a delicate situation should be allowed to interact with them. There is nothing wrong with a simple letter-writing campaign, which give children in a difficult medical situation help and *chizuk* knowing they are not isolated. Well meaning seventh graders stinging into the telephone can be an intrusion.

Mrs. Winter's noble act may have proved to be an interesting educational tool for the students, but I doubt how much truly it benefited the young children by exposing the possibility of death to a normal classroom. I am sure that, with creative thinking, the elements of *chessed* and *tefilla* can be taught in a more subdued and less emotionally charged manner.

Once again, I commend Mrs. Winter on her noble act, but I would like to caution anyone who wishes to pur-

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sue such a risk-prone path to think out the ramifications and alternatives very clearly.

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LESS JUDGMENTAL WHEN HELPING CHILDREN

To the Editor:

While I was moved by the article's depiction of the noble intentions of those involved in trying to mitigate the suffering of cancer stricken children, I found the tone of the article condescending to acquaintances of Ahuva's mother as they struggled to react to their friend's situation. Is it not a tenet of Jewish faith to judge others favorably? Their denial may stem from fear or past personal experiences. Let us educate rather than judge.

A PARENT
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CHILDREN'S ROLE IN THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS

To the Editor:

I read Yaakov Astor's story, *When Children Help Children*, with great interest. I have since become aware that a respected professional cautions strongly against the "grave dangers" of involving 7th graders in a support program for cancer victims.

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with children with developmental disabilities (autistic, severe ADHD, multiple handicapped, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, etc.) has led to different conclusions. Initially, I was cautioned against encouraging youngsters to offer respite care and play activities to other severely impaired children. I was warned of the terrible effects that this could have on the fragile psyches of school-aged children.

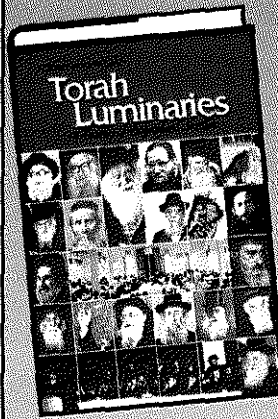
However, our experience has proved just the opposite. Once children become involved as friends and support providers, the relationships

have grown mutually beneficial. The patient recovers his/her feelings of "normal" life, while the care-givers often discover dimensions of their own personalities when faced with real emotions—providing a source of *hakaras hatov* for their own existence.

Even in cases of poor prognosis, the involvement of healthy children can directly assist in *hatzolas nefashos*, saving a life. The victim is in grave physical and emotional danger because the diagnosis of cancer creates the feeling that all hope is lost.

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FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR
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Monsey, NY

**HELPING CHILDREN: VALUABLE
TO BOTH PROVIDERS AND
RECIPIENTS**

To the Editor:

Thank you for the article, "When Children Help Children." There are no words to adequately describe the value of the work Mrs. Winter is doing. (We personally know someone who has been touched by her *chessed*, and this is no exaggeration.)

In some ways, the giver benefits even more than the recipient of the *chessed*. In this very mixed up world, this type of *chessed* helps the girls develop and maintain proper priorities. (Can we really complain about a menu, or think the world is coming to an end because of a supposed deficiency in a wardrobe, when confronted with life's real problems? Do not the *Birchos HaShachar* and the *beracha* of *Asher Yotzar* said throughout the day take on new meaning for the girls as a result of their involvement with their newfound friends? And this is just the tip of the iceberg.)

Yasher Koach to Yaakov Astor and JO for yet another job well done.

MALKI ANTEBY
Brooklyn, NY

**IN PRAISE OF HELPING
CHILDREN**

To the Editor:

I very much appreciated your ar-

ticle concerning the efforts of Mrs. Winter and her students. It is a true *kiddush Hashem* and beautiful display of *Ahavas Yisroel*. Many of us, ת"ב, give *tzeddaka* and do acts of *chessed*, but to actually be *mishtatef* (join in partnership) with a person in his or her unfortunate situation is something which is, in many cases, overlooked and shied away from. Indeed it was because of this *midda* that *Moshe Rabbeinu* was chosen to be the leader of *Klal Yisroel*.

Noteworthy is Mrs. Winter's keen insight and extra sensitivity to recognize the needs of the siblings of the sick children. I have personally seen the feelings of neglect and jealousy apparent in the other children in the family, the younger ones in particular.

In truth, there are many organizations—Jewish and non-Jewish—that help sick children and their families. Each one has its own advantages, and fills particular needs like no other organization can. Furthermore, who's to say?—maybe a child is comforted at times by what one group has to offer and at other times by the services of another. I hope that the need for this new organization, too, will become widely recognized so that the lives of many more sick children, ל"ב, can be reached and touched.

SHLOMO ROSENBERG
Ocean, NJ

**NOTES OF GRATITUDE TO
SENSITIVE, WARM HELPERS OF
CHILDREN IN NEED**

To the Editor:

It was with great pleasure that I read the article "Children Helping Children" by Yaakov Astor. I am one of the lucky people personally acquainted with Mrs. Winter and I am thrilled that her story has finally been

told so admirably. Her genuine *Ahavas Yisroel* and sensitivity to a much forgotten and neglected group of children is truly an inspiration to all who meet this wonderful, dynamic woman.

Unfortunately, serious illness can deeply affect an individual and his family. When children are the ones suffering from chronic disease or, ל"ב, cancer, the problems are greatly magnified. The parents must deal with all the medical ramifications the disease brings with it and also with the psychological and emotional effects it leaves on the child and his siblings. A vast amount of *bitachon* and *emunah* can definitely alleviate the ravages of the illness, but when dealing with a child who does not yet have the inner strength *bitachon* gives us, a huge amount of love and attention is needed, to make the crucial difference in weathering a very stormy course of treatment. Mrs. Winter has this love and sensitivity.

My daughter has always been on the shy side. So when Mrs. Winter entered our lives with her warm, enthusiastic telephone calls, and the flood of communications from her seventh grade class, I suspected that they were wasting their effort. My daughter had little to say to them in response. Thus, when we were invited to join the seventh grade class in their *siyum*, I was confident that we'd sit this one out. Besides, I had little inclination to drive 1½ hours from my home to Monsey. Much to my surprise, my daughter wanted to go.

I took the day off and we drove there, to find a friendly, happy group of girls welcoming us. My guess was that she'd have preferred to watch the proceedings from a safe distance rather than be the center of attraction. But when the next invitation came and I couldn't make it, my daughter chose to go on her own, without me!

Mrs. Winter sparked a genuine interest in her students who will I'm sure grow to be better adults because of it. They, in turn, brought in a glow of warmth and fun to an ailing child who got so much of what she desperately needed. Mrs. Winter opened doors where they were closed and in

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a very consistent manner helped to make a very stressful period a bit easier.

Fortunately, our community is also very lucky to have an outstanding organization working in its chosen format in the same field: Chai Lifeline, which had dedicated itself to helping children in need of *yeshu'os* and encouraging both children and their families. I have personally seen how Camp Simcha, run by Chai Lifeline, has brightened the future for many children who aren't sure there will be one. The love and devotion of their outstanding staff is apparent in all aspects of camp life. They too are to be commended for all they are doing and it is wonderful to see more people realizing the great need to reach out and help these children so that they can face their tomorrows with hope and happiness.

May others learn from both Mrs. Winter and Chai Lifeline and emulate their wonderful *Ahavas Yisroel* and dedication to *bikur cholim*.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

Mrs. Winter Responds:

A number of readers took the effort to respond to Mr. Astor's article by mail, and even more by phone or in person. The majority of the communications were positive, which is extremely encouraging.

Several letters, however, were critical in one way or another, and it is those criticisms that I wish to address. When a person is presented with the opportunity to do a *chessed* project such as this, that person should seek *daas Torah*. In this regard, I have received letters from a number of prominent *Rabbonim* in our community. They not only commended the program, but specifically encouraged the schools to allow me to teach the students sensitivity to the needs of the stricken girls. They also emphasized how important it was to make the ailing girls not feel like outcasts. We are in consultation with *Rabbonim* and continue to modify our program in accordance with their counsel.

In addition, the project received warm approval from the heads of *Bikur Cholim* organizations, *Chessed*

programs, school administrators, as well as dedicated teachers in the tri-state area and beyond.

Several letters mentioned certain precautionary statements made in the name of social workers and the like; I too have been in *constant* contact with health professionals. I regularly discuss the issues and receive guidance from them. They inform me if a situation might be too stressful and guide me in how to handle it.

This leads me to reiterate a point made clearly in the article: *this project is not a program to be undertaken im-*

promptu by just any teacher. It requires guidance, as well as dedication, hard work, and of course siyata diShmaya. Nevertheless, in my opinion, and in the opinion of those whom I have consulted, it is a project well worth undertaking for all involved.

Following the suggestion that such a project should only be undertaken by the classmates of a stricken student would certainly have been nice—and perhaps even ideal—had the girls' classmates become involved. However, they did not (for whatever reasons). As for the

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stricken girls and their families who received our *chessed*, I know that they were truly grateful for the help, no matter from which quarter it came.

A parent should be on the alert and contact me—or the person(s) in charge of directing their child's involvement—in the event they are worried about any particular side-effects on their children.

The article was not meant to sound condescending in any way. We thought it necessary to describe the reaction of Ahuva's mother's friends, to highlight the alienated feeling a parent can have. This was not to be judgmental, but to make people sensitive to how additionally devastated a parent can feel when friends and acquaintances fail to acknowledge their calls for emotional support.

May I conclude by commending all those involved in other programs serving the same or similar needs groups. Each program performs a unique and vital function. I personally am grateful for the opportunity to help these families—the entire family, including the siblings—on a daily basis.

"MRS. WINTER"
A.K.A. YENTI FROST,
DIRECTOR
HANDS-ON PROGRAM
Monsey, NY

EDITORIAL NOTE

We have received a communication from Prof. Lawrence Kaplan, in which he takes issue with the interpretation of his approach to *Daas Torah*, as published in Rabbi Wein's article on the topic, in *The Jewish Observer*, Oct. '94. Professor Kaplan's perspective on the topic, in his own words, are part of the record, as published in the lead chapter of *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy* (Yeshiva University Press, New York, 1992).

ADDENDUM TO PRAISE OF SANZ MEDICAL CENTER

To the Editor:

In your *Kislev* issue, describing the wonderful accomplishments of the Klausenberger Rebbe, זצ"ל, I found an unfortunate misrepresentation as follows: "The Sanz Medical Center (Laniado Hospital) Nursing School is the only nursing school in Israel in which Torah subjects are an integral part of the curriculum."

It is a known fact that in Jerusalem the Shaare Zedek Hospital Nurses Training School opened in 1936 by the *tzaddik* Dr. Moshe Wallach, ז"ל, and the sainted

Schwester Selma, נ"ע, Torah subjects were an integral part of the curriculum from its inception until this very day.

As the chairman of your Editorial Board, Dr. Ernst L. Bodenheimer, can certainly attest, Shaare Zedek Medical Center, as well as Laniado Hospital, can pride itself of dispensing the best in medical care with the *nth* degree of halachic observance.

A. ASHER HIRSCH
Jerusalem

GREAT ARTICLE, WRONG CITATION

To the Editor:

I greatly enjoyed the article about the *Mashgiach* of Lomza, Rabbi Moshe Rosenstain, זצ"ל, by Rabbi Chaim Shapiro (Jan. '95). It was a very interesting and inspiring. I would, however, like to make two points.

On page 13, it says, "Reb Moshe would underscore the above message with a *pasuk*: '*Chaklili eiynaim miyayin... ul'ven shinayim mechalav*—white teeth [a smiling face] is better than milk.'" First, the source of the *pasuk* is mistakenly cited as *Shir Hashirim*, whereas it is in *Bereishis 48,12*, in *Yaakov Avinu's berachos* to Yehuda.

Second, Reb Moshe was probably referring to the *Gemora* (*Kesubos 111b*): Rabbi Yochanan said, "One who whitens his teeth to his friend is better than one who gives him milk to drink, as it says, '*Ul'ven shinayim mechalav*.' Do not read '*ul'ven*,' read '*u'l'von shinayim* [—whitening of teeth].'"

MORDECHAI WAKSLAK
Long Beach, NY

MODIFICATIONS ON SIGNALS FOR HELP

To the Editor:

Re: "More Than Meets The Eye," by June Prochko, (JO, Jan. '95)

My husband and I, as products of Ohr Somayach and Neve Yerushalayim, related to much of what was written in her article. Three points I'd like made in response are:

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Firstly, not all *baalei teshuva* feel alienated since many of those who went through the "late comers" *yeshiva* system have established lasting family-like relationships with their teachers/*rabbaim* and their fellow students and their families. This is certainly true in our case.

Next, *baalei teshuva* don't always suffer from "loss of family and friends they left behind." Unless—and sadly to say, it happens—that one's family does the cutting off, most *baalei teshuva* continue a fine relationship with their families. If anyone out there knows my family for example, they know that I can truly say that as far as one's family goes regarding taking on new aspects of *Yiddishkeit* or even becoming *frum*, well, you just *never know*.

Lastly, my husband pointed out to me that not all *frum* people who feel a sense of alienation are *baalei teshuva*.

We have had the pleasant experience of having been told that we helped make the *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov* experience of an always *frum* family more enjoyable.

I'll finish by reminding all those who became *frum* after their marriage or got married before their basic learning was finished, there are opportunities to spend a week-end or *Yom Tov* in a *baal teshuva* learning environment. I recommend they call The Jewish Learning Exchange for information at 212-344-2000. Keep an open line to family and friends always being guided by *daas Torah*. There may be social gatherings which strangers may not attend, but for family, may be perfectly *muttar*.

If you are not invited and your *kashrus* is reliable, invite others in. You may be surprised at how you grow when you find how much you have to share.

I sign off with a note of thanks to our wonderful families, teachers, and friends, before, during, and after we discovered the *derech* of Torah and *Mitzvos*. We felt and continue to feel their love and support. Good luck to the author and her family and all those enhancing their Jewishness.

MRS. MIRIAM GREEN
South Bend, Indiana

SOURCE OF CHILDREN'S G'MACH FUND IN RABBI MYSKI ARTICLE

To the Editor:

I thoroughly enjoyed the article about the late Rabbi Myski, ל"צ, in the December issue of *The Jewish Observer*. The author did leave out a small but important detail, in the article, recounting Rabbi Myski's "visionary" concept in regard to involving school children in the *mitzva* of *gemillas chessed* by having them contribute their spending money to *G'mach Keren Hachessed* whenever possible. This idea was not unlike the passbook savings accounts many schools opened for us 20, 30 years ago when I was in *yeshiva ketana*. The objective then was to teach us as young children the value of saving our money.

In 1974 our family moved to Monsey where my father, William Shandelman, ל"צ, met Rabbi Myski at the Lakewood Minyan on Maple Leaf Rd. My father, a financial analyst for HUD (Housing and Urban Development), volunteered his expertise to the *G'mach* and assisted Rabbi Myski in setting up an accounting system that my father envisioned would soon have millions of dollars on deposit. He suggested the concept of school children saving

their "recess" money and pocket change for the *mitzva* of helping the other *Yiddin* in need. Rabbi Myski at the time remained unconvinced that the effort involved, from an accounting perspective, justified the herculean effort of keeping track of the pennies that might be deposited. As my father was not the type of person to take "no" for an answer, and because of all the effort my father had already given to Rabbi Myski's cause, Rabbi Myski had no choice but to go along with this "visionary" concept. In just a couple of years there were more than a million dollars on deposit with the *G'mach*.

While I myself was unaware of the amount of effort my father had given to help Rabbi Myski, the two of them were quite content with knowing that as *oskim betzorchei tzibbur be'emuna*, Hashem would compensate them many times over for their *chessed* in seeing to the various needs of the Monsey community.

Most of the above details were recounted to me and my family by Rabbi Myski when he came to be *menachem avel* our family when my father passed away in February of 1987.

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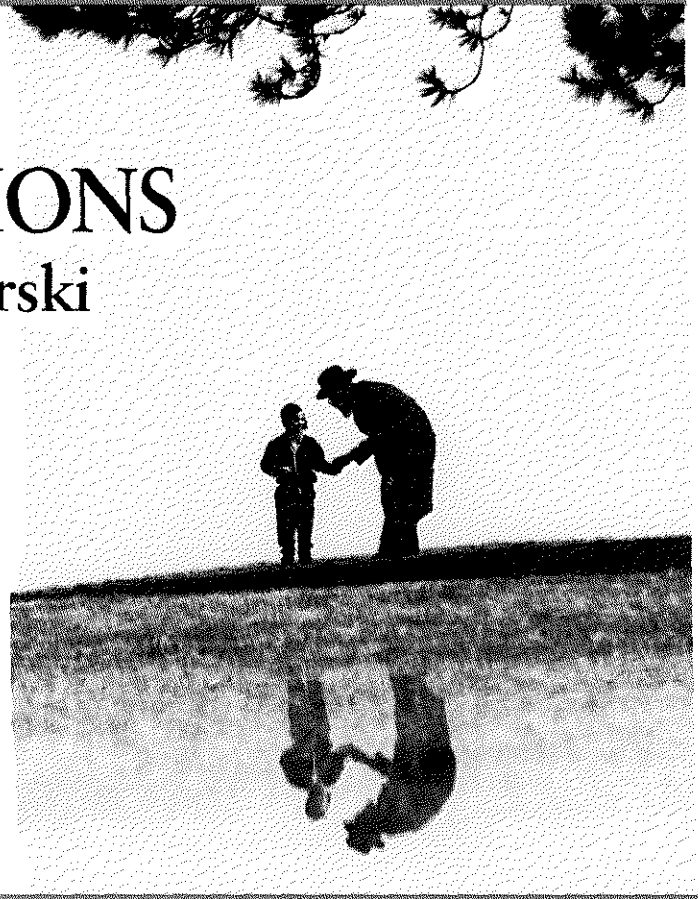
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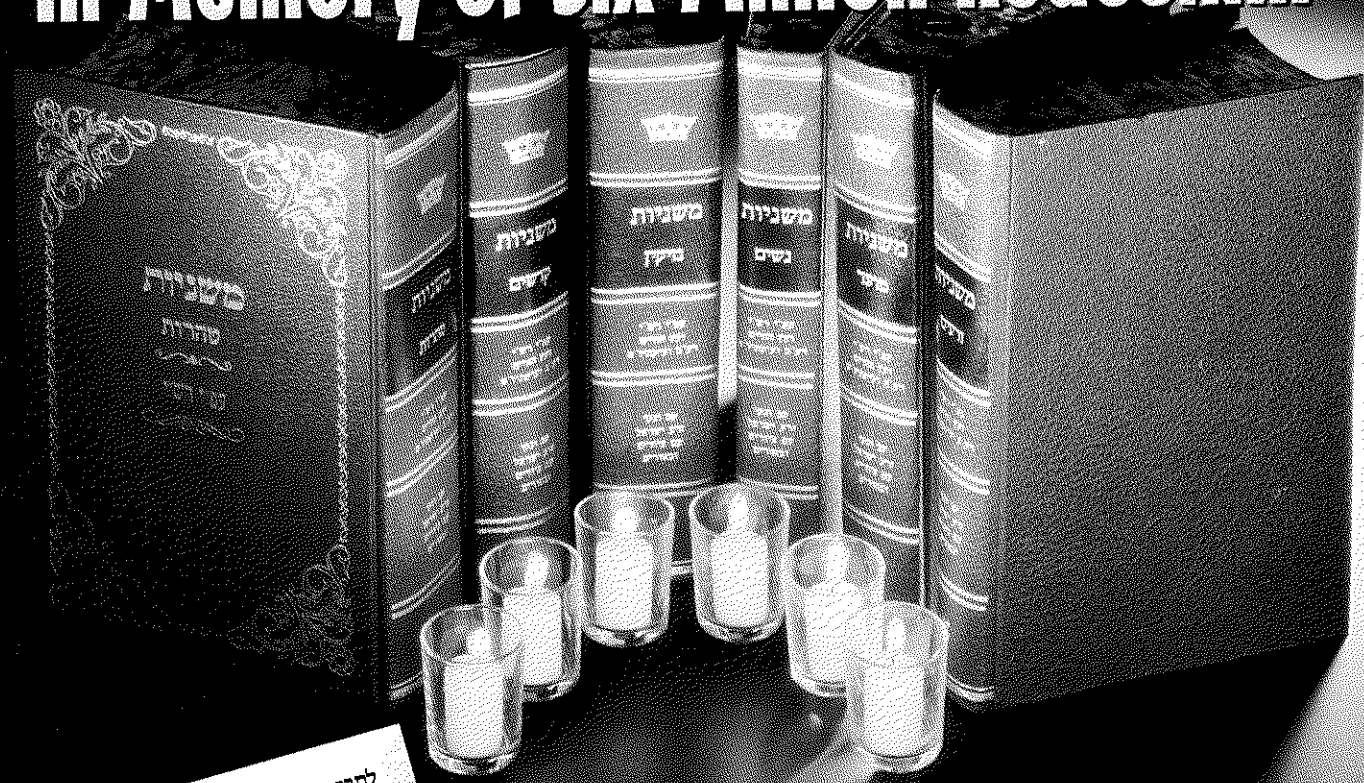
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