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*A Rebbi's
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ANONYMOUS

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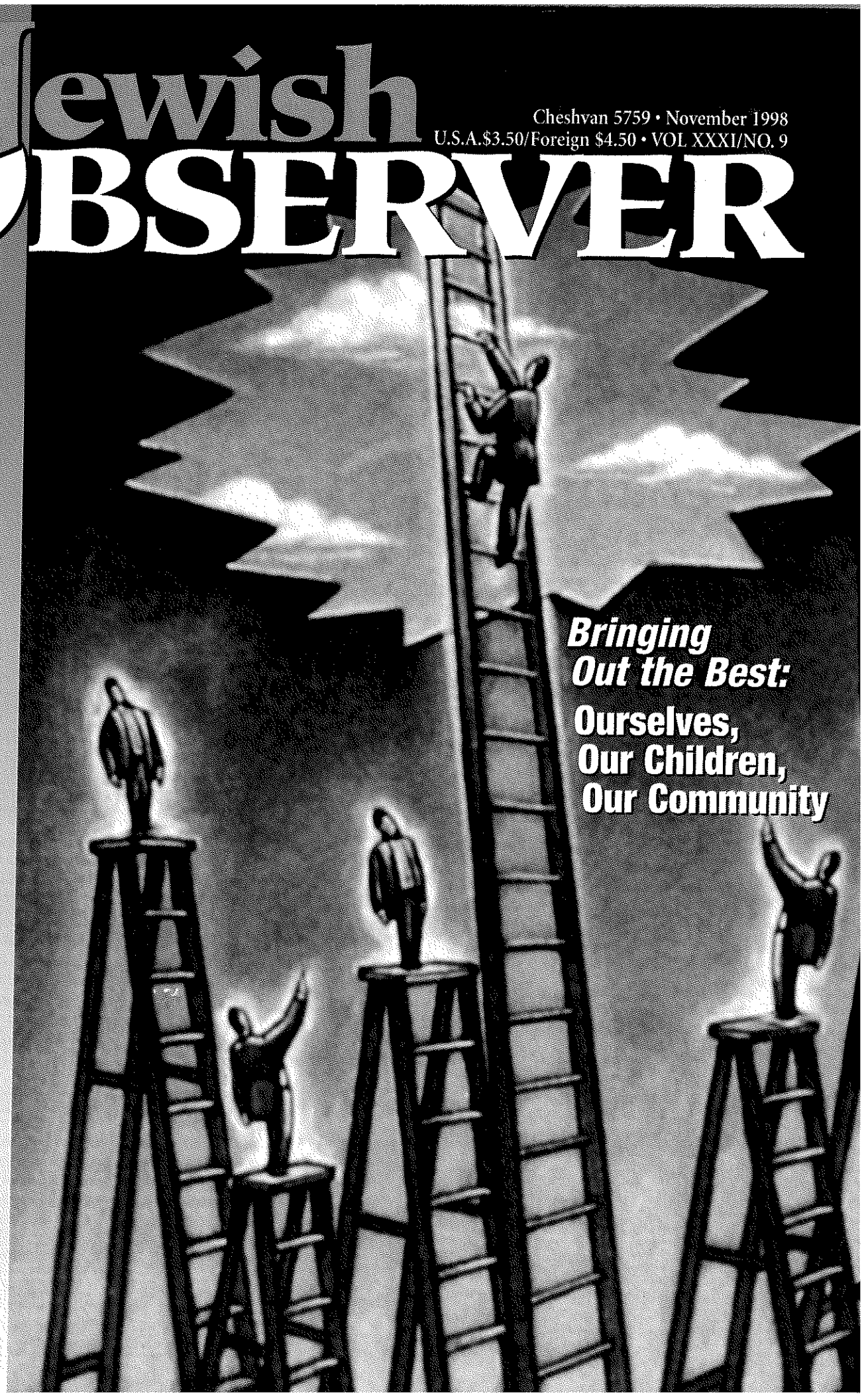
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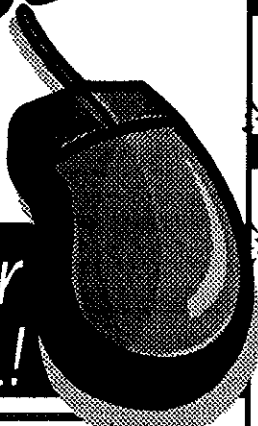
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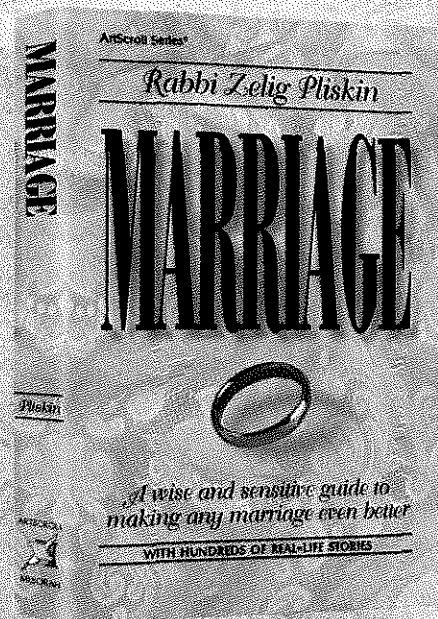
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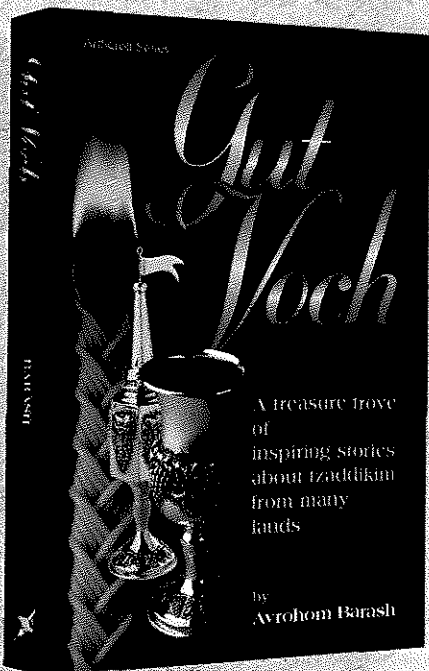
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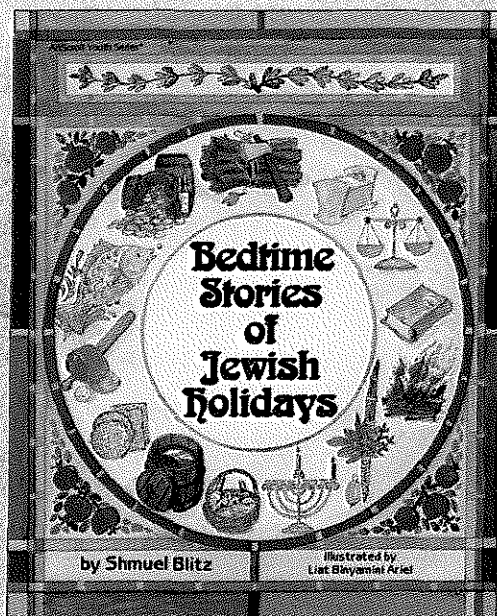
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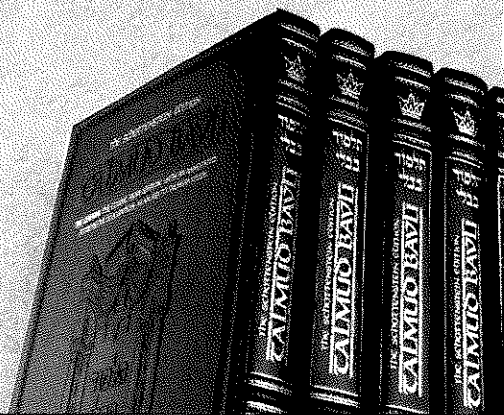
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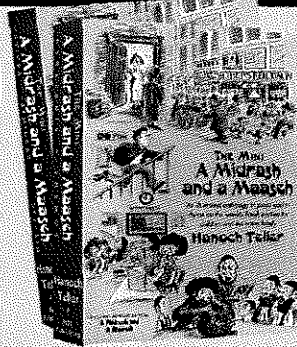


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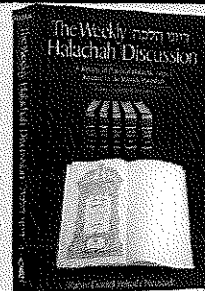
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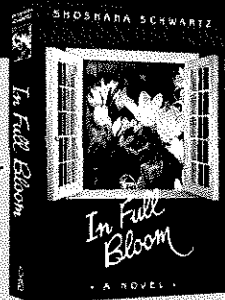
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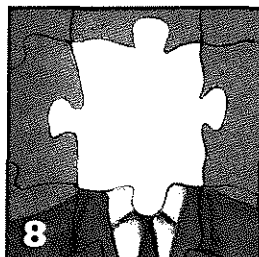
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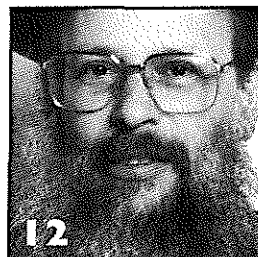
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A SEA OF FACES WHERE EVERY
BREAKER COUNTS

Watching people can be quite fascinating...not prying into everyone's business, but simply wondering at the multiplicity of faces, each one different from the other, each one with his or her own personality and mission in life. Millions of people rushing here and there, each one with his and her individual drive and sense of purpose. People with happy faces and people with sad faces. Some with heady abandonment, others deep in thought. Everyone different and yet each one an essential cog in the wheel of man's achievements.

A sea of faces takes on greater immediacy, however, when one becomes personally involved with any of them. Individuals stand out, and any previous anonymity turns into meaningful reality. Individuals change from one of a species into a force to be reckoned with.

Yet humans are not a species. With or without relationships, there is no diminishing of the value of each individual, Jew or non-Jew, child or adult, man or woman. The *Chashivus HaAdam* — man's innate worth — is the crowning glory of all that has been created.

In recent years, there have been incidents of devaluation of the worth of the human being. Over the centuries, there have always been instances of man's inhumanity to man, and the cruelty meted out by people against each other has often reached intolerable levels. Witness the savagery of the so-called

Rabbi Young, formerly principal of the Bais Yaakov of Manchester (U.K.) and founder of the Sarah Schenirer Seminary there, lives in Brooklyn, where he lectures in various seminaries. He is a regular columnist in the London *Jewish Tribune* and the English-language *HaModia*.

barbarians. Yet the present time seems to reflect a different form of human devaluation, of a sort that will not likely be contained in the world at large without reaching us. We must be aware of it so that it will not continue to erode

condemn them: how they debased humankind through their actions and failed to elevate it. Nowadays, the human status is irrelevant and it is primarily the functional usefulness of any individual that gives him any value whatsoever.

Perhaps because people are more well-informed than at any other period in history, they feel equipped to have opinions on every subject, and wisdom is not seen as an extension of the human essence. It is knowledge without an anchorage, and it becomes everybody's property. The source of expression of knowledge has become irrelevant, as long as knowledge has been obtained and is there for all to enjoy.

In summary, the concept of *Tzellem Elokim* (G-d's image) is being lost, and this results in the devaluation of *Chashivus HaAdam*.

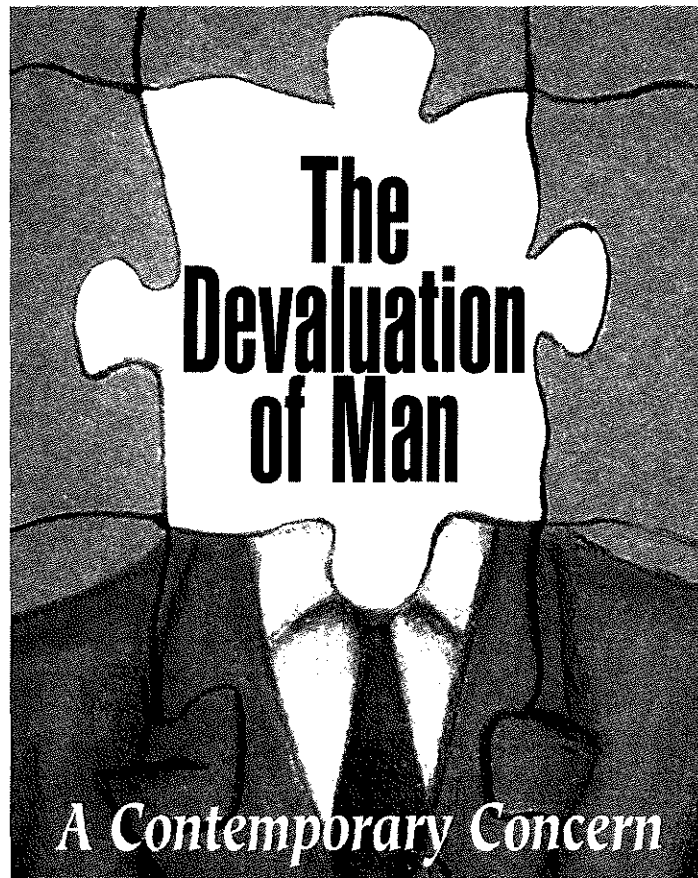
UNDERSTANDING TZELLEM
ELOKIM

Man is the vehicle through which the Eternal Truth of G-d is transmitted to earth in its fullness. But man cannot

determine on his own absolute right or wrong. Civilizations have attempted this, based on some innate feeling that there are absolutes, but have never come to any permanent conclusions. Law and morality are defined to suit the fluid and flexible cycle of prevailing attitudes. In the long run, there have been no absolutes of Truth.

It is, therefore, pivotal to believe that G-d created the world and made a plan for its continuous existence — the Torah. It gives authority and permanence to absolute moral judgments. There is no random wisdom.

It is only through man that the wisdom of Torah can be relayed to earth: the ability that G-d gave to man to communicate through ideas and in the



our Torah values and our own society. It has already made insidious inroads into even the most Torah-loyal groups, but it certainly is not too late to redress some of its influence.

DEVALUATION WITH A DIFFERENCE

Whereas in the past human life was cheap, now it is not just physical existence that is cheap; it is the essence of man that has been devalued. There have always been rogues, even amongst royalty and world leaders. Many kings, queens and emperors have been much less than paragons of virtue. Yet criticism of them has always been focused on their terrible actions, which give people the license to

abstract, to be able to make conscious decisions and to be aware of one's own situation, is encapsulated in the verse (*Bereishis* 2,7): "Vayipach b'apov nishmas chaim — and He blew into man the breath of life." The *Targum* explains the phrase, "nishmas chaim" to mean "ruach memalelo" — the ability to speak and communicate. This is the definitive description of man, conveying the *Chashivus HaAdam*. The description given to this wonderful being as a physical entity is "Tzellem Elokim." There must be a constant awareness that whenever one sees a human being, one is seeing a potential vehicle for *Kavod Shamayim* (Divine glory) — and an instrument for projecting *Toras Hashem*. No other creature has this honor or this ability. In this respect, there is no difference between Jew and non-Jew. All human beings are called "Tzellem Elokim" (*Maharal, Chiddushei Aggados, Shabbos* 127a).

ALL MANKIND IS PRECIOUS

Throughout the world, tragedies and disturbances take place: there are earthquakes and wars; there is famine and rebellion. People suffer — men, women and children. Some have brought it upon themselves, others have disturbances thrust upon them. There is no shortage of pain. Many ignore the plight of those who are at a distance from them; many do not even want to know. In truth, few outsiders are genuinely distressed about such occurrences.

Yet *David Hamelech* found a place in his heart for the suffering of others, irrespective of their nationality. Rabbi Chanina *S'gan Hakohanim* says that one should pray for the welfare of the government (*Avos* 3:2). Rabbeinu Yonah explains this to mean that one should pray for the alleviation of suffering of people, and he brings a verse from *Tehillim* (35, 13): "Va'ani b'chalosam levushi sak — But as for me, when they suffered illness, sackcloth was my garb." He explains that *David Hamelech* was in a state of mourning when he heard that people were in distress anywhere in the

world. To be sure, there are wicked people throughout the world, but one cannot be dismissive of the distress that befalls the ordinary man in the street. If the Croats and Serbs hound each other, or the Hutus and Tutsis massacre each other, there is some meaning to their suffering as decided from Above. To say simply, "A plague on both their houses!" and turn to more pleasant subjects, reflects an inability to recognize the

Perhaps because people are more well-informed than at any other period in history, they feel equipped to have opinions on every subject.

Chashivus HaAdam. Many people, each one a precious *Tzellem Elokim*, are being lost and destroyed. Each one of those anonymous bodies could have proclaimed, "Bishvili nivra haolam! — The world was created for my sake!" and is no longer able to do so.

THE JEW'S DISTINCTIVE TZELLEM ELOKIM

While everyone in the world is called "Tzellem Elokim" and is to be considered as such, this title as attached to *Yisroel* can be used only if the added dimension of Torah is present. If that element is lacking in a Jew, his stature is diminished, and he loses his entitlement to the appellation "Tzellem Elokim."

The *Gemora* tells us that the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva died during the period of the *Omer* because they did not honor each other (*Yevamos* 62b). They

died from *askera*, which is a type of choking, a severe ailment affecting the mouth and throat. The *Maharal* (*Nesivos Olam, N'siv HaTorah* 12) explains that *talmidei chachamim* must honor each other. As we said above, a person's ability to communicate comes from the *ruach memalelo*, which is the hallmark of the *Tzellem Elokim*. All speech reflects this gift given to man, but none more than Torah speech. This is the life-force of the Jew.

Thus, when somebody undermines the Torah speech of another person, not only does he belittle the feelings of that person, he actually is dismissing the value of the other person's Torah words — the Jew's *Tzellem Elokim par excellence*. If this is denied and disappears, the person too has disappeared. The punishment meted out to the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva for this was *midda k'neged midda*, measure for measure: because they nullified speech and took away each other's vital expression of life — they lost their own lives, after first suffering deprivation of speech.

THE FADING AWAY OF CHASHIVUS HAADAM

With instant communication on a global scale, opinions and words can reach everybody more rapidly than ever before. The media thrive on undermining people and their opinions anywhere in the world. You can say what you like about anyone you dislike with virtual impunity. Respect for one's fellow man is no longer an axiom of life, as *Chashivus HaAdam* is becoming, at best, a relic of the past.

If that is the situation in the world at large, must we follow suit? Unfortunately, such is becoming the case. Even in the Torah world, the Torah opinion of renowned *talmidei chachamim* is often treated disrespectfully, if a point of *halacha* or *hashkafa* appears to have some discrepancy. In daily speech, titles are casually omitted or last names are used when referring to well-known *talmidei chachamim*. It is as if impersonal opinions on Torah are floating

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around completely detached from their human source — the *Tzellem Elokim*. Is it because so much Torah knowledge can now be obtained by mechanical methods without the need for a human *rebbe*? Is it because of a lack of “*vehayu einecha ra'os es morecha* — and your eyes shall behold your master”? Or is it just the influence of the prevailing *Zeitgeist*?

Certainly, kings, queens, presidents and prime-ministers no longer receive the respect that their positions ought to command. No longer is there an aura of honor surrounding these people. They seem to be like “any other guy.” But they are truly not worse than leaders of any previous generation. During the past thirty years, egalitarian concepts have become masters of the human mindset. Because of this, there has been an increase in the desire to force people into a mold of equality of status, in knowledge, in families, in schools, in religion and anywhere that it could appear that someone might have power or authority over others. By undermining *Chashivus HaAdam*, one can achieve this very goal. Seeing that everyone has the key to the fountain of knowledge, there can be no one who can demand authority by virtue of his superior knowledge, wisdom or experience. As one is drowned in the tidal wave of uncontrolled knowledge and invention, people as humans are becoming dispensable. They just don't matter any more.

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**THE TORAH JEW'S PLACE IN THE
EGALITARIAN SCENE**

So how does the Torah Jew fit into this world scene? True, one must make use of all knowledge that is available. Yet sight must not be lost of the sanctity of man, the *Tzelleim Elokim*, the *ruach memalelo*. A sense of respect for others must be a preliminary condition in all forms of social and business relationships. There must always be time for the other person. There is no need to flit from one person to another in the middle of conversation (click on the telephone!) because the other person

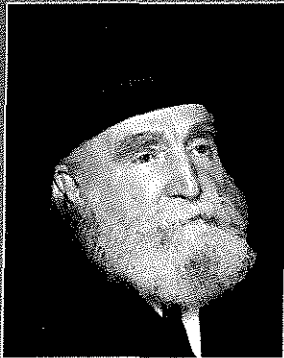
might have something more important, more valuable or more exciting to offer. This person is human, too. A Torah Jew will afford everybody his or her full attention as if there were nobody else present at that time.

To devalue the human being is to dehumanize him. To devalue only some human beings will eventually result in devaluing all human beings.

People may perform many deeds of *chessed* because of their desire to do good for others, but just as true *chessed* is achieved only by considering fully the needs of the other person, so too will building up the value of the other per-

son in all aspects of human relationships result in more than the elevation of the other person; it will also strengthen one's own projection of *Tzelleim Elokim*.

Once the world is set on a particular course of behavior, there is little that can be done to change it — certainly not in any short period of time. Nevertheless, a diagnosis is half way to a cure. An awareness of the *Chashivus HaAdam* within the Torah community will at least help us prevent any further erosion of the fabric of our community, and people will begin to value others and believe that they really do matter. It is just a matter of making the time to do it. ■



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To Teach and to Touch

A Tribute to Rabbi Dovid Heckscher זכר צדיק לברכה

MANAGING THE TIME OF HIS LIFE

All his life, Rabbi Dovid Heckscher — as if he had prescient knowledge of how limited his stay would be in this world — knew how to value time. After a day of vigorous study, he would remain up until late at night, alone with a *sefer* and a notebook, into which he entered his incisive insights, working assiduously. And if sometimes his eyes would droop, he would resume his writing as soon as he awoke, as if there had been no interruption.

Reb Dovid exhibited masterful time management from his youth. When a student in Yeshiva Kol Torah, he attended the *shiur* of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, זצ"ל, during which he would take copious notes.

Reb Shlomo Zalman once reviewed his notes and marvelled over page after page of concise conceptualization written with meticulous clarity, without a single erasure. Reb Shlomo Zalman was astonished: "He writes this during *shiur*? Why, he pays such keen attention and participates so actively, questioning and challenging. How could he possibly write *this* well?"

But the fact was, discipline was his discipline.

An insight into his time-management

Hanoch Teller, author of two dozen popular books, both biographies and inspiring stories — most recently, *The Mini: A Midrash and A Maaseh* — lives in Jerusalem. He is a frequent contributor to these pages, most recently with "From Dave to Dave" (Jan. '97).



ing sessions alone, Reb Dovid completed the entire Mishna Berura several times!

WHEN CAPABILITY ESTABLISHED MANDATE

Reb Dovid had an innate sense of responsibility, unaffected by neither expense nor discomfort. And once he deemed an issue of importance to *bnei Torah* and learning to be within his jurisdiction or sphere of influence, he felt personally responsible for the matter.

Man's psyche is limited by experience - the frustration of being caught in traffic when we are in a rush; the jealousy incurred by someone we consider less deserving than ourselves receiving something that we sorely long for and have

been denied; the shame resulting from a family member botching his lines in a play; these are all emotions that we can relate to, for we have experienced them.

Fortunately, the following scenario is foreign to most of us: Rabbi Heckscher, after a prolonged stay in the United States, was finally granted permission by his doctor to return to Israel. This was not a blanket permission, nor an indication of a medical breakthrough. It was merely a furlough that the doctor had granted — almost, as it were, against his better judgment. But of course it was contingent upon numerous conditions, the most severe of which being that the trip must be preceded by a full day of chemotherapy treatment.

This meant traveling to Manhattan,

can be gleaned from a personal ledger that he maintained, in which he recorded how he utilized his time. The entries read like a paradigm for an efficiency manager — with one exception. Once in the log there is a reference to a minor infraction, with a comment: "I must investigate why this tiny setback has occurred. Perhaps it was a result of my *engagement* to Miriam this week..."

At the age of fifty, Reb Dovid was diagnosed as having a malignancy. He departed for the United States to be admitted to a treatment program in Manhattan's Mount Sinai Hospital. Since only one specialist treated a large number of patients, the wait to see the doctor was inevitably long, fatiguing and frustrating. During these wait-

admission to the hospital, waiting in line, being exposed to elements of New York life that this Israeli *tzaddik* would have longed to have been spared, and undergoing a medical procedure that is as painful as it is frightening.

But what better incentive could there be? Going home! Home to *Eretz Yisroel*, to Jerusalem, to his family, and — equally important — home to his beloved students and Yeshiva Kol Torah. No longer a guest in the apartment of a gracious Brooklyn family, but back home to his *own* home. What anticipation! What anxiety!

On the day of the trip, Reb Dovid received a phone call from the Holy Land regarding a sensitive problem: A young man in Israel was about to get engaged, but when the family apprised his older brother who was learning in a New York yeshiva, the older sibling expressed unmitigated disappointment; he could not allow his younger brother's engagement to precede his own.

The family did not know that Reb Dovid was due to return to Israel that evening, nor did they know that his body had just been injected with nauseating poisons. Reb Dovid did not inform them, nor would he ever "impose" his suffering upon anyone else.

All that they did know was that when young men needed counseling, especially regarding marriage, Reb Dovid Heckscher was the one to whom you turned.

Nauseously sick, with his luggage only half-packed, Reb Dovid did not summon the boy to him, but traveled to the yeshiva to engage him in a long and heartfelt conversation. Later that night, as Reb Dovid was flying back to Israel, a *chassan* in Jerusalem announced his engagement, to the joy and the delight of his *entire* family.

LESSONS IN COURAGE

During his stay in New York, Reb Dovid learned that a woman suffering from a similar disease had arrived from Israel for medical treatment.

Upon her arrival, however, she was

so frightened of the ravages of chemotherapy that she refused to even have an appointment with an oncologist; the poor, stubborn, and frightfully ill woman remained in bed. Her family members, who had undergone such torment and expense to fly her to America, were besides themselves with frustration.

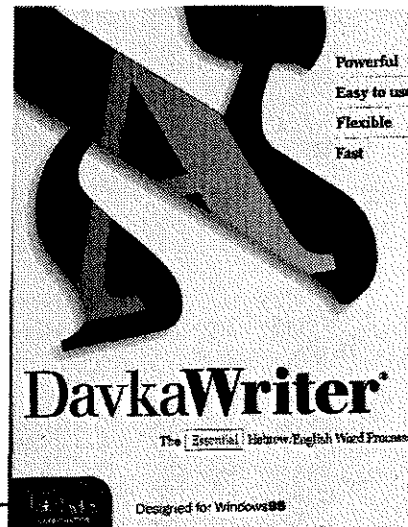
When Rabbi Dovid learned of her plight, he knew what he had to do: He shined his shoes, checked his shirt sleeves, put on his *Shabbos* frock, and brushed his hat. He stood in front of

a mirror, adjusted the knot of his necktie, and combed his beard. Under the circumstances, he could not have looked better. And then Reb Dovid traveled to see this incorrigible woman whom he had never met before. He entered the home and was led into her room. He said but five words: "My name is Dovid Heckscher."

Who hadn't heard of Rabbi Heckscher, and who didn't know what he was doing in America? That very day the woman got up, and later that week agreed to medical treatment.

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One day, as he was waiting his turn to see his doctor, he took note of a middle-aged Jew in a wheelchair, pushed by his son.

"Tell me," Reb Dovid asked the young man quietly, "is the disease located in your father's legs?"

"No, no, not at all. However, he is so broken from this whole experience that he cannot even find the strength to walk anymore."

Reb Dovid did not have to hear another word. He invited the sick gentleman to sit next to him, and then used

the rest of the time at his disposal for his own brand of therapy. The expression to "put somebody on his feet" gained new significance that day, as the man not only resumed walking, but pushed his own wheelchair into the elevator on his way home.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR EFFORTS

One *Shabbos* morning, a family living in the French Hill section of Jerusalem was surprised to find Reb Dovid Heckscher at their

front door. Anyone would have been delighted by the arrival of such a distinguished guest, but this *Shabbos* was *Erev Pesach*, and Reb Dovid just happened to live two hours away.

What could bring him out in this scorching heat on such a busy day? He had an important message to deliver: Reb Dovid had baked the *matzos* for this family, but he had not separated *challah* so as to allow them to perform the *mitzva*. Reb Dovid was not certain if he had passed on this information. He was sure that he could not risk them eating *matzos* that were not fit, hence he undertook the ambitious hike, wished everyone a "gut *Shabbos*" and a joyous *Yom Tov*, and headed back home.

Aside from his regular *shiur*, Rabbi Heckscher used to deliver a weekly *Chumash/Hashkafa* class to the *chutz la-arets* students at Kol Torah who were on "foreign soil" — albeit the holy soil of their homeland — and needed extra warmth and attention.

Even though these classes were convened but once a week, the students considered Reb Dovid *their rebbi*; and the feeling was mutual. For many of these boys, Reb Dovid remained their *rebbi* for the rest of their lives — or more accurately, for the rest of his life. He afforded them the very same policy he awarded any disciple — indeed, any Jew: 24-hour-a-day access with unlimited time. His door was truly open around the clock, as was his heart and his mind.

When the phone rang in the Heckscher home at 3:30 one morning, one of the Rabbi's sons groggily picked up the receiver and was informed by a student from overseas that he wished to speak with Rav Heckscher. The son asked if it couldn't wait until his father would get up, but the answer was a definite "no."

Assuming that it was a matter of life and death, the boy woke up his father. This student, one with a past of numerous problems, had finally become engaged, and he wanted Rabbi Heckscher to be the first to know.

Later that morning, when the family was a trifle more rested, they asked their father why it was so crucial that he be awakened to hear the good news. Without any hesi-

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tation, Reb Dovid offered, "This boy is certain that I have trouble sleeping because he is not yet engaged. He felt that it would only be decent to inform me right away so that my mind would be at ease and I could sleep well...."

"V'kach tzarich libiyot — and this is the way that it should be!"

In the conventional Israeli *yeshivos*, the *rebbe* delivers a *shiur* in *Gemora* and the student's interaction with his *rebbe* centers around the understanding of the *shiur*.

Reb Dovid opened himself up to a far, far more personal relationship. *Gemora* learning was only one facet in the limitless connection between student and teacher. Admittedly, such an association is time consuming, but to Reb Dovid, it was the most natural thing in the world; and if a student did not confide in him all the aspects of his life, he felt that he was wanting in his role as a father/teacher.

Reb Dovid noticed that his students were wasting precious time, and experiencing unnecessary frustration, in their preparation of the *sugya* (topic). Once again, Reb Dovid felt a responsibility to ease the situation. From that moment on, he prepared *marei mekomos*, which pinpointed the sources critical for a proper understanding of the subject matter, and indicated which sources were *not* mandatory for proper comprehension. These sheets proved enormously useful to the students.

During one of Reb Dovid's brief visits to Israel during the course of his illness, a *talmid* informed him that not all of the students in the yeshiva were studying the same text. Some were on one page, while others were several pages ahead. The best way to straighten out the problem would be a battery of *marei mekomos*. But Reb Dovid was departing in just a few hours for the United States.

That night, a *bachur* who was also flying to America spotted Reb Dovid on the flight. It was the eve of this boy's

admission-interview to the Lakewood Yeshiva, and he was eager to have the *dvar Torah* that he had prepared clarified and enhanced. The boy could not have encountered a more accommodating mentor.

With this solitary exception, Reb Dovid spent the rest of the night writing the *marei mekomos*. This easily-admitted Lakewood student testified that Rabbi Heckscher's light never went out.

Immediately upon his arrival in Brooklyn, Reb Dovid faxed three pages of *marei mekomos* together with a caveat that they must be checked, for he had written them without the assistance of any *sefarim*. Very few inaccuracies were found.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A WARM PERSONALITY

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several boys of diverse backgrounds and lifestyles, not from the ranks of Kol Torah, attached themselves to Rabbi Heckscher. On occasion, Reb Dovid felt that a particular boy was yeshiva material, and endeavored to have him admitted.

It was always an uphill battle, for the yeshiva maintained a high admissions standard, and problematic individuals did not have a record of success there. Yet Reb Dovid would persist until he achieved his goal.

But he didn't stop there. Since his relationship to each of his students was

truly like that of a father to an only child, Reb Dovid assumed the responsibility of marrying off the student. The first step in the process was obviously finding the right candidate — a pool of information which Reb Dovid obviously did not possess. Hence, he would call or travel to speak to the heads of women's seminaries regarding possibilities.

Once a *shidduch* was proposed, Reb Dovid would see the boy through every step of the dating process. In this regard, he was clearly a most outstanding advisor. Once the boy was engaged, money

had to be raised for the wedding and living expenses. Reb Dovid assumed more than his share in this regard as well.

Rabbi Heckscher served as the director of Kol Torah's *Tomchei Temimim [Ta"t]* (funds collected for needy students), a position that he maintained even after he had to relocate to America because of his illness. In this role, he was constantly innovating, for he understood the needs and the pressures of the students.

Reb Dovid recognized the many factors that could contribute to a student's feeling disadvantaged. And just like a new suit could do wonders to raise the esteem of a poor boy, a good and patient *chavrusa* could do wonders for one who was not succeeding in his learning. Hence, Reb Dovid had no hesitation spending *Ta"t* money on the hiring of a *rebbei* for someone who needed extra help but could ill-afford it.

Because Reb Dovid was so responsive to requests for help, they came from all over and at all hours.

Once an avrech (young married fellow) came to Reb Dovid's house at midnight with a problem. The fellow did not intend to pursue the matter at that hour, but only wished to find out when it would be appropriate to come back, as it concerned a critical matter, and time was of the premium.

"There is plenty of time to talk right now," Reb Dovid replied good naturedly. Seeing that the avrech was hardly convinced, Reb Dovid pointed to the clock on the wall, "Look, now it is 12:00, and I have until 6:00!"

Once someone dialed Reb Dovid, but was informed that the Rav was not at home. "Is there possibly a number where he can be reached?"

The caller was provided with a phone number, and got through right away. Rabbi Heckscher offered his fullest attention, and helped unravel a thorny problem. The caller expressed his thanks, and commented that there must be something peculiar about the telephone, for the Rav's voice sounded strange.

"No, the telephone is not to blame," Rav Heckscher said reassuringly from his hos-



ב.ט.ד.

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pital bed, "but I have a tube up my nose, which affects the way I speak."

If someone turned to Reb Dovid, and he was unable (he was never *unwilling*) to be of assistance, the matter was not over for him. He would search and hunt until he could find the right person to address the need. He never absolved himself of a matter until he was certain that it was being properly dealt with.

One final example of his sense of responsibility: Due to his weak condition, on the last *Yom Kippur* of his life, the *tefillos* were held in the home where he stayed in Brooklyn. This was not to be a rushed service because of the presence of a sick man, by any means. The length of the solitary break in the prayers barely spanned ten minutes. Nor was it a small *minyán* either. Men and women in the neighborhood vied for the honor of praying together with Reb Dovid.

But before *Kol Nidre* got underway, Reb Dovid had an announcement to make: He wished everyone to know that, due to his feeble condition, he received

a *hetter* from Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky to sit during the *tefillos*. In fact, he barely sat down the entire day, but lest anyone look at him — a man beleaguered by the ravishes of a horrific disease — and come to the wrong conclusion, he wished to set matters straight up front. Such was his compelling sense of responsibility for his every action.

THE POWER OF HIS SMILE

When one pictures Reb Dovid, inevitably the first thing that comes to mind is his smile. The expression in Hebrew, *he'aras panim* — which in a pale translation means "shining countenance" — is more descriptive than "smile," and does more justice to Rabbi Heckscher.

Indeed, Reb Dovid showed you, from the depths of his soul — in your very first encounter — that he loved you. Such an attitude can do wonders for any relationship....

One day, an emotionally unstable boy decided to say farewell to this cruel

world. Armed with a knife, he crawled out on the ledge of a window and prepared to make his departure. The scene can be easily pictured: Panic-stricken people below, befuddled police bull-horning orders, shrieks from inside the building, while one person, as always, knew what he had to do: Through word and deed, Reb Dovid showed that he loved this boy and that there was indeed purpose to life.

What a professionally trained police psychologist could not do, and friends and neighbors could not accomplish, Reb Dovid's compassionate smile could.*

Less dramatic is the man who attended Reb Dovid's *shiurim* in America, even though he could not comprehend them, only because he so greatly admired the rabbi's demeanor and countenance. And this fellow was not the only one.

Every time Reb Dovid had to be readmitted to Mount Sinai Hospital, he would receive a hero's reception. Black nurses, Oriental PAs, Hispanic mainte-

*The PS to the story is that today this boy is fully rehabilitated, and a husband and father.

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nance personnel, Italian dieticians, Jewish social workers, interns and residents came from their stations upon hearing the tidings: "The Rabbi is back! The Rabbi is here!"

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It is said that a man's true character is revealed in three areas: his finances, his flask, and his fury. When it comes to money matters, when he is "in his cups," and when he

loses his temper, a man's rein on his natural impulses snaps and the opaque shield behind which he conceals his inner self becomes transparent.

There is, however, one more state wherein man is stripped of his defenses: his infirmity. Can a fevered brain control the words that escape slack lips? Can debilitated flesh be made to respond to the commands of the soul? The answer, obviously, is yes — when the soul has so saintly a custodian as Reb Dovid.

Rabbi Heckscher's first medical visit to America brought him to Memorial

Hospital, where he was operated upon and informed that his situation was beyond hope and he should return home. A student came to visit Reb Dovid while he was recuperating from the surgery and this stinging prognosis.

The student found a man who was tranquil and totally at peace with himself. Or as the visitor put it, "Not only did he have his usual smile, but he blessed and encouraged me, and looked more like he was at a major *simcha*, certainly not like he had just been presented with his final notice."

Neither the word of doctors nor his emaciated body were about to break this servant of the L-rd. He refused to accept this death sentence. Before charting a difficult course, he first consulted with the rabbinic giants of Bnei Brak. His next move, on their counsel, was to submit to an aggressive chemotherapy regimen that kept him in the United States for virtually three straight years. During this period he delivered countless *shiurim* (Talmudic discourses) and *shmuessen* (lectures) throughout the New York area. Volumes have already been compiled of the *shiurim* and *shmuessen*.

He never refused an invitation to deliver a *shiur*, including addressing a group of women in English. When he was too weak to walk to *shul* on *Shabbos*, a *minyan* was held in the home where he stayed, and he graced the attendees with a *shiur* as his token of appreciation for helping him out.

Remarkably, no matter how debilitated he was, once he began to deliver his *shiur*, his weak voice found the ability to broadcast audibly and clearly. Perhaps this was the strength of the Torah, or perhaps his drive to provide for others no matter what the obstacle.

When this author brought his twin daughters to visit Reb Dovid in the hospital — one week prior to his demise — for a *beracha* in honor of their *bas mitzva*, the *gadol*, prostrate and jaundiced, with little hair and a spider web of medical devices attached, found the strength to bless them clearly and articulately, with beautiful words.

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she was a partner in everything he did. Her participation involved not only working with couples and families, but together with her husband, forming a home that was clearly a fitting abode for the *Shechina*. All of the guidance that the *Rav* and the *Rebbitzin* provided was best understood by watching the way the two of them spoke to each other, cared for each other, and understood each other.

The last week of his life, while every vital sign indicated that the end was drawing near, he would not despair. When the student from Kol Torah who had arranged the *marei*

mekomos called him from Israel to inquire after his status, Reb Dovid paused for a few moments to gather enough strength to whisper, "*Boruch Hashem.*" He concluded his very last conversation with this fellow by saying, "I hope I will be out of here very soon, please G-d, and then I will immediately resume writing the *marei mekomos.*"

On the last night of his life, his family and some of his closest friends had gathered at his bedside in Mount Sinai Hospital. The *Rav* was already comatose, but the nurse said that they should not give up trying to communicate with him. The group awaited one final message, one word to help carry on in a world that would be so empty and dark after his departure. One of Rabbi Heckscher's close friends from his days in the *Ponevezh Yeshiva* was also there. He bent forward... it was *Pesach Sheini*, "Do you remember what *Rav Shach* said about *Pesach Sheini*?"

Suddenly there was a reaction and everyone silently held their breath. Rabbi Heckscher furrowed his eyebrows in thought and then shook his head.

"Surely you remember the *shiur* he gave about '*chametz u'matzoh imo babayis*'!"

"Yes," was the *Rav's* final word.

intents and purposes he had converted into a *beis midrash* — was that if he were to be at home, he would consider it mandatory to rise when a guest entered to visit. But as his feet were so swollen that this was impossible, he did not have to agonize over this dilemma.

During the course of Rabbi Heckscher's treatment, he would have occasional diagnostic operations to gauge the effectiveness of the chemotherapy. Prior to one of these surgeries, Reb Dovid's host arrived from Brooklyn to escort him to the operating theater. Lying on the gurney, presumably in dread of going under the knife and discovering whether months of tortuous treatment had effected an improvement, or if *chalilla*, the disease had spread, Reb Dovid was asked if he was nervous.

"No." A blissful smile adorned his lips. "I know that all that G-d does is for the good. Sometimes we understand, sometimes we cannot comprehend. I am ready for all that He has in store."

Of course he was ready. The situation continued to get worse, but he never lost hope. When asked how he was feeling, his standard reply was, "*Chasdei Hashem* — G-d's kindness [is with me]."

Reb Dovid's wife, Miriam, stood by him during this entire difficult period;

The next day over 1,000 *bnei Torah* gathered on *Erev Shabbos* to pay their final respects to a *gadol* who, in his short stay in America, had so enriched their lives. Sunday night in Israel, thousands upon thousands crammed the environs of *Yeshiva Kol Torah* to say goodbye to the towering scholar who had greeted everyone with love and a smile, and did not waste a precious second of his all-too-short time in this world, in his quest to improve, enhance, and sanctify the Name of Heaven. ■

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A Rebbi's Confession

translated and prepared for publication by
Rabbi Eli Teitelbaum and Rabbi Zalman Wald

I have been involved in *chinuch* for 52 years. At first, I taught small children the *Aleph Beis* and *kriya* (reading) with a true sense of mission. I was a partner in something that would accompany my students throughout their lives. Once they learned to read, they would never stop.

I invested much contemplation and experimentation in my efforts, long before learning disabilities were recognized, and I discovered that not every child relates to learning *kriya* the same way. Some children grasp through listening; others through intense observation. Some through story-telling; others only through games with cutout cardboard letters. I combined various methods at different times of the day. Although there were up to 50 children in each class, by Pesach every child, without exception, knew how to read.

I had numerous requests to tutor children in *kriya* after school, but I refused them all. After teaching, I was busy with my family, I studied in an

The above article was translated from the Israel-based journal, *Olam Hachassidus*, by Rabbi Eli Teitelbaum, who is a Rebbi in Yeshiva Torah Temimah (Brooklyn), and heads Torah Communications Network, and Rabbi Zalman Wald, who is a Rebbi in Yeshiva Toras Emes-Kamenitz (Brooklyn). Rabbi Teitelbaum investigated the above account for authenticity, and verified that the nameless author was a widely-respected educator who is still engaged in the remedial tutoring program described above.

afternoon *Kollel*, and I had a regular session in *halacha* in the evening.

I remember in particular one desperate mother, whose eight-year-old son had still not learned to read, and all her efforts, including private tutoring, had failed to help. When she called me and asked that I teach her son, I gave her my standard answer, "I'm sorry, please turn elsewhere. I don't accept private students."

"But there is no one else!" said the woman. "My son has studied under all of the *kriya* teachers in town, and not one of them has succeeded."

I answered that I was indeed sorry, but this additional burden would disturb my teaching. "I wish you *hatzlacha*."

The woman persisted: "The children in your class can learn *kriya* from another teacher. But here is an eight-year-old who is trying with superhuman efforts and cannot grasp *kriya*. You must teach my son! There is no one else!"

"Lady, you can't force me to violate my principles," I replied resentfully.

"*Lo sa'amod al dam rei'acha* — Don't stand by while your friend's blood flows!" she cried.

"*Kol tuv* and good night," I said, and hung up.

I quickly forgot the incident.

ON TO BROADER HORIZONS

After 15 years, I wanted a change — to present *Chumash* to slightly older children, like second or

third graders, who could listen without getting up every minute or interrupting with annoying questions. After two or three years of early grades, I was asked to teach the first year of the new *Yeshiva Ketana* (high-school department) that was being established by the administration of the Talmud Torah.

I accepted the new position with apprehension, but I quickly realized that teaching children of Grade 1-primary and *bachurim* of first-level *yeshiva ketana* had much in common. Both classes had weaker students and stronger ones, cooperative and difficult ones. The major difference was that the older children, unlike the younger ones, never admitted their weaknesses, but tried — unsuccessfully — to cover them up. Nor did they have the courage to admit, "I'm bored just sitting and listening."

I worked with each child in the first level of the *Yeshiva Ketana* according to his abilities. When I considered that next Elul a new *maggid shiur* would enter the picture and possibly destroy what I had accomplished, I was horrified. So I moved up with my class to *Shiur Beis* — and further, until I reached *Yeshiva Gedola*, where the episode I am about to relate occurred.

Pardon my longwindedness, but I get carried away whenever I mention chinuch. There is no more thrilling occupation — except that at times it can also be dangerous, as you will soon hear.

**DEALING WITH AVRAHAM...
FROM A DISTANCE**

In general, I was close with my students. In all my classes I had my "favorites" — not necessarily the brightest in the group. Rather, they were the ones who worked the hardest — the ones who listened and accepted my guidance.

Avraham was not one of my pets. In fact, there was something about him that turned me off. He wasn't raptly attentive to my *shiurim*, nor did he eagerly anticipate every word that I uttered. Although he never disturbed the class, he was distant, and that upset me. I wanted to see him completely involved.

Looking back, I must conclude that I considered chinuch my own personal project, as if it were an expression and validation of my expertise. Each student was my goal to conquer. Each success contributed to my well-being, and each failure hurt me deeply, mainly my kavod.

It is clear to me today that the true approach in chinuch — as in every profession — is to recognize that we are merely Hashem's agents. Our successes come from Him, as do our failures. Understandably, I believed it in a theoretical sense, but in a practical sense I was an ambitious man who craved recognition. I deeply regret that I only perceive this now, and I have been doing teshuva for it every day. I pray that the toil that I did invest in the children will

not be forgotten by Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Avraham, as I mentioned, was a student who did not conform. He would sit in a corner of the classroom, study the *Gemora*, look at me politely, and learn. But he learned according to his own understanding, at times differing with my approach. On rare occasions — mostly at the outset of the year — he would present his differences of opinion to me. But after I sharply — even hostilely — refuted him, he stopped sharing his thoughts with me. His facial expression said, "I don't agree with you all the time, but I'll keep it to myself."

At the end of the year, my duties with

Avraham's class were concluded and I bid the boys farewell. There were students who continued to attend my Sunday afternoon lectures, which were of a more open format. Avraham, however, never came, and I didn't meet him again until several years later.

AVRAHAM'S RETURN

One morning I arrived in yeshiva a little later than usual, due to a delay at home. It was 10:15, and my regular *shiur* started at 10:30.

As I paid the taxi driver and approached the yeshiva building, I

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heard another car stop behind me, and a car door slam. I turned and saw Avraham, although at first I didn't recognize him. He looked older than I had remembered him. He snuffed out a cigarette and threw it in the garbage bin as

he entered. He was dressed nicely. He didn't look like the rest of the boys rushing past me, busily involved in learning. While I watched him approach the building, I recalled that eight months earlier Avraham had left the yeshiva with

a "seed" group to be *mechazek* a new yeshiva in the *Negev*. I had not approved of this step, especially since the *Rosh Yeshiva* of that new yeshiva did not share our ideological views. And now Avraham was back.

I waited for him to get closer, to ask him why he had come. Then I noticed with dismay that the black *yarmulke* that Avraham used to wear had been replaced with a bright gray suede *yarmulke* — very bright, too bright: more an ideological statement than a fashion statement. I stared at him, shocked. How could a student return to the place where he had once learned, dressed like this?

"*Shalom Aleichem, Rebbi!* I came to invite the members of the faculty and my old friends to my wedding. I'm getting married in a short time *יהי*."

"And this is how you come to yeshiva to invite your friends? Where have you been hanging around since you left the yeshiva?"

Avraham was obviously offended by the way I spoke, but he nevertheless answered politely, "I learned in Yeshiva _____, by Rav _____. Since the beginning of this *z'man*, I'm in a *beis midrash* near my home because my wedding is imminent."

"And now you come here, appearing like this, and you still want to roam the yeshiva and gain sympathy from your friends?" I could no longer bear his indifference. He had always done whatever he wanted, but this time he had gone too far. "Get out of here," I shouted, "and don't you dare set foot in here again!"

I probably raised my voice, because everyone turned to stare at us, and the secretary rushed out of the office. Avraham looked at me for a moment, his face pale. He immediately turned and left the yeshiva.

I went up to my classroom very angry. "Where does a *bachur* get such *chutzpa!*" I was fuming. "To show up in yeshiva with such a brazenly modern *kipa!* What arrogance! To be oblivious to all rules, and to talk to me as if he and I were equals!"

I delivered my *shiur* and put the

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whole episode out of my mind, although from time to time I would recall that unfortunate encounter.

A DISASTROUS CHAIN OF EVENTS

About a month later, my wife was struck with a serious illness. We flew to Sweden, where she underwent complicated brain surgery. When we returned to *Eretz Yisroel*, I resumed teaching. After six months of painful treatments, she passed away.

My life changed from one extreme to the other. From a mature, independent person who led a fully active life, I became a depressed, broken man; my home was empty and my independence was compromised. I stubbornly continued living in my home alone, but I was no longer the same person. I couldn't concentrate; my faculties weren't as sharp. I found myself dreaming and thinking of days gone by, and I noticed that I had aged.

Three months passed. I fell and broke my hip. No one was with me at the time, and I couldn't get up to summon help. I slipped in and out of consciousness, lying on the floor for ten hours, until one of my grandchildren came to visit and found me.

After surgery, I was transferred to a rehabilitation facility. Some of my students requested to visit me, but I refused to see them. How could I let them see me in this state — so helpless, old, crippled, and dependent on others?

My family really helped me. Slowly, and with great difficulty, I began to stand on my own feet, and then took a few steps with a walker. I understood that I would no longer be able to walk unassisted, and that I would continue to suffer pain. I notified the yeshiva administration that I intended to retire. They tried to persuade me to come in at least once a week to give a *shiur*, or even to give *shiurim* in my home, but I detected a note of pity in the *Rosh Yeshiva's* voice, so I proudly refused.

We hired a home attendant to live with me, and my life became boring and meaningless for the next few months.

AVRAHAM COMES BACK AGAIN

I woke up one morning with horrible back pains. It felt like I was being sawed in half. The doctors said a disc in my vertebrae had moved out of place

— probably as a result of my fall, or during surgery. They gave me pain killers because I wasn't strong enough to endure another operation. I didn't move at all, so as not to suffer those excruciating pains. On the third day after

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this last diagnosis, I heard a knock at the door. The attendant answered the door and told me that a young man wanted to see me. Before I responded, the young man entered the room. It was Avraham.

"I was afraid you might refuse to see me, so I entered by myself," he said. "I must speak to you!" The assistant left the room to bring a chair for Avraham.

"My mother appeared to me in a

dream last night, for the third time, and she instructed me to come here," he said with downcast eyes. "I didn't know the *Rebbi* was ill, that *Rebbi* had stopped teaching in yeshiva. When did this happen?"

For some reason, I *myself* don't know why — perhaps because I was so depressed and sick — I briefly related to Avraham the whole saga of my hardships of the past two years. Avraham listened quietly, with rapt attention and with an expression of empathy.

"So all this started from the time the *Rebbetzin* died?" Avraham asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"And when was her disease discovered?" he asked. "What was the exact date?"

"Tuesday, 7 Adar," I answered. "An easy date to remember." [It is the *Yahrzeit* of Moshe *Rabbeinu*.]

Avraham heard this and let out a short cry.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"That's the date I got married!" said Avraham quietly. "That Tuesday I got married, and my heart was full of resentment towards you — more than I had ever felt toward anyone else."

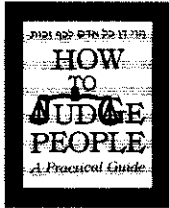
"What was the reason for your resentment?" I asked.

"Don't you remember how you threw me out of Yeshiva the day that I came to invite my friends to my wedding?" asked Avraham in surprise. "You don't even remember? *I remember!* I could never forget it! I was so ashamed and distressed, I wished that the earth would open up beneath me and swallow me alive. It was as if my whole being were burning with flames of humiliation and scorn. I had been so happy to come to Yeshiva, and I was so humiliated when I was sent away. I had finally achieved this wonderful *shidduch* with the daughter of a prominent *Rav*. I was so eager to share my *simcha* with my friends. And — just like that — I was thrown out for nothing!"

"For nothing?" I cried out in amazement. I attempted to get up in my bed to see the *yarmulke* he was wearing. It was a typical black *yarmulke*, same as mine. "And what about your *yarmulke*?"

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"What about it?" he asked in surprise. "That bright, colorful, suede *yarmulke* that you wore. That *chutzpa'dik* modern one that you dared put on, to strut around with in Yeshiva!"

"A modern suede *yarmulke*?" Avraham repeated, confused.

Could I have been mistaken? Avraham sat transfixed with shock, as if trying to remind himself of something. "Now I remember! There was a strong wind blowing on my way to Yeshiva. The taxi driver had opened the windows, and my *yarmulke* flew out of the cab. The driver stopped with a screech to retrieve it. I also ran after it, holding my arm over my head. The *yarmulke* landed in the middle of the road and at least a dozen cars ran over it and crushed it before I was able to grab it. I shook it out as best as I could and put it back on my head."

There was a period of silence. "And that's why you got so angry?" he asked. "You thought that I came to Yeshiva with an improper *yarmulke*?"

I nodded my head.

"Why didn't you ask?" he inquired of me with pain. "Why didn't you approach me in a regular manner to clarify what it was that was on my head? How much pain could have been avoided! How much hatred and aggravation! I felt I was being attacked through no fault of my own. You were yelling, and embarrassing me for the way I appeared. Had I ever

dressed strangely before? Had I ever dressed like my older brother who forsook the *olam hayeshivos*, and became a working boy who went out of his way to dress modern? Did I ever try to copy him? Throughout the years I stood strong, with clenched teeth, against his sneering mockery and his attempts to persuade me. I never switched to a more fashionable mode of dress, even though there was nothing wrong with that. I refused to take off or add even a single button to be stylish. I never even put on one of the colorful neckties that he gave me as a gift. I was meticulous, with supreme effort, not to follow his ways. Nevertheless, I had a hard time with *shidduchim* because I had a brother who went off the *derech* and people assumed that I was similar to him.

"I fought for my good name, and insisted to the *shadchonim* to find a girl with *yiras Shamayim*, a *tzenua* (modest). Finally, after a painful period of time, I was offered a wonderful girl from a large family of a respected *talmid chacham* — a family of limited means, but blessed with spiritual bounty. I came to Yeshiva to share my *simcha* with my friends, and I was driven out with scorn, like scum. And I was admonished for my *chutzpa'dik* appearance! I left Yeshiva with deep-seated feelings of hatred toward you. I'm sorry, but those are the facts. On the day of my *chupa* I begged

Hashem to pay you back for the humiliation that I suffered. But I never imagined that it would come to this! I don't live in this city, so I didn't hear a thing about what had happened to you."

HIS MOTHER'S COMMAND

An eerie silence prevailed the small room. I remained deep in thought, contemplating what I had just heard. I could actually identify with the humiliation and pain that Avraham had endured.

"So what brought you to me?" I finally asked.

"My mother $\text{ל}^{\text{ר}}$ appeared to me in a dream on each of these past three nights. She commanded me to go to you and tell you that I forgive you in her name, in my name, and in my older brother's name."

"What do I have to do with your older brother?" I asked.

"I really don't know," he shrugged his shoulders. "My brother, Yehuda, is ten years older than I. He hasn't learned in Yeshiva for years. As a child, he had serious problems reading. When he was 11 years old, he was placed in a class of learning disabled children that really wasn't for him, and only caused more harm than good. He finally learned to read with the help of a new, modern method, in a center for the development

chosen words

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of children, which wasn't religious. My mother always cried about the fact that she was forced to have him spend half a year there to solve the problem. She claimed that those six months triggered his later rebellion against *Yiddishkeit*. Yehuda stopped learning in yeshiva at

age 17. He was discharged from the army because of emotional problems, but was very successful in managing a small business. Five years ago, he married a girl from a traditional home, and they now live in Tel Aviv."

As if in a dream, from a distance of many years, I heard a mother's voice during the phone conversation: "You must help my son! *Lo sa'amod al dam rei'acha!*"

I asked Avraham, "Do you happen to know if your mother ever asked me to teach your brother reading?"

"I never heard your name," answered Avraham. "But countless times my mother mentioned that there was one teacher who was an expert in remedial reading, who had refused her request for help. She was embittered, and she kept on asking over and over how a G-d-fearing person could be so indifferent to the desperate situation of a little boy!"

Avraham expressed his forgiveness in his name, his brother's name, and his mother's name, and left. All this was four months ago. Within a week, my back pains diminished and gradually disappeared.

REMEDIAL EDUCATION — A SOURCE OF MERIT

I resumed my walking exercises. For the first time in my life I began to engage in *hirschurei teshuva* — genuine introspection and remorse. I began to reconstruct my years in *chinuch*. I tried to judge my actions honestly and objectively, and reached conclusions regarding my character and motivations that I had not realized before.

I decided that since I could die at any moment, it was incumbent upon me to do something beneficial with the life that was still left to me. I returned to my original profession — teaching reading, tutoring children who had difficulty reading. Because of my weak condition, I took only four children a week — free of charge, of course. Every time, before I start the lesson, I pray that the merit of my efforts be for the benefit of *Yehuda ben Miriam*, that he should do *teshuva* and return completely to *Yiddishkeit*.

All that I have written is true, and is recounted with the hope that it will prevent any *mechanech* — or any person, for that matter — from making a hasty decision that could have tragic results, and to ensure that one should "judge all men favorably."

May it be *Hashem's* will that these lines also be of merit for *Yehuda ben Miriam*. ■

בס"ד

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**בשתי עינים:
An Eye to the Past,
A Vision for the Future**

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I S R A E L O F
A M E R I C A ' S

76th 
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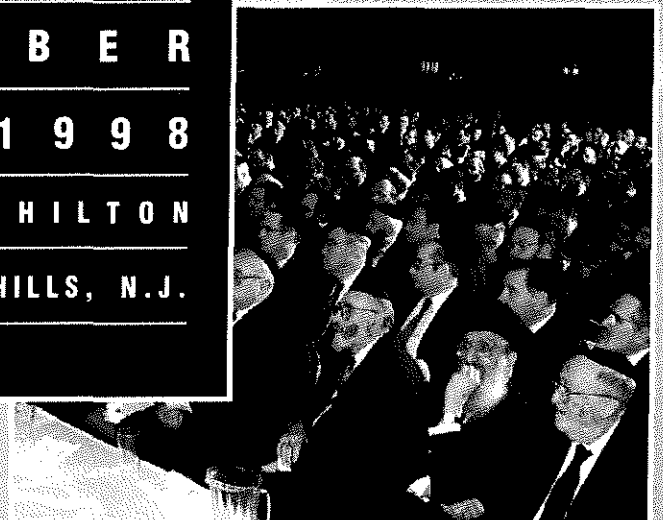
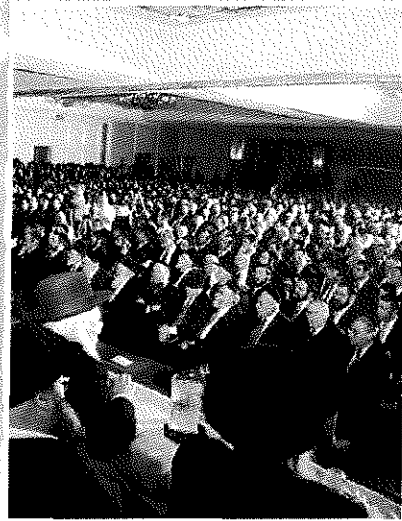
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N O V E M B E R

26 - 29 1998

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Rabbi Y. Frankel



Rabbi Z. Gelley



Rabbi C.D. Keller



Rabbi A.M. Kotler



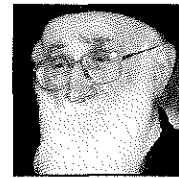
Rabbi S. Kamenetsky



Rabbi A.C. Levin



Rabbi L.Y. Horowitz



Rabbi C. Stein

Thursday Afternoon - 2:15 PM

CONCURRENT SYMPOSIA

I. לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם PARENTS AND CHILDREN: *Strengthening the Bonds*

Overview: **Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky**
Rosh HaYeshiva
Yeshiva of Philadelphia

Speakers: **Rabbi Shlomo Mandel**
Rosh HaYeshiva
Yeshiva and Mesivta of Brooklyn

Rabbi Mordechai Finkelman
Rebbe, Yeshiva Darchei Torah
Mesivta Chaim Shlomo

Rabbi Yakov Horowitz, Menahel,
Yeshiva Darchei Noam (Monsey);
Director, Project Y.E.S., AIA

Chairman: **Saul Kamelhar**

II. SURROUNDED FROM ALL SIDES: *Protecting our Neshomos from a Culture of Decadence*

Overview: **Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Levin**
Rosh HaYeshiva,
Telshe Yeshiva-Chicago

Speakers: **Rabbi Noach Isaac Oelbaum**
Rav, Khal Nachlas Yitzchok (Queens)

Rabbi Yaakov Salomon, CSW
Psychotherapist, private practice

Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss
Rav, Agudath Israel of Staten Island

III. ENSURING THE FISCAL VIABILITY OF OUR EMBATTLED YESHIVOS: *The Role of Parents, Community, and Government*

Overview: **Rabbi Naftoli Neuberger**
President, Yeshivas Ner Israel (Baltimore)

Speakers: **Rabbi David Ozeiry**
Director, Yeshiva Ateret Torah

Rabbi Chaim Nosson Segal
Rav, New Springville Jewish Center (S.I.),
Director of Community Development,
Torah Umesorah

Dr. Aaron Twerski
Professor of Law, Brooklyn Law School
Chairman, Commission on Legislation and
Civic Action, Agudath Israel of America

Chairman: **Yaakov Rajchenbach** (Chicago)

IV. THE CHILONI/CHAREIDI DIVIDE: *Assessing the Danger, Bridging the Gap*

Overview: **Rabbi Yosef Harari-Rafal**
Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Ateret Torah

Speakers: **Rabbi Shmuel Dishon**
Mashgiach Ruchni, Yeshivas Karlin-Stolin

Rabbi Zev Leff,
Rav, Moshav Mattityahu

Rabbi Yonason Rosenblum
Columnist, The Jerusalem Post

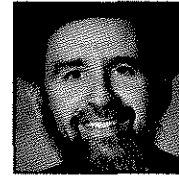
Chairman: **Yosef Davis** (Chicago)



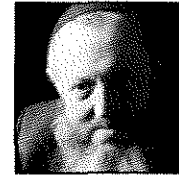
Rabbi A.D. Dunner



Rabbi E. Eichler



Rabbi Y. Zweig



Rabbi N. Neuberger



Rabbi Y. Frand



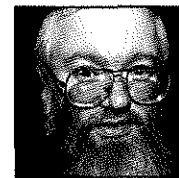
Rabbi S. Bloom



Rabbi N. Scherman



C.D. Zweibel, Esq.



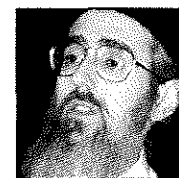
Rabbi Yakov Reisman



Rabbi S. Sherer



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman



Rabbi M. Finkelman



Rabbi Z. Leff



Rabbi D. Ozeiry



Rabbi Y. Rosenblum



Dr. Y. Salomon

Thursday Evening - 7:45 PM

בשתי עינים: AN EYE TO THE PAST, A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Overview: **Rabbi Mattisyahu Solomon**, Mashgiach, Beth Medrash Govoha (Lakewood)

Speakers: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand**, Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivas Ner Israel (Baltimore)
Rabbi Shimshon Sherer, Rav, Khal Zichron Mordechai

Chairman: **Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, Esq.**, General Counsel and Director of Government Affairs, AIA

Friday Morning Roundtable Discussions: see page 30

Shabbos Addresses

Rabbi Simcha Bunim Ehrenfeld,
Mattesdorfer Rav

Rabbi Eliezer Eichler,
Boyaner Rav

Rabbi Reuven Feinstein,
Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva of S.I.

Rabbi Elya Fisher, Rosh Kollel Gur

Rabbi Zachariah Gelley,
Rav, Khal Adath Jeshurun

Rabbi Eliezer Gross
Rosh HaYeshiva,
Yeshiva Gedolah of LA

Rabbi Aryeh Malkiel Kotler,
Rosh HaYeshiva Beth Medrash
Govoha (Lakewood)

Rabbi Chaim Stein,
Rosh HaYeshiva,
Yeshivas Telshe (Cleveland)

Rabbi Chaim Aaron Weinberg,
Menahel, Yeshiva Ateret Torah

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig,
Rosh HaYeshiva,
Yeshiva V'Kollel Remach (Miami)



Rabbi E. Svei



Rabbi Y. Perlow



Rabbi Y. Weinberg



Rabbi S.B. Ehrenfeld



Rabbi Y. Harari-Rafal



Rabbi R. Feinstein



Rabbi E. Fischer



Rabbi M. Solomon

Shabbos Symposia

קדושים תהיו: A TIMELESS AND TIMELY IMPERATIVE (Yiddish)

Greetings from the Nesius: **Rabbi Yosef Frankel**, Vyelepoler Rov, Rav, Khal Bnei Shloima Zalman

Speakers: **Rabbi Osher Greenfeld**, Rav and Rosh Kollel, Khal Imrei Chaim Viznitz (Montreal)

Rabbi Uren Reich, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva of Perth Amboy

Rabbi Pinchos Breuer, Rav, Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH: EMES IN OUR PERSONAL LIFE AND INTERPERSONAL DEALINGS(English)

Message: **Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg**, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivas Ner Israel (Baltimore)

Address: **Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller**, Rosh HaYeshiva, TelsheYeshiva (Chicago)

Speaker: **Rabbi Paysach Krohn**, Author, The "Maggid" Series

Chairman: **Rabbi Shlomo Gertzulin**, Vice President and Comptroller, Agudath Israel

Motzoei Shabbos - Keynote Session - 8:00 PM

Hazkora for Rabbi Moshe Sherer, z"l:

Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, Novominsker Rebbe

Address: **Rabbi Elya Svei**, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva of Philadelphia

Message: **Rabbi Shmuel Bloom**, Executive Vice President, Agudath Israel of America

Guest Speaker: **Rabbi Aaron Dovid Dunner**, Dayan, Hisachdus Kehillos HaCharedim (London)

Chairman: **Rabbi Ephraim Wachsman**, Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivas Adas Yereim (Monsey)

Sunday Morning - 10:00 AM

Greetings: **Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz**, Bostoner Rebbe (Boston - Har Nof)

SESSION I.

"UNTIL 120":

Caring For and About Our Elders

Rabbi Yaakov Reisman

Rav, Agudath Israel of Long Island

Rabbi Yechiel Kaufman

Rav, Khal Anshei S'fard

Chairman: **Rabbi Dovid Grossman**, Chaplain, MJGC

SESSION II.

Ms.DIRECTED ENERGIES: The New Blurring of Gender Roles in the Orthodox World

Rabbi Yisroel Reisman

Rav, Al Zichron Chaim Zvi of Madison

Rabbi Nosson Scherman

General Editor, Mesorah Publications

Chairman: **Rabbi Moshe Boruch Parness**, (Dayton)

Agudah Women Program Highlights

THURSDAY - RECEPTION

Greetings: **Rebbetzin Rose Isbee**, Co-President, Agudah Women of America

Speaker: **Rabbi Zev Leff**, Rav, Moshav Mattityahu

KABBOLAS SHABBOS

Speaker: **Rabbi Dov Eichenstein**, Rav, Agudath Israel of Belle Harbor

Chairman: **Mrs. Matti Berkowitz**

SEUDA SHLISHIS

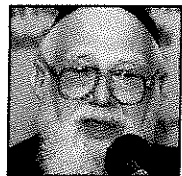
Greetings: **Mrs. Aliza Grund**, Co-President, Agudah Women of America

Speaker: **Rabbi Paysach Krohn**, Author, the Maggid Series

Chairman: **Mrs. Cyna Singer**



Rabbi S. Mandel



Rabbi C. Besser



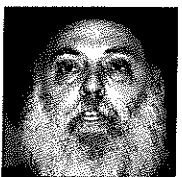
Rabbi U. Reich



Rabbi O. Greenfeld



Rabbi S. Gertzulin



Rabbi S. Dishon



Rabbi P. Breuer



Dr. A. Twerski



Rabbi M.M. Weiss



Rabbi N.I. Oelbaum



Rabbi C. Weinberg



Rabbi Y. Kaufman



Rabbi Y. Horowitz



Rabbi P. Krohn

CONVENTION CHAIRMEN



Ellis Safdeye



Reuven Dessler

Friday Morning - Roundtable Forums

The Friday morning Roundtable Discussions aim to involve more people in some of the important issues facing Torah Jewry — to thoroughly ventilate these topics, to allow for constructive debate and to gather diverse viewpoints, all in accordance with Torah principles.

1. CHILDREN SEEKING PARENTS, COUPLES SEEKING CHILDREN

What options are available to children who need new homes, and to couples seeking to build new homes? What is our responsibility as a Torah community?

Chairman: **Moshe Zakheim**, Chairman of the Board, Ohel Children's Home
Panelists: **Shimon Ostreicher**, Belzer Bikur Cholim
Dr. Joel Rosenshein, Director, Jewish Board/Mishkan
Dr. Eli Schussheim (Jerusalem), World Chairman of C.R.I.B.
Yosef Tefter, Partner, Ernest & Young LLP; foster parent, Ohel

Consultant: **Dr. Richard Grazi**, Maimonides Medical Center
Coordinator: **Rabbi Shmuel Lefkowitz**,
Vice President for Community Affairs, AIA
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Shmuel Fuerst**
Rav, Agudath Israel of Chicago

2. "IF THERE IS NO FLOUR...": IDENTIFYING NEW FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR OUR MOSDOS

It is no secret that the Orthodox world's yeshivos and social services institutions are growing and that new mosdos are constantly being established. What new fiscal resources can be enlisted and developed in the cause of ensuring the Jewish educational and institutional future?

Chairman: **Yosef Rieder**, Beth Medrash Govoha; Avir Yaakov (Skver Mosdos)
Panelists: **Yisroel Langer, Esq.**, Tax Partner, Danziger & Markhoff
Menachem Shayovich, President, Machon Bais Yaakov
Gershon Sostchin, President, Bais Yaakov of Miami

Coordinator: **Mordechai Avigdor, Esq.**, Associate General Counsel, Agudath Israel of America
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Yosef Lieber**
Exec. V.P., Yeshiva Shaarei Torah (Monsey)

3. SETTLING ACCOUNTS: HOLOCAUST ACCORDS AND THE ORTHODOX WORLD

Recent developments have brought to the fore the issue of compensatory funds for heirless and unclaimed Jewish property in Eastern Europe that might yet be forthcoming and earmarked for Jewish communal use. How can we ensure that the Orthodox world is allotted a fair share of any such funds.

Chairman: **Abraham Biderman**, AIWO Rep. to Conf. on Material Claims
Panelists: **Dr. Eric Erlbach**, President, Khal Adath Jeshurun
Shraga Faish Herzog, Vice President, Kedem Wine Corp.
Avrohom Schonberger, President, Mosdos Viener Kehillos
Alan Stern (Los Angeles), Vice President, Specialty Commodities

Coordinator: **Prof. Moishe Zvi Reicher**, AIWO UN Rep. and Director of International Affairs
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Chaskel Besser**, Nesius, AIA

4. AFFIRMATIVE REACTION: CREATING HOLINESS IN AN UNHOLY WORLD

What concrete steps can we take to inoculate ourselves and our families against the infectious atmosphere of modern-day America? How can we create an oasis of sanity and sanctity amid all the turbulence and tumah?

Chairman: **Gedalya Weinberger**, Chairman, Daf Yomi Commission, AIA
Panelists: **Shlomo Gottesman** (West Side)
Michael Hasten (Indianapolis)
Michael Kest (Los Angeles)
Rabbi Ephraim M. Appelbaum, (Toronto)

Coordinator: **Rabbi Avrohom Nisan Perl**,
Dir., Community Service Div., AIA
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Moshe Brown**, Rav, AI of W. Lawrence;
Magid Shiur, Yeshiva of Far Rockaway

5. "WHERE BA'ALEI TESHUVAH STAND..." APPRECIATING — AND UTILIZING — THE GIFTS OF THE NEWLY-OBSERVANT

How might the special dedication and talents of the more recent arrivals to Jewish observance most effectively be utilized to promote the well-being of Orthodoxy? How can the needs of the newly-observant (and the not-so-newly-observant) best be met as they proceed beyond the initial stages of becoming "ba'alei teshuva"?

Chairman: **Jordan Most**, Aluminum Traffic Manager, Glencore, LTD.
Panelists: **Dr. Jonathan Bortz**, Dir., Bortz Diabetes Control Center (St Louis)
Shimon Lefkowitz, Chairman, Yeshiva Shearith Israel
Yisroel Neuberger, Member of the Board, Hineni
Yaakov Steinberg, Investment Manager (Passaic)

Coordinator: **Rabbi Nisson Wolpin**,
Editor, The Jewish Observer
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Avrohom Braun**,
Menahel, Yeshiva Ohr Somayach (Monsey)

6. PRESSING PRIORITIES AND POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES: OUR NEXT STEPS IN GOVERNMENTAL ADVOCACY

How can we more effectively translate our demographic gains into tangible benefits for our families and institutions? What are the key issues on which we should be focusing our energies as we seek to influence governmental policy in the months and years ahead?

Chairman: **George Klein**, Co-Chair, Committee on Government Affairs, AIA
Panelists: **Harry Brown**, President, Agudath Israel of Cleveland
Dr. Irving Lebovics, Agudath Israel of Los Angeles
Hon. Seymour Lachman, New York State Senator
Hon. Kalman Finkel, Commissioner, NYC Dep. of Housing

Coordinator: **Abba Cohen** (Baltimore), Director and Counsel,
AIA Washington Office
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Sheftel Neuberger**,
Yeshivas Ner Israel (Baltimore)

7. KNOWING WHO WE ARE: THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-ESTEEM IN EVERY JEWISH LIFE (Women Only)

How can we foster a healthy degree of truly Jewish self-worth in our children, our parents, ourselves? What steps can we take to ensure that our recognition of "meh oni u'meh chayay?" — "What am I and what is my life?" is properly balanced with an understanding of "bishvili nivro ha'olam" — "For me the world was created"?

Chairman: **Rebbetzin Basie Rosenblatt**
Panelists: **Mrs. Miriam Stern**, Social Worker, HASC
Mrs. Rebecca Weiss, Principal, Shalshelas Bais Yaakov

Coordinator: **Mrs. Chavi Finestone**, Psychologist
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Aryeh Zev Ginsberg**,
Ohr Moshe Torah Institute (Queens)

8. ANTICIPATING THE UNEXPECTED: ACHIEVING PREPAREDNESS FOR ADVERSITY (Women Only)

How might we more Jewishly face the trials and obstacles, both the unexpected and the inevitable, on the paths of our lives? When — and how — is it proper for a Jew to prepare, emotionally, economically or otherwise, for distress or tragedy?

Chairman: **Mrs. Laya Leshkowitz**, Co-Chairman, N'shei C.A.R.E.S.
Panelists: **Mrs. Chaya Hochbaum**, Fresh Start Training Program, AIA
Rabbi Yisroel Lefkowitz, CEO, Palm Gardens Nursing Home

Panelists: **Moshe Z. Newman, Esq.**, Sen. Partner, Newman & Berger
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Peretz Steinberg**, YI of Queens Valley

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Yeshiva-Day Memories

After having dedicated an entire book to life in the European *shtetl* of old,¹ it's time we sketched the details of life in the *yeshivos* of pre-World II Europe. The topics are closely related, for wherever there was a yeshiva, half of the *shtetl* made a living from the yeshiva.

would fill up huge pots with potatoes or kashye and some meat, place it in the oven over night, and by the next afternoon dinner was ready: *cholent*, seven days a week.

The *Rosh Hayeshiva*, Reb Elchonon Wasserman, ר"ח, carried the entire finances of the yeshiva on his shoulders singlehandedly³.

Hence no one dared complain about the daily *cholent*.

name was Shapiro.

We did, however have a problem with the foreigners who came from places with names we could hardly pronounce.

Is it *New York*? Or *NevYork*? Or *Nayork*? Or perhaps *Newark*? So we played it safe and called him "Yankel Der Amerikaner." Or, if he came from Germany, "Moshe Der Deitch" or "Der Yekke" (not, *chalilla*, in a derogatory sense).

Graduated Shiurim

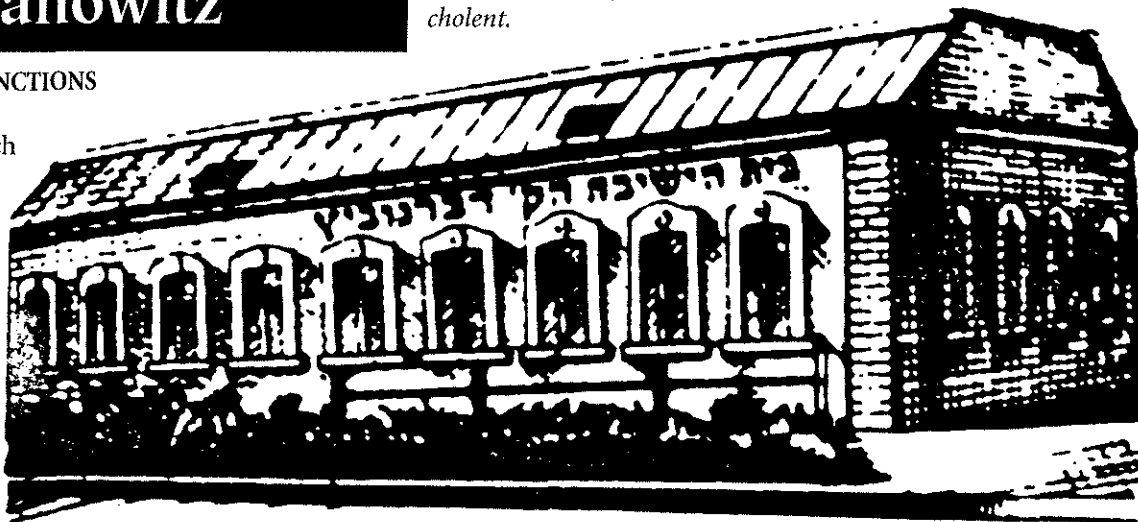
In Lomza there were five levels — *Beis, Gimmel-Aleph, Gimmel-Beis, 4* and 5. In Baranowitz there were levels 4, 5, and 6. Any newcomer had to spend at least one *z'man* in level 4. The *Rebbe* was

Remembering Lomza and Baranowitz

I. STRUCTURAL DISTINCTIONS

The *yeshivos* were each different from one another, not only in method of learning and in *ruchniyus* (spiritual matters), but even in physical structure. For example, Lomza was the only yeshiva that had dining facilities plus a dormitory for its *talmidim*.² While Baranowitz had dining facilities but no dormitory, all the other *yeshivos* had neither.

In Lomza, the "kitchen" supplied three meals a day, in Baranowitz only one. After the morning *davening* in Baranowitz, the *shamash*, Rabbi Nissan Kaplan, would hand out portions of black bread. For breakfast, we would take it to our *stanzye* (sleeping quarters) where we washed it down with sweet tea. That was breakfast. At two in the afternoon, dinner was served. The menu was invariably some sort of "*cholent*." The elderly woman who served as cook



Personal Identity

In the *yeshivos*, no one was called by his last name, only by the name of the town he came from, and for good reason. There could be a number of boys with both the same first and last name, but very seldom did both Chaims, for example, hail from the same town. Hence I was called Chaim Lomzer (from the city of Lomza), with hardly anyone knowing that my family

Rabbi Laib Gavye, a *talmid chacham* who was half blind (in those days, they had no cure for cataracts). He gave a daily *shiur* (practically by heart), as well as a *dvar Torah*.⁴ Reb Elchonon would give the daily *blatt* for both classes 5 and 6 — the same *blatt* twice daily. Of course, they differed in complexity and depth. In addition, he would deliver the weekly *pilpul shiur* on *Shabbos*.

Reb Elchonon was active in *Klal Yisroel* matters. On occasion, Rabbi Aaron Kotler זצ"ל would arrive from Kletzk, and together they would travel to a meeting of *gedolei Yisroel*, leaving Reb Elchonon's

Rabbi Chaim Shapiro, currently of Baltimore, is a frequent contributor to these pages, most recently (Dec. '97) with "Novaradok to ... Paris," about the late Rabbi Gershon Liebman זצ"ל.

¹ *Once Upon a Shtetl*, ArtScroll/Mesorah.

² Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin opened many years later.

³ He claimed yeshiva money is *mamon hekadesh* (sacred funds) and can't be used for paying a *meshulach*.

⁴ The late Rabbi Aaron Kreiser זצ"ל of Lakewood published a few of Rabbi Leib Gavye's *ma'amorim*.

son Reb Naftoli to say the *shiur* in his place. Reb Naftoli once wrote his father a *dvar Torah* in which he answered a *kushye* (difficulty) in a *Tosafos*. In response, his father *mussared* (chastised) him gently, "It's not for us *zu machen Torah* to answer *Tosafos's kushye*. Our goal is to understand *Tosafos's kushye*."

II. BARANOWITZ PERSONALITIES

Reb Elchonon was so pre-occupied with myriad responsibilities that he delegated much of the *ruchniyus* of the yeshiva to the *Mashgiach*, Reb Yisroel Yaakov Lubchansky.⁵

Reb Yisroel Yaakov's daily duties began in the dining room. Since we were all teen-agers, he enforced discipline there, personally attending every meal. He appointed the *mechalkim* (waiters), maintaining that whoever feeds *bnei Torah*, handing out food to them, must be a *baal mussar* (an ethical personali-

⁵ See JO May '70

ty) and appreciate the fact that he is practicing *chessed*, *hatova* and other *middos* (selfless giving, among other positive attributes). As I recall, every *mechalek* was a *baal madreiga* (refined personality), and developed into a respected *talmid chacham*.

The chief *mechalek* was Nachman Rubzevitz (from the *shtetl* of Rubzevitz), whose family name was Nechomkin (presently in Brooklyn). Why was he the "chief"? Because he had the most difficult job, namely to divide a piece of meat into a few hundred portions, spreading out a few strands of meat on each plate, making it look like a substantial portion. If you would take together all the strings on a plate, it would be as wide as a solitary finger!

The *Mashgiach* enforced total



Reb Yisroel Yaakov Lubchansky ל'צ"ק

silence during the meal. He would quote the *Gemora* in *Sanhedrin* 23: "The *nekiyei hadaas* (refined personalities) in Yerushalayim would not sit down to eat until they knew whom they would be sitting with."

In his *shmuessen*, he would sometimes focus on the meals: "When one sits down to a table, he should ask himself, *Would David Hamelech sit at my table?* Of course, we don't know at which table he would prefer to sit. But we do know at which table he would definitely *not* sit. For he said it himself in the first *pasuk* of *Tehillim* — '*U'vemoshav leitzim lo yashav* — [Fortunate is he] who sits not at a gathering of scoffers.'"

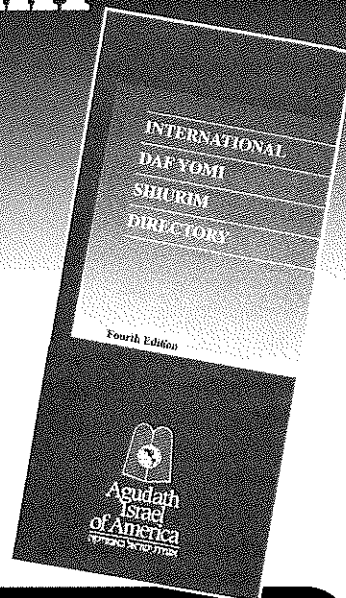
Hence total silence during the meals. I recall the reaction of a pharmacist who had brought his son to the yeshiva. After the meal, he enthusiastically declared: "What a *Kiddush Hashem*! A few hundred boys, and all I heard was the spoons and forks hitting the metal plates."

Reb Yisroel Yaakov would insist that every boy report to *davening* on time. I remember one boy who would learn until 4 a.m., and as a result, he would come to *daven* late. He "gave" it to him in public: "Torah without *tefilla* is not a good *shidduch*." He later complained to several boys: "Look at my *parnassa*! A *bachur* learns all night and I have to criticize him."

A few weeks later, he publicly asked the boy for *mechilla* (forgiveness) for embarrassing him. Before he began the regular *shmuess*, he said, "I thing I overreacted in my *mussar* to Alter Ruder *berabbim* (in public), hence I ask his *mechilla berabbim*."

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**The Various Gvardyes:
The Baranowitz Bunch**

There were *Gvardyes* in every yeshiva — groups of boys who would cling together, learn together, discussing various subjects, and “fighting” in Torah together. In Baranowitz, an elite *Gvardye* constituted of Nochum “Troker” זצ”ל (Parcewitz, later Rosh Yeshiva Mir, Yerushalayim), Shmuel “Kidishiner”⁶ (Birenbaum, later Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, Brooklyn), Aaron “Kovler” זצ”ל (Kreiser, one of the great *marbitzei Torah* in America), Tuvye “Vlodover” (Goldstein, Rosh Yeshiva of Emek Halacha), Avrem’l “Traber” זצ”ל (Broyda, later Rosh Yeshiva in Mesivta Torah Vodaas) and a few others.

In every yeshiva there was a Horodoker click. Horodok is a small town near Vilna, where the *Rav* was Rabbi Eliyahu Garber, a *tzaddik* and a *baal mussar*, he had been a *talmid* of Reb Boruch Ber in the early days at Holusk, and he so impressed Reb Boruch Ber that the Rosh Yeshiva later selected him to marry his younger sister. The *Rav* of Horodok would gather the boys of the *shtetl*, learn with them, and send them off to the yeshiva⁷ at his own expense.

Mir-educated Rabbi Leib Baron of Montreal relates, “I didn’t want to go to yeshiva. When the wagon drove into the forest on the way to Baranowitz, I jumped off and went home. A week later the *Rav* met me in the street. He took me by both ears and accompanied me on the wagon to personally deliver me to the yeshiva of Baranowitz.” That boy with the stretched ears became a *talmid chacham* and was even chosen by the *Mashgiach* to be a *mechalek*. He eventually became a Rosh Yeshiva, and published six highly regarded *sefarim*.

⁶ A cluster of towns, Tiktin, Kidishin, Korochin. My uncle Rabbi Chaim Moseson, who was *Rav* in Korochin, was known as the little Chofetz Chaim. His brother had the courage to remain as *Rav* in Leningrad — in spite of the *Yevsektzye* (Jewish Communists) for many years, trusting that his old age (in the 90’s) would protect him from them. Their younger brother was a *Rav* on the Lower East Side of Manhattan for many years.

⁷ The son of the Horodoker *Rav*, Rabbi Yisroel Garber, was active in *chinuch habanos*, and published *sefarim*. Recently, when we began *Daf Yomi Bera-chos*, his *sefer Tal LeYisroel* proved very useful.

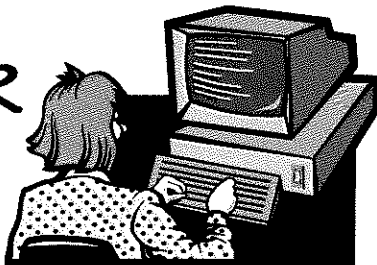
The Mussar Sessions

We learned *mussar* for a half hour before *Maariv*. Rumor had it that Reb Yisroel Yaakov

had wanted to add an additional half hour before *Mincha*, but Reb Elchonon remarked, “Would you take *acharayus* for *bittul Torah*?” Reb Yisroel Yaakov then settled for an additional 15 min-

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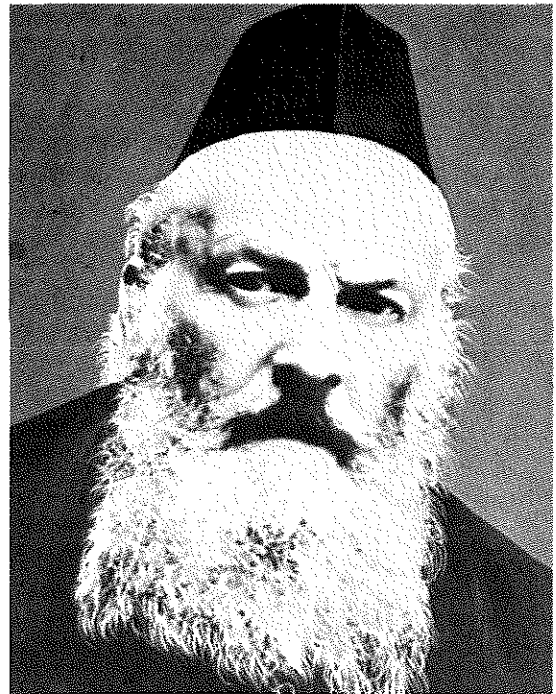
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utes before *Mincha*, in Elul.

Every *Shabbos* after *Shalosh Seudos*, when the yeshiva was immersed in total darkness, Reb Yisroel Yaakov would give his weekly *shmuess* (sometimes offering an additional one during the week). He would virtually take us apart because he knew the inside of every *talmid*. In Elul, *hisorerus* (words of inspiration) were added to the *shmuess*. Many *baalei batim* would come to listen, and Reb Elchonon personally would slip in among them, taking a seat on the rear bench. When the *Mashgiach* would call out loudly, "Let us be *mispallel Hashiveinu... ve'nashuva*," the walls would tremble from his cries. When the lights went on after *Maariv*, it was apparent that there wasn't a single dry eye in the assembly.

Reb Dovid's Shiur

To talk about Baranowitz without mentioning Reb Dovid Rappaport would be a terrible sin of omission. He was known in the yeshi-

va world as the *Tzemach Dovid*, after his first *sefer*. Then followed the *Mikdash Dovid* on *Kadoshim*. It is said that Reb Boruch Ber of Kamenitz once commented, "Such a *sefer* could not have been written without *ruach hakodesh*." Reb Dovid was a grandson of Rabbi Akiva Eiger. His father was at one time one of the wealthiest Jews in Minsk. After the Communist Revolution, he escaped to Danzig where he accepted the post of *dayan*.

I remember the first *shiur* he gave in yeshiva to us new arrivals. He stood tall and erect, his head covered with a large square *yarmulke*, his reddish beard turning gray, both temples throbbing when he was thinking. He took his place on the left side of the *aron kodesh*, while the entire yeshiva stood in a semi-circle around him, holding their collective breath.

Then he began, and we newcomers got the greatest shock: he was a heavy stut-terer. We couldn't believe our ears. Stut-terers normally avoid public speaking or lecturing, but he held all the boys in some sort of a trance. Some took notes, some nodded their heads in agreement, and we new arrivals felt robbed, because we couldn't follow the *shiur*.

Later we learned that Reb Elchonon had been in need of another *Rosh Yeshiva*.⁸ He was very impressed by Reb Dovid's *sefarim* published while he was yet in the *Kollel* of Slobodka, so he invited him to join the yeshiva. On discovering the man's handicap, he had every legal right to refuse him the position, but Reb Elchonon was not an average person; neither was Reb Dovid. He remained. In reality, Reb Dovid was a blessing in disguise, because he would talk very slowly. After a few weeks, one would get used to his presentation and it worked out perfectly.

⁸ Once Rabbi Shlomo Heiman, later *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, told his *Rebbetzin* that Reb Elchonon gave him a position in the yeshiva. A practical woman, she asked, "How much is your salary?" Said Reb Shlomo, "I forgot to ask." He went back to Reb Elchonon, and asked, to which Reb Elchonon replied "The same as mine." He happily reported to his *Rebbetzin*, "You hear? The same as Reb Elchonon's!" Little did he know that Reb Elchonon's salary was bare minimum.

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Neighbors to Reb Dovid

We were six boys renting two rooms in the fourth house from Reb Dovid.⁹ Every time we passed by, he was standing at the window staring at the sky. When we said *Good Morning*, he never replied, as if he didn't see us. He was childless, and his *Rebbetzin* watched over him constantly, for he was one of the greatest absent-minded scholars in the world.

Every *Shabbos* morning, she would sit on the front steps waiting for us with cookies. She liked to play mother to us out-of-towners. She would tell us how she married the *Rosh Yeshiva*. Her father was a wealthy *baalebos* in Kremenchuk. During the first World War, when the *yeshivos* and all *gedolim* were forced into the interior of Russia, forty *yeshivaleit* including Reb Boruch Ber came to Kremenchuk. Her father, Rabbi Chaim Dov Halevi Gringraz, neglected his business to take care of the *gedolim*. He prided himself on his activities and always claimed that he was *zocheh* to marry off four daughters to great *talmidei chachamim, rabbanim* and *Roshei Yeshiva* only in the *zechus* of his *chassadim*. By the time it came to his fifth daughter's turn, he had been *niftar*, but he came to her in a dream to tell her: *I didn't have time to marry you off while I was alive, so I'll marry you off from my grave. Your husband-to-be is Rabbi Dovid Rappaport. And they married.*

She apologized to us for his not responding to our "good morning" or "gut *Shabbos*." "He is very absent minded," she explained, "and I have to constantly watch over him. He doesn't even see you when you pass by; his mind is totally involved in Torah."

He loved to take walks, preparing his *shiur* while on the move. Observers could tell by the sounds his cane produced while hitting the wooden sidewalks that he had perfected an excellent *sevora* (rationale). When he would begin to twirl his cane like a windmill, we knew that he had succeeded in explaining a difficult *Rambam*, and

⁹ Only three of us remain: Yos'l Linchewski (Tiktiner), Zelig Weisbord (Lomza), and myself.

when the cane increased in its velocity, he had proved his grandfather, Rabbi Akiva Eiger, to be correct.

Once a poor dog got hit by the twirling cane, yelping and barking. Reb Dovid neither heard nor saw a thing and kept on walking until he collided with a utility pole. He said, "Excuse me," and continued on his way.

Rabbi Mendel Goldberg, a former *talmid* of the Chofetz Chaim, who knew the entire *Mishna Berura* by heart, owned the biggest liquor store in the city located in the center of town. Once, on a busy market day, when the streets were full of Polish farmers and White Russian laborers, Reb Mendel looked out of his store window, and noticed Reb Dovid marching. His cane was poised to start twirling. Reb Mendel rushed out just in time, and escorted him back to the yeshiva.

III. POSTSCRIPT: AFTER THE WAR

When the yeshiva arrived in Vilna, fleeing from Baranowitz (1940), the Lithuanian authorities made them move to Troki and then to Semilishok, two small towns in the vicinity of Vilna. It happened on *Shabbos*, a week before the dreadful June 22, 1941, the day the Germans attacked Russia. The yeshiva was in the middle of reading the Torah. The reader said: "For they are wholly given to me from among the children of Israel, I have taken them unto Me" (*Bamidbar* 8, 16). A police officer burst into the *beis midrash*, gun in hand, shouting, "You are all under arrest!"

Reb Dovid was the only one there from the faculty; Reb Elchonon and Reb Yisroel Yaakov were in Vilna. Reb Dovid, knowing the Bolsheviks from the days of the Revolution in his native Minsk, jumped out the window, with many boys following, only to find that a cordon of police armed with rifles had encircled the entire building, firing shots in the air. They were all taken to the railroad station in Vileika.

One must concede that the Russians were not like the Germans. They only sent single men to prison camps; cou-

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ples and families were assigned to villages, where they were conscripted into forced labor. Reb Dovid, separated from his wife, was considered single, and sent to a prison camp.

In the Soviet view, all are *not* equal. In the USSR any one arrested automatically became an enemy of the people, but there were enemies of various degrees. For instance, a capitalist need only to be relieved of his wealth, shipped out to a remote village, and put to work, and he'd be rehabilitated, forget his riches, and become adjusted to Soviet reality. More dangerous to the regime were clerics, scholars, writers, and thinkers. They needed stronger medicine, longer arrests, to reeducate them in the dialectics of Marxism. Starved until they were finally released, they emerged bonafide Socialists, no longer enemies of the working class. The most dangerous were the intellectuals; they were shot on the spot, worked to death, or driven to suicide.

Reb Dovid had everything against him — the son of a capitalist, his father was a spy in Danzig, and a cleric; he him-

self had published books, so he was also an intellectual.

He was shipped to prison in the Karelo Finnish Republic. When the Germans and their allies, the Finns, encircled Leningrad, all inmates of the prison camps in the vicinity were shipped into the Russian interior — some by train, some on foot. On the march, Reb Dovid fell; he simply couldn't continue. Before his *petira* (passing), he managed to give a *beracha* to two Jews: "You will make it to the end, but please search for my wife Frume, and tell her of my fate so that she can remarry."

On American Shores

After the war in 1948, I arrived in America. My father's old friend from Lomza, Reb Yechiel Mordechai Gordon, invited me to join his *Kollel*, where he had gathered all those who had learned in the Lomza Yeshiva. There I met Moshe Pultusker (Segal). I remembered him, a Chassidic *talmid*, who, in spite of his youth, became one of the top men in the yeshiva. I needed a *sefer*, my library was practically empty. Said Reb Moshe, "Stop off in my apartment, I have the *sefer*." While searching for the *sefer*, his *Rebbetzin* walked in with a baby in her hands. We both stopped in our tracks. In fact, she almost dropped the baby. "Chaim Lomzer, is that you!" It was the former Frume Rappaport.

It took some time before we could even talk, then she told me her story. Having been separated from her husband, she was shipped to the Altayski Kray (in the Altay region), 400 kilometers from the nearest railroad station in Barnaul. She arrived in the village Radino. When the Polish Prime Minister General Sikorski signed a peace treaty with the USSR, Stalin declared an amnesty for all Polish pris-

oners — both in prison or semi-prison. They left Siberia, traveling to the warmer climate of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and other southern lands. Frume stopped in Tashkent (capital of Uzbekistan), Alma Ata (capital of Kazakhstan), Buchara, and finally settled in Dzambul (Kazach Republic).

During the war, the entire country worked seven days a week. Frume, not wanting to work on *Shabbos*, refused to take a job, even at the price of losing the rights to a monthly ration card. She used to buy potatoes, bake *latkes* called "piroshki" in Russian, load up her basket and go to the railroad station to sell her merchandise. Whenever she encountered Jewish passengers, she would ask them if they had met or heard of her husband, the *Rosh Yeshiva* in Baranowitz, as well as about her four brothers-in-law.

On Fridays, she would leave the station at noon, *lekavod Shabbos*. One Friday, she still had a dozen *latkes* in her store, and she decided to stay a little longer. A train arrived, and two Jews disembarked. After they purchased several *latkes*, she gave them a few more for free, *lekavod Shabbos*, and then she asked the old *nusach* about her husband and brothers-in-law. The two, with mouths full of *latkes*, said, "Yes," referring to Rappaport. Frume fainted. The two men were puzzled. They had seen many people passing out from starvation, but this woman had *latkes*. Why had she fainted?

A woman passed by and said, "*Oy vey is mir! Rebbetzin Rappaport!*" The two suddenly realized the importance of their testimony and fulfilled their promise to the dying *Rosh Yeshiva*. They later told the *beis din* that they were traveling from Murmansk and Archangel, and had passed literally hundreds of stations, never feeling any inclination to disembark. When the train stopped in Dzambul, however, a mysterious feeling pushed them to get off the train.

On the basis of their testimony, the *beis din* gave her permission to remarry. It was after the war back in Lodz, Poland, that she met Moshe Segal from Pultusk. They raised five children and left behind a *dor yeshorim*, as I personally witnessed in America. ■

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The Casualties of Success

Why Some Successful People Fail as Parents

PERSONALITY PROFILE OF SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

Success can be defined as high achievement in those areas for which one earns significant status, prestige and recognition.

Regardless of the area of endeavor, all successful people share one or more of the following character traits.

- **Goal directed.** Some people never seem to know what they want. Successful people, on the other hand, know exactly what they want and they are routinely busy striving to reach their goals.
- **Time efficient.** Some people are always looking for fresh ways to "kill time." Successful people, however, never waste a minute because they value what can be accomplished even in small amounts of time.
- **Conscientious and persistent.** Successful people just never give up, no matter how long it takes to get there. They consistently attain their goals, not so much as a result of good fortune, but due to their unwillingness to accept failure.
- **Detail oriented.** Throughout the ages, great men have been distinguished by their attention to details that would have easily been overlooked or neglected by others.
- **Future focused.** People who cannot delay immediate gratification achieve very little in life. Successful people, on the other hand, accomplish exceptional feats by virtue of their long range vision.*

Everyone would agree, for example, that all Torah luminaries possess some

Dr. Meir Wikler, a psychotherapist and family counselor in private practice, lives in Brooklyn, N.Y. He is a frequent contributor to these pages, most recently with "Planting an AiSheL in Your Home," April '98. This essay is based on a workshop that the author conducted for a private group of *Rabbanim* in *Eretz Yisroel* in August, '94.

or all of the *middos* listed above. But it is not these traits alone that produce greatness. It is also the proper balance of these attributes which results in unusual lifetime achievements.

At times, individuals possess enough of these qualities to achieve a modicum of success at work, but they have not reached the proper balance to succeed at parenting.

CHILDREN'S PROBLEMS

T*sa'ar gidul banim*, the pangs of childrearing, are universal (*Shabbos* 89b). But, when successful people fail to raise successful children, the torment of the parents is unusually severe. And with alarming frequency today, some of the children of successful people are suffering from certain common problems at home and in yeshiva.

- **Academic failure.** "I just know he can do better work," is a refrain echoed by *rebbe'im*, teachers, and parents alike. Psychological testing confirms what everyone knows already. This child is performing far below his ability. Why is he failing?
- **Acting-out behavior.** In yeshiva, at home, and/or at camp, this child is disobedient. There may be a disregard for authority. At times, the child may be openly defiant and disrespectful. Rules are broken; peace and harmony are shattered; and the parents' hopes and dreams are dashed. Why is this child so unruly when all of the other children from the same family are so well-behaved?
- **Depression and withdrawal.** The child keeps to himself and stays at home. Activities that would interest other

*See *Bayis Ne'eman b'Yisrael*, Chapter 10, for a fuller discussion of this point.

children the same age do not appeal to him. If an adult felt this way, we would call him depressed. Why is this child so withdrawn?

At times, the answer to all of these questions is the same. If the parents are highly successful, it just may be that the same personality qualities that enabled the parents to achieve so much outside are the very traits that have interfered with their parenting at home. Three case examples will illustrate the dynamics of this process.

(The identifying information in the following case examples has been sufficiently disguised to the point where the individuals involved should not even be able to recognize themselves.)

Yossi

Yossi's father heads a large C.P.A. firm with over 50 employees. In spite of the demands of his accounting practice, Yossi's father keeps a three-hour daily *sefer* of learning in a local *kollel*. Part of his *sefer* is devoted to learning with a *chavrusa* and part is devoted to completing a *sefer* on *halacha*.

Yossi's mother teaches at a local preschool, but not because the family needs the additional income.

Both of his parents are looked up to by all members of the community as models of *Torah* and *chessed*. Their home is open to *Shabbos* guests and yeshiva parlor meetings. And their list of friends includes both the "Who's Who" as well as the lonely and overlooked members of the community. What problems could Yossi possibly have with parents like these?

First, Yossi has been missing *minyan* more often than he attends. Second,

Yossi's parents recently discovered that he has secretly applied for no less than three credit cards. Finally, Yossi has become uncooperative, gruff, and quite uncommunicative with his parents and, as one of the oldest children, he has taken to terrorizing some of his younger siblings. Yossi's parents hear no reassurance from his *rebbe*. They don't know how he's learning, when he's learning or even, *chas v'Shalom*, if he's not learning at all!

Extensive consultations with Yossi's parents revealed a long history of heated confrontations between Yossi and his father, and occasionally his mother. His parents initially attempted to correct Yossi's behavior by being firm and disapproving. When that failed, they tried simply ignoring his misbehavior and treating him cordially. When that failed, they sought a *Rav* to "talk some sense into him." And when that failed,... they just broke down and cried.

Chaim

Misbehavior was never a complaint of Chaim's *rebbe'im*. If anything, Chaim's behavior was often described as "too good." His academic performance was always above average. What troubled Chaim's parents, however, was his moodiness and social withdrawal.

Chaim's father is a high profile, high-powered owner of a major travel agency, who is respected not only for his wheeling and dealing but also for his integrity and honesty. It is well known, for example, that he would walk away from a six figure deal without the slightest hesitation if his *Rav* directed him to do so. Chaim's mother does not work — outside of the home. But she keeps a large, spotless home humming smoothly, as she devotedly cares for Chaim and his four younger siblings.

By the time Chaim entered 10th

grade, he seemed to have no friends at all. He hardly ventured out of his room, except to go to yeshiva. Although the phone rang off the wall for Chaim's popular younger brother, Menachem, no one ever called for Chaim.

Chaim's parents, especially his father, wanted to have a close relationship with Chaim, but did not know how. Whenever Chaim and his father walked to *shul* together on *Shabbos* without Menachem, there were often long, uncomfortable silences. Chaim's father remembered how distant he had been from his own father and wanted to change all that, especially with his oldest son. Nevertheless, he painfully and helplessly watched as his family history repeated itself.

In 11th grade, Chaim became even more withdrawn and depressed. Even men in *shul* commented to Chaim's father that they never saw Chaim smile. That was

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when Chaim's parents' concern turned to worry and they requested a consultation with a mental health professional.

Aaron

At times, casualties from misguided, albeit successful parents can even be found in the homes of klei kodesh. Here, too, the qualities which produce success in rabbanus or chinuch do not always guarantee success in parenting, even though an accomplished talmid chacham or mechanech will, as a rule, be a baal middos...as illustrated by the following case example.

Aaron's father holds three jobs, all of which would be considered full-time by anyone else. He is a *maggid shiur* at a prestigious *mesivta*. His teaching is so highly regarded that some parents send their sons to that *mesivta* simply because they know he will be their sons' *Rebbi* for one year.

In addition, Aaron's father is the *Rav* of a large, well-respected congregation, where he is called upon to deliver regular *shiurim*, besides *drashos* on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. Finally, as if all of that were not enough, Aaron's father serves as the rabbinical advisor for a major Jewish communal organization.

Besides the salaries Aaron's father earns at each of his three positions, he has earned the respect of colleagues, coworkers, subordinates and the community for the superior fashion in which he fulfills his many responsibilities.

Aaron's mother is a talented *Rebbetzin*, above and beyond the management of her busy, bustling home. She is a frequent public speaker, active in *chessed* organizations — you get the picture.

With role models like these, how could anything go wrong? In spite of the examples set by his parents, Aaron performed quite poorly in yeshiva. He often seemed absent minded, and had no close friends. What troubled his parents most was that he seemed to be increasingly unhappy all the time. Yet both of his parents are known as *ba'alei middos*, who are generally patient and compassionate.

A full battery of psychological tests revealed serious academic delays, above

average intelligence, unmet emotional needs, a fear of his father and an inability to express feelings.

Extensive consultation with the parents uncovered a pattern of parenting which included extremely high expectations and a lack of emotional nurturing, wherein most expressions of approval focused on academic performance.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Coming from such exemplary homes, we would expect at least average, if not above average, behavior and academic performance from Yossi, Chaim and Aaron. What went wrong?

At times, people have managed to acquire the character traits necessary to succeed in careers outside of the home. Nevertheless, because they have not perfected or modified those *middos*, these same people fail in their careers at home, as parents.

For example, if one is goal-directed, time-efficient and persistent to an extreme, one can become rigid, demanding and stubborn. When that happens, the high expectations one imposes upon oneself become unrealistic, unreachable goals for one's children. And when children feel that they can never satisfy their parents, they act out, stop trying, or do both.

Furthermore, if someone is too detail-oriented, he could lose his perspective and miss the big picture. When that occurs, a parent will treat every minor infraction as if it were a major catastrophe, which, in turn, serves only to discourage the child.

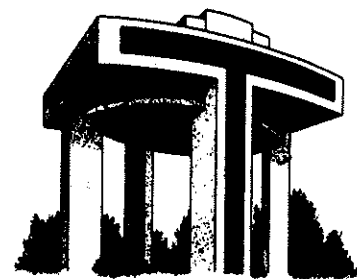
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Chaim's father remembered how distant he had been from his own father and wanted to change all that, especially with his oldest son.

Finally, too much efficiency can lead to emotional distance. And when parents create cold, emotionally sterile atmosphere at home, it triggers hurt and angry feelings in the children.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Is there hope for Yossi, Chaim and Aaron? Is it already too late? What can be done to help their parents raise successful children?

Yes, there is hope for these families. If the parents can accept that *they* must make some changes, improvement is possible. By taking some or all of the following steps, parents who are successful in their careers outside can succeed at home, as well.

- Give some unconditional approval.

There is perhaps no greater motivation for children than the prospect of earning their parents' praise. By linking approval to behavior or academic performance, parents try to bring out the best in their children. But if all approval is conditional, or if the parents' expectations are unrealistic, then the children will rebel, give up, or do both. So while it's a good idea to give any child some unconditional approbation, it is absolutely vital for a Yossi, Chaim or Aaron.

- **Limit criticism.** Children need to be corrected, otherwise they will never learn. But parents who are always finding fault with their children will soon discover that no one is paying attention anymore. Their *musar shmuessen* may be quite accurate; but if their children are not listening, nothing is accomplished. As *Chazal* have taught, "*s'mol docheh v'yamin m'kareiv*, criticize with the weaker hand and praise with the stronger one" (*Sota 47a*).

- **Spend time with each child.** Relationships cannot be imposed and enforced like a dress code. Even parent-child relationships must be nurtured over time. Animals instinctively bond with their parents. But humans must deliberately devote time to each of their children in order to build the closeness which is so vital to healthy psychosocial development. And that time must be

focused on the child — not the chore, task or homework that is the agenda of the parent.

- **Admit failure and defeat.** Some parents mistakenly believe that it is good *chinuch* for their children to think parents are perfect and never make mistakes. These parents make every effort to hide their imperfections from their children.

Yossi, Chaim and Aaron each felt alienated and estranged from their parents, in part, because they saw their parents as so superior and unreachable. If their parents had shared some of their own frustrations, errors and even embarrassments with them, the parents might have appeared more human, more approachable.

FOLLOW-UP

What ever happened to Yossi, Chaim and Aaron? Their parents swallowed hard and accepted the bitter pill (for them) of the prescription outlined above. It took quite some time, but all three families were able to reverse the destructive patterns outlined above.

Aaron is now learning well, solidly established in the upper half of his class at a most demanding yeshiva. Yossi is married, living out of town, learning in *kollel*, and the pride and joy of his in-laws, to his parents' surprise. His relationship with his parents has improved dramatically and they now regularly fax messages back and forth, which include more fondness and affection than they ever dreamed possible.

Chaim is still somewhat socially withdrawn, but not nearly as noticeably unhappy as he used to be. He is beginning to crawl out of his shell, although he still has a long way to go. The closer relationship he has recently developed with his father, however, has unmistakably raised his self-esteem — as well as his parents' hopes.

These three sets of parents are now more successful at home. And if other parents would follow their example, then, perhaps, we would see fewer casualties from success. ■



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Reclaiming Kamocho:

Instilling a Healthy Self-Image in Our Students

Much attention is being focused on adolescents drifting from our schools and our values, and rightfully so. In addition, it would prove worthwhile to address those youths still in our ranks, to curb future statistics. There is, in the words of a seasoned mechanech I spoke with recently, a "dark cloud" over our schoolchildren, now more than ever. In a recent workshop I gave to one group of high school girls, they unanimously labeled their most pressing problem: "I don't like myself." Many suffer from a low self-esteem, contributing to a lack of simchas hachayim — joie de vivre. These, again, are not the adolescents who have fallen out of our system — they are our system, and it behooves us to address them. Not to simplify the myriad of problems in homes and avoid approaching each situation individually, but perhaps to emerge with a redefined, positive attitude toward students within the classroom, as well as help them master crucial life skills, which could help even those with severe maladies cope more effectively.

“Y’hi ch’vod talmidcha chaviv alecha k’shelach.” May the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own (Avos 4:15). According to Rabbi S.R. Hirsch: Demanding honor and obedience from our children without granting them respect and dignity in turn is doomed to failure (Yesodoth Hachinuch, Vol. 1).

Children thrive on acceptance, on feeling unconditionally loved and admired as people. They have a strong need for their educators to be machshiv (respect) them, to be motivated to

Mrs. Juravel of Monsey, NY, is involved in girls' education on the high school and seminary level.

grow. This respect should stem from an overall recognition of their essential goodness and potential. In *Yeshayahu* (49:1), the Jews despairingly express their sense of loss: "Azavtani Hashem v'Hashem shichechani — G-d has abandoned me and forgotten me." Hashem then reassures them, replying, "Anochi lo eshkacheich — I will not forget you!" Rabbi Yitzchok Kirzner, ז"ר, explains this as G-d's reminder that, regardless of circumstance, we all have a core that is immutably pure. We all, through the Sinai experience and acceptance of His commands beginning with "Anochi," became extensions of Him. That aspect of each and every Jew — the *Anochi*, so to speak — is what Hashem views as their constant potential, and that will never be forgotten.

Rabbi Zev Leff of Moshav Matisyahu elucidates this, pointing out that the one time *Moshe Rabbeinu* was punished irrevocably for a wrongdoing followed his referring to the Jews as "morim — rebels." Interestingly, that was the only time that *Moshe* labeled the People rather than merely their wrongdoing. Actions, when negative, should strike us as incongruous with what we believe to be a student's essence, and that is the message we should convey.

Faced with a student inappropriately dressed, a teacher regained her composure after the initial shock and smiled at her. Privately, she asked the girl, "How do you see yourself, forty years from now, discussing this stage of life with your grandchildren?"

The look of relief on the student's face was obvious; someone viewed her as more than a young girl at this stage of life.

A boy was wandering around his yeshiva high-school campus after graduation, unsure of his self-worth. He had decided not to pursue a track of full-time learning. A former rebbi approached him and, as if reading his mind, said, "You can be a baal habayis and still be a talmid chacham."

The man, now in his thirties, has pursued that goal with a daily kvius b'limud (scheduled time reserved for Torah study) ever since.

Acceptance yields growth. Students need to feel that their teacher is rooting for them, liking and respecting them as people through their growth process. This attitude must preclude any advance labeling, as well. Students deserve the benefit of a fresh attitude, without preconceived expectations based on reputation.

SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECIES

There is a story told of a young teacher thanking her principal for keying her in on her students' potential. "Those I.Q. scores you penciled in next to their names on the roster have proven to be right on the mark."

The principal was puzzled. "I.Q.'s?" he asked. "Those were their locker numbers!"

Teacher's rooms, too, unfortunately, can sometimes be breeding ground for many self-fulfilling prophecies, albeit well-meaning.

A teacher was frustrated by questions posed by a difficult student that were, she felt, coming from a negative attitude. "How could she ask a question like that

about Sarah Imeinu? It just proves that she has no respect for what our Imahos stand for." Luckily, rather than fueling her fire, another teacher tactfully pointed out how many of the mefarshim deal with just that question. The teacher reentered the room, armed with a new attitude. The student was elated over the attention given to her issues.

I once heard a noted lecturer define the ultimate level of *simcha*. The letters of the word that we define as happiness can, with different vowels, be read as *she'macha*: the ability to erase. True happiness comes, after all, from being granted a clean slate. We can all benefit from others through the gift of erasure, the opportunity to move on without previous labels and wrongdoing defining us.

A MATTER OF CHANNELING

There are, however, behaviors and attitudes that are difficult to accept and tolerate, and that warrant discipline. How to view those manifestations of seemingly negative *middos*?

Middos are relative. One who is unaware of his shortcomings, Reb Yisroel Salanter told his students, is compared to one who is sick, the "illness" spreading to devastating ends without his attention. One who is unaware of his virtues, however, is like one who is dead. Only an awareness of our virtues gives us the tools to overcome our faults. Interestingly, one's virtues and faults can be one and the same — it is a matter of appropriate channeling. Rather than assuming the form of verbal castigation, discipline should ideally incorporate constructive channeling techniques, leaving the student hopeful rather than defeated.

A teenager, artistic by nature, looked forward each year to the one thing she enjoyed about school: being in charge of makeup application at her high school's concert. One day, not long before the concert, she came into class wearing more makeup than appropriate. Her principal, after verbally castigating her for the infraction, meted out

her punishment: no longer could she deserve to be involved with makeup at the concert.

What an opportunity lost! What a chance for an educator to remind a dear *neshama* of the fact that, shortly, there would be an appropriate channel available for her useful talent! To even add, "And someday you'll make *kallos* shine on their wedding day!" Not only was the opportunity lost...the young woman was lost to *Yiddishkeit* for many sad years, remembering this incident bitterly as a turning point.

ACCENTUATING THE POSITIVE

We often preach *anivus* (humility) to our students, forgetting to differentiate between true humility and low self-image. The girls I spoke to in the aforementioned workshop feared that truly liking themselves would lead to *ga'ava* (pride). How misguided! We have to be aware of our strengths and be humbled, in turn, by

the gift, and by the obligations inherent in recognizing their G-dly source.

A young teacher, seeing a talented student showing signs of being "high on herself," began her own campaign to stem her charge's budding ego. She ignored her raised hand in class and

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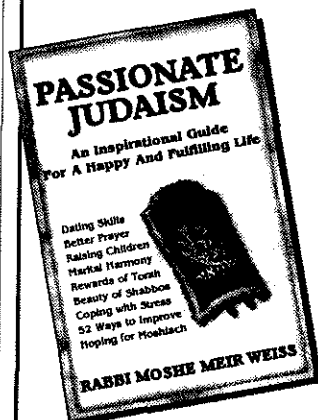
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didn't list her name when thanking all involved in a class production in which the girl starred. The student's self-confidence took many years to rebuild.

How much the girl could have gained had she been complimented on her G-d-given talents, encouraging her to make Hashem proud with them in a way that only she could. That attitude could have yielded true *anivus*, rather than crush her self-image. The girl was left questioning her worth as defined by one whose opinion she valued and whose acceptance she sorely needed.

Students I spoke with told me they

have no problem liking their friends — to the contrary! But, I asked, "Don't the same things that stop you from liking yourselves make it difficult to totally accept friends' imperfections, not yet having reached their potential — impure motives, less-than-ideal activities and thoughts, not being all that attractive...?"

"Sure!" one girl replied. "But you realize that you can love them even though they're not perfect. You love them for who they are."

How wise. We're told, though, that "V'ahavta l'reiacha kamocho — to love one's fellow man like yourself," and infer

that to love others, the healthy basis of loving yourself must exist; the obligation toward "reiacha" necessitates love of "kamocho." "That unconditional acceptance should apply to you, too," I suggested.

"It's different," a second young woman said, after thinking. "You expect more from yourself."

True, but students need to love the fact that they *do* expect more from themselves; to love themselves as works in progress.

EVALUATION... BASED ON POTENTIAL

Rebbi Dessler asks why there is a need for Rosh Hashana, if its exacting judgment is only to be overruled come Yom Kippur. One doesn't preclude the other, he answers. Rather, on Rosh Hashana Hashem judges us based on our actual deeds: who we *were* that year. Yom Kippur, on the other hand, is meant to judge our yearnings: who we *want* to be, once defined and crystallized through the *teshuvah* (repentance) process. That being the case, we find Hashem overlooking the former in judging us by the latter, which He sees as our true self. Self image can, in turn, be based on the recognition that I, in my unique way, am striving to grow and express a level of G-dliness like no other.

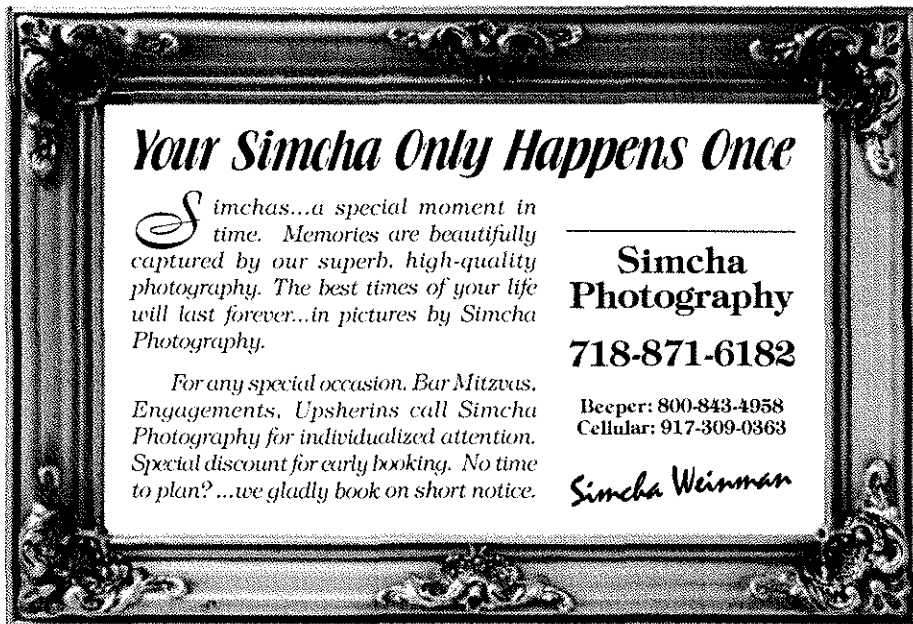
A student's self-esteem was shattered. She had become involved in an intolerable relationship. "How," she tearfully asked her teacher, "can I get out of this?"

Her teacher soothingly asked, "Could you have imagined yourself in this awful situation two years ago?"

The girl shook her head.

"So perhaps you can't imagine now what you could grow to be two years from now."

Presently, courses abound aimed at targeting self-image and developing coping strategies so sorely needed on all levels. Perhaps it would be worthwhile for us to incorporate a *hashkafa* "life skills" program for impressionable 8th-11th graders, drawing on the wealth of Torah teachings accessible to us, aimed



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One's virtues and faults can be one and the same — it is a matter of appropriate channeling.

at arming them with skills to effectively yield greater results in handling a complicated time of growing up, and offering solid ground in building an all-encompassing relationship with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. A sample curriculum could include:

- **ACCEPTING MYSELF:** my family, talents, weaknesses, my situation...as channels enabling me to grow to my potential as an individual within the Torah world. Rabbi Hutner זצ"ל described us as infinite points on a circle, each unique, but sharing a common center.

- **THE NEED FOR HELP IN GROWING — FINDING A MENTOR:** We often wait until we're "finished products" to confidently present ourselves to those we admire (even to *Hashem*). What we don't take into account is needing their help to get to that point!

- **DECISION-MAKING:** Youngsters need to be guided in the concept of "opportunity cost" — the immediate gain of any decision vs. the long-range effect. This leads to an awareness of the "bigger picture," and controlling difficult situations.

- **GOAL-ACHIEVING:** establishing realistic goals that are challenging yet achievable, as stepping stones to a long-range aspiration. The ability to meet manageable standards does wonders for self-image and provides the impetus needed to take on more.

- **ACHIEVING A LEVEL OF SPIRITUALITY WITHIN A MUNDANE EXISTENCE:** This seems rather sophisticated, but students are interested in coming to terms with how to apply lofty standards to their "regular lives —

now." Students need to view ideals presented as being relevant and applicable.

- **TIME- AND STRESS-MANAGEMENT SKILLS:** learning to prioritize tasks realistically, viewing overwhelming situations as temporary and ultimately worthwhile.

- **SELF WORTH INDEPENDENT OF PEERS' EVALUATIONS:** handling rejection, recognizing peer pressure that is potentially detrimental, "people pleasing" vs. the gratification found in making *Hashem* proud through our actions, once properly thought-out and weighed.

This list is merely a springboard. These ideas can be brought up tangentially within the framework of other classes (*Pirkei Avos*, for example) or in a "rap-session" type of setting. In either case, it is essential to offer enough input while assisting students to arrive at insights on their own. We all, after all, act in a more effective manner when spurred to growth through our own desire to grow, and self-recognition of the need to do so.

Walking into a room and feeling the tension following a difficult exam given in the previous period, the teacher put down her books and smiled. "I was having such a rough day," she confided, "but having you girls always

picks me up. You have no idea how much I look forward to your class."

She went on to teach her best class ever.

An educator once wrote, "As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration."

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Intersecting Objections

The International Section of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 24, 1998) featured a story entitled "A Ban on Islamic Head Scarves Unsettles Turkey's Universities." Much of the article centered around the political ramifications of the tensions between Islamic Fundamentalists and the secular establishment.

But the article discussed another aspect of the controversy as well.

"It is good that girls with scarves and boys with beards come to the university — there is a chance that they will grow out of it," says Murat Belge, a prominent human rights activist and a Professor of English Literature at Bilgi University, a new, private institution.

It is not easy to make common cause with Islamic Fundamentalists. Too much innocent Jewish blood has flowed because of them. Yet, one cannot but sympathize with parents sending young boys and girls to universities, little realizing that many of the professors who teach their children view religion as an anachronism. They do not consider it inconsistent with their roles to help tear young people away from faith.

Young people are susceptible to the blandishments of exciting ideas, of brilliant minds, and of new ways to think. Students, even if they return home with the trappings of their religion intact, may have undergone an internal change — of a very unwelcome kind.

There is a lesson here for all people of faith. And there is a lesson for parents who head Torah homes. We ignore it at our peril.

Dr. Fryshman, Professor of Physics at the New York Institute of Technology, and Executive Vice-President of AARTS, writes extensively on a variety of topics.

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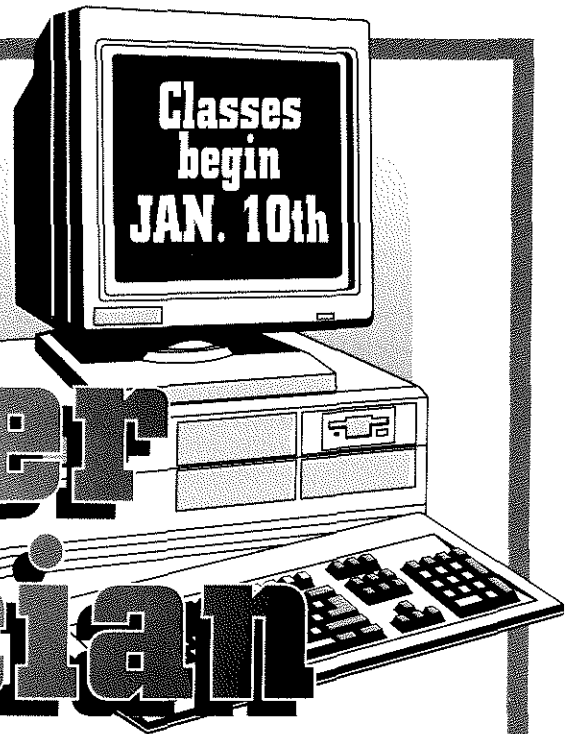
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The Story Behind the Picture

The Summer issue of The Jewish Observer, which was dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Moshe Sherer זצ"ל, featured a picture of Rabbi Sherer with two Syrian children.

I believe it would be of interest to your readers to know the background of that picture. The story will reflect in a small way the greatness of Rabbi Sherer's remarkable dedication not only to Klal Yisrael but also to Reb Yisrael.

On September 12, 1991, a mother of two children in Yeshivat Ateret Torah, where I serve as *menahel*, entered my office and requested of me to pay added attention to her children. This request was due to the fact that she was returning to Syria and did not know when or if she would return. After my initial shock set in, I inquired as to the reason of her drastic decision. She then unfolded before me a story that reminded me of something out of a book.

The mother had been able to leave Syria in 1986 with her husband and two of her children on the condition that she leave her two remaining children as hostages. At that time, the children had two healthy grandmothers to care for them. The parents were sure that, with the help of *Hashem*, their two remaining children would be able to get out of Syria. "It is now 1991, five years later. We do not see immediate hope of getting them out, and now my mother and mother-in-law, the children's grandmothers, are no longer able to care for them. My husband will remain with our three children in the U.S., and I will return to Syria to care for my two children there."

A truly heart rending story! I asked her if she had consulted with a Rabbi as to whether she was permitted to do what she planned. She confirmed consulting with the *Rosh Yeshiva*, *Hacham* Yosef Harari-Raful שליט"א, and with no visible alternative in sight, he agreed that she return. She had already purchased a ticket for her trip.

Rabbi Chaim Aaron Weinberg is *Menahel* of Yeshivat Ateret Torah in Brooklyn.

I begged her to allow me to try one last avenue of help: "Rabbi Moshe Sherer!" I called Rabbi Raful to plead our case to Rabbi Sherer. I then called Rabbi Sherer, who requested of me to give him the information in writing. I saved all the correspondence; here is a brief outline:

September 12, 1991: Letter to Rabbi Sherer with information.

September 20, 1991: Rabbi Sherer informs Rabbi Raful that he already put into motion "his friends at the U.S. Congress and U.S. State Department" on behalf of these children.

October 10, 1991: Letter of U.S. Congressman Stephen Solarz to Assistant Secretary of State Edward Djerejian asking him to intercede on behalf of these children with President Asad upon the upcoming meeting with President Asad and Secretary of State Baker and himself. In this letter, Congressman Solarz informed the Assistant Secretary of State that the request for the release of these children was first made by the Congressman in Syria in August of 1990!

October 16, 1991: Letter of Assistant Secretary of State Richard Schifter to Rabbi Sherer confirming his influence through the U.S. Embassy in Damascus.

November 29, 1991: Letter from the Assistant Secretary Richard Schifter to Rabbi Sherer, "We have good news on the _____ children. They will be allowed to leave Syria!"

December 6, 1991: My letter to Rabbi Sherer informing him that although the government had approved the children's release, the local secret police has not issued exit permits. (High hopes shattered.)

December 10, 1991: Rabbi Sherer forwards my information to Assistant Secretary of State Richard Schifter. "I would appreci-



ate your *personally* following through on this mission of mercy to make sure that it has a happy ending." (M.S.)

January 9, 1992: My thank you letter to Ambassador Schifter expressing joy and happiness to the entire community upon the reuniting of the family!

February 8, 1992: The family visits with Rabbi Sherer in his office. (The picture in the summer *Jewish Observer* is of that meeting.) Mother and children (and a very happy *menahel*) express their gratitude.

February 9, 1992: Letter from Rabbi Sherer to the family thanking them for their visit. "I cannot tell you how deeply moved I am to have the *zechut* to have been of help in bringing over your son and daughter to the U.S. from Syria. Looking at their faces, as well as meeting your other children, was itself the greatest reward that I could receive. I have arranged with one of the best immigration attorneys in New York to work on the immigration case of your two children *entirely free of charge*."

February 1996: A *Bar Mitzva* invitation for this youngster to Rabbi Sherer. A gracious expression of *Hakarot Hatov* (gratitude). Not intended to be *matriach* (bother) the busy Rabbi Sherer!

March 1, 1996: Rabbi Sherer attends the *Bar Mitzva* (see picture), "I would not have missed it for the world!"

June 22, 1996: Graduation Yeshivat Ateret Torah... Valedictorian Address: a young student (our former Syrian immigrant).

June 21, 1998: Graduation Bet Yaakov Ateret Torah... High School valedictorian: a young lady (our former Syrian immigrant).

June 25, 1998: *Od yishama be'arei Yehuda...* Our valedictorian of four days prior weds her *hatan*, a *ben Torah*, who together with his young *kalla* are about to set up their *bayit ne'eman beYisrael*. ■



Three New Siddurim

The Jewish people have long been known as the "People of the Book." The truth is that we are the people of many books — *Tanach* (Bible), *Mishna*, Talmud, and certainly not least of all, *Siddur*, the prayer book of Israel. Every generation has its leaders and scholars, its righteous people and its villains. Every generation has its own prayer books as well. Although the text of the *Siddur* has long been established, with its core sections dating back to the times of Ezra, the format of the *Siddur*, its appearance and usability, have undergone constant change and revision, reflecting the needs of different generations and Jewish societies. In my own lifetime, I have seen enormous changes in the *Siddurim* in use in synagogues, schools and homes. And since Jewish society currently is undergoing rapid change, with the growth of Jewish outreach movements and the obvious desire of a large and growing group of Jews, unfortunately and innocently raised without any meaningful Jewish education, to find G-d and themselves and to engage in the experience of true prayer, it is no surprise that new *Siddurim* are coming on to the market with regularity. I wish therefore to present for the readers' consideration three of these new *Siddurim* that have recently been published.

The ArtScroll Siddur Sief Edition/ Zichron Avraham, by Rabbi Benjamin Yudin (published by ArtScroll/Mesorah, \$29.99)

Many years ago, ArtScroll/Mesorah Publications broke new ground and now dominates the "English" *Siddur* field with its Complete ArtScroll *Siddur*. This past March it published a translated linear *Siddur* (Sief Edition/Zichron Avraham). The *Siddur* is intended to meet the needs of those Jews who are not really well-versed enough in Hebrew to

Rabbi Wein, well known on the American scene as a popular lecturer, author, educator and community leader, now lives in Jerusalem where he continues to pursue a similarly active role.

pray in that language and yet do not wish to pray in English when attending a prayer service being conducted in Hebrew. Producing such a *Siddur* can be a nightmare of confusion on the page, since the original Hebrew text, the transliterated (Hebrew sounds in English letters) text, and the English translation of the Hebrew prayers all must somehow appear together in a coordinated and usable fashion.

Among the many great and innovative achievements of ArtScroll/Mesorah has been its genius in solving the enormously difficult graphics problems of its productions. The page layout of this *Siddur* is truly outstanding for it allows the user to identify easily the Hebrew phrase being transliterated, and the English translation of that phrase can easily be scanned while reading the transliteration itself. The translation and the comments upon the prayers are taken from the standard Complete ArtScroll *Siddur*. The purpose, philosophy and necessity for such a transliterated *Siddur* are all beautifully presented in the introductory essay to the *Siddur*, written by Rabbi Benjamin Yudin. The current volume covers the Sabbath and Festival prayers; its presence and use in synagogues and outreach groups should certainly be encouraged.

Siddur, by Rabbis David Solomon and R.M. Steinberger (published by Har-Tov Publishers)

A new *Siddur* containing an English translation of commentaries on the weekday prayers has been prepared by Rabbi David Solomon and R.M. Steinberger and published by Har-Tov Publishers, Jerusalem. This *Siddur* is not an actual translation of the text of the prayers itself but is a compilation of laws, customs, insights and comments relating to the weekday prayer service. The presentation of both the Hebrew text and the English commentary is pleasing to the eye and

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very user-friendly.

As is always the case regarding anthologies of commentaries spanning the centuries, the choice of which comments to include is personal to the authors, and therefore subject to other viewpoints as well. Nevertheless, I found the comments chosen to be pertinent, thought-provoking and, in many instances, most inspiring. This is a *Siddur* that one should study and learn from, and not necessarily use for actual prayer, for the enticement and attraction of the commentaries are so great

that they may prove a distraction to the prayer-effort itself. I cannot imagine any Jew, serious about prayer and praise of G-d, who will not benefit from the use of this *Siddur*. The English rendition is cogent, though the authors assume a level of familiarity with Hebrew and halachic terms that may not be present among many of the wide variety of Jews that this *Siddur* can and should benefit. Though the anthology of commentaries includes only the weekday prayer service, the Hebrew text of this *Siddur* includes the Sabbath and Festival prayers also, as well as many other fine additional features and inclusions. I am convinced that anyone who uses this *Siddur* and devotes even a very few moments to studying its contents will find one's *tefilla* and devotion level uplifted and more focused. As such, it is a valuable addition to the *Siddur* publications of our generation.

and includes essays on "The Power of Prayer," "How to Pray," "Fifty Suggestions for Concentrating During Prayer," and "Ten Things That Prevent Prayer From Being Accepted." The work was originally written in Hebrew and went through many editions.

Since Hebrew is a language of brevity and scholarly nuance, the work suffers somewhat stylistically in its present translation. Nevertheless it accomplishes its main goal, in that it allows one to understand, at least on a literal and simple plane, the words that comprise this central daily prayer of the Jewish people. It also clearly footnotes each sentence of translation, citing the commentary upon which the author based his view and words. The footnotes also detail the varying interpretations offered by the great sages over the centuries to a particular word or phrase, and what the prevailing custom is in our day regarding that particular word or phrase. Again, this is more a book of study than of actual prayer use, though the format of the book has obviously been designed with the thought of the book being used in actual prayer service in mind.

The material in this small work is of immense importance and should therefore be studied and absorbed by every Jew who faces the daunting responsibility of praying daily to the Creator.

Pathway to Prayer, by Rabbi Mayer Birnbaum (published by Feldheim Publishers, \$9.95)

Rabbi Mayer Birnbaum of Passaic, New Jersey, has written and published a translation and explanation of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, the weekday *Amida* service which serves as the core for Jewish prescribed prayer. The work is entitled *Pathway to Prayer*

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Prayer is a most taxing enterprise. Daily, set, obligatory prayers are subject to the deadly apathy of habit and rote. The great men of the *Mussar* Movement attempted to counter this apathy by demanding of themselves ingenuity and creativity in the recitation of their daily *tefillos*. Study and analytical understanding of the contents of those *tefillos* are a strong

basis for achieving personal creativity and freshness in the prayer services. Therefore, each one of these three new *Siddurim* — each in its own way and directed to its own audience — can serve as an effective aid in encouraging the feeling of freshness and enthusiasm that we all wish to experience in our daily *tefilla*-encounter with eternity and immortality. ■

Sefer Eretz Ha-Tzvi: A Halacha Guide to the Mitzvos That are Dependent on Eretz Yisroel to the Traveler, Newcomer and Resident, by Rabbi Tzvi Teichman (published by Feldheim Publishers, \$13.95)

Reading Rabbi Teichman's halachic compendium of the *halachos ha'teluyos ba'aretz*, brought me back to my most recent trip to *Eretz Yisroel*. We planned a weekday trip to the *Kosel*, which raised many questions of *hilchos kriya* (tearing one's garment in mourning upon seeing the site of the destroyed *Beis Hamikdash*). A stop at a local food center brought up questions of *teruma* and *ma'asros*. Can we trust the vendor to have properly separated the tithes? How do we do it ourselves? Many trips to *Eretz Yisroel* often revolve around a *Yom Tov*, which brings along an entire host of its own halachic problems. What may we do, what may we not do, on *Yom Tov Sheini*? What may we ask others to do?

After these and numerous other questions, I began to have the distinct feeling that it would be wonderful if somebody would publish a *sefer* with clear and precise guidance for the traveler in *Eretz Yisroel*.

Baruch Hashem, Rabbi Teichman has done just that. Anyone who has been to *Eretz Yisroel* knows the dozens of questions and uncertainties that arise almost daily.

Rabbi Teichman, who himself hails from America, has written a *sefer* that is

Rabbi Becker is Associate Executive Director and Director of Special Projects of Agudath Israel of America.

sensitive to the needs of those visiting our Holy Land. In unusually clear and precise language, *Eretz Ha-Tzvi* spells out the *halachos* and underlying rationales of the most common areas of concern. It also conveys the sweet scent of *kedusha* that permeates these very special *halachos*.



As Rabbi Teichman states in his introduction, "only through the study and application of *Eretz Yisroel's* mitzvos, can we begin to understand and appreciate its greatness. If we increase our dedication to this task then the land will extend itself to us, allowing us to realize its full physical and spiritual potential. In this light I have entitled this work *Eretz Ha-Tzvi*, for its purpose is to expand the awareness of the true nature of *Eretz Yisroel*. With this heightened consciousness, may we merit to bask in its full glory, speedily in our time."

The major areas that are covered in this volume are the sanctity of the Temple Mount, the mourning of the destruction, *Yom Tov Sheini* and *Purim*, *terumos* and *ma'asros*, *Shemitta* and *kivrei tzaddikim*. Each section begins with a *hashkafa* preface, which sets the tone for the *halachos* to follow. Also included are numerous *tefillos* to be recited at the gravesites of *tzaddikim* and at other *mekomos hakedoshim*.

Reading this *sefer* brings in one's *neschama* a powerful longing for *kedushas Eretz Yisroel*. May *Hashem* grant that with the study of the *halachos* of *Eretz Yisroel*, we will all be *zocheh* to the advent of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* and *Yerushalayim habenuya*.

—reviewed by Rabbi Laibish Becker

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**"SHOMER PSA'IM HASHEM" —
LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

To the Editor:

The article about laxity in matters of

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safety (Oct '98), while addressing a valid point, employs a phrase in a manner that is unfortunately inaccurate and misleading as far as the *halacha* is concerned.

"*Shomer psa'im Hashem*" is a *halacha pesuka* (established Torah law) cited in the *Gemora* (*Avoda Zara* 30b and *Yevamos* 12b), is codified in *Rambam* and *Tur* as well, and I believe it is even used as the basis of a *p'sak* in *Igros Moshe*.

While there are limitations of "*Ein somchin al haness* — one may not rely on miracles," there definitely is license, in clearly defined circumstances, to rely on *Hashgachas Hashem* (Divine guidance) and refrain from excessive caution — a point that the article ignores.

PINCHAS LESSER
Brooklyn, NY

Editorial comment:

While the article referred to above was submitted for rabbinical review, the phrase regarding *shomer psa'im Hashem* as a commentary and not a license (allowing readers to infer that it is *never* licensed) was inserted later. The correction is appreciated. NW

Author's Notation

In my reply to Rabbi Yehuda Henkin,

(JO, Oct'98) there was a footnote dealing with German weddings. Part of the footnote (page 42), stated below in italics, was inadvertently omitted:

My informant remembers his father, a native of Munich, saying that while it was possible to make weddings with mixed seating in Germany or New York forty years ago, *the unrestrained simcha of American weddings no longer makes it possible*; of his family of six children, five out of six weddings had separate seating and a *mechitza*, and the one mixed seating wedding had a *mechitza* for dancing.

Anyone reading the footnote without the italicized portion might think this individual was forced to make separate-seating weddings because of outside pressure; there is evidence that Rabbi Breuer resisted the introduction of separate seating. However, it was the behavior of the younger generation that made separate seating a necessity.

LAWRENCE M. REISMAN

FOOLS RUSH IN...THROUGH A CLOUD OF SMOKE

To the Editor:

I was very pleased to read Chaim Kuperwasser's article, "*Shomer Psa'im Hashem*," regarding placing oneself under this phrase's guarantee by acting

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foolishly. The reckless driving habits I have long observed have been a source of dismay and wonderment to me, and when the driver is obviously a religious Jew, that astonishment is compounded manifold. (Aside from the danger to themselves and others, it also creates a *chillul Hashem* when rules of the road, as well as basic courtesy, are flagrantly violated.) A modern Orthodox friend once remarked, "I call Brooklyn 'G-d's country,' because some people seem to just assume He'll watch out for them no matter what!"

Dangerous driving, however, is but one example of the negligence that Mr. Kuperwasser so rightly condemns. There are other health and safety issues being blithely ignored, and I am writing regarding the tragedy of cigarette smoking. While the halachic issues are beyond the scope of this article, (I also agreed with the article in last month's JO regarding women as *poskim!*)¹ I would like to make one point: The commonly referred-to *psak* by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein which smokers often point to in defense of their habit was written in 1963, before much of the current medical findings. In any case, I am addressing the issue from the *pesi-chacham* angle. As my five-year-old child once asked incredulously, when I told him that smoking cigarettes is very unhealthy and causes many serious illnesses, "Then how are they allowed to sell them?!"

Those who are "hopelessly" addicted may feel that it is absolutely impossible for them to quit (notwithstanding several available devices and medications). Perhaps they will be inspired by the following story:

Rabbi Benzion Halberstam, the previous Bobover Rebbe ז"ר, was once feeling ill, and consulted a doctor in Vienna. While in the waiting room, he smoked a Havana cigar, with which his followers would regularly provide him, knowing that the Rebbe enjoyed them. When the doctor entered the room and saw the Rebbe smok-

ing, he told him, "Herr Rabbiner, smoking is not healthy for you!"

The Rebbe put his cigar into a nearby ashtray and followed the professor inside. When the examination was finished, R' Benzion put on his coat to leave. The doctor hurried after him, calling, "Rabbiner! You have forgotten your cigar!"

"No," replied R' Benzion, "I don't smoke!"

The professor was dumbfounded. The Rebbe explained that the moment the doctor told him that smoking was unhealthy — a fact which he had not known — he put the cigar down and would never touch one again. He was surprised at the doctor's incredulity. "How is it possible to smoke after hearing it is not healthy?" he asked.

*For his part, the doctor was amazed that a person who had smoked for so long could quit so abruptly, without any difficulty. The Rebbe did not understand the doctor's surprise. He explained, "The Torah commands us, ושמרתם מאד לפשותכם and you shall beware exceedingly for your souls" (Devarim 4,15). I must obey this command to guard my health, just as I must obey any other command in the Torah."*²

Let us leave aside for the moment the issue of mature adults indulging in such a habit which has been proved without a doubt to cause a host of dreadful and usually fatal ר"ל illnesses: But how and why are an alarming percentage of our young people smoking?

Perhaps they are unaware that smoking can cause diseases of the heart, lungs, and throat (among other organs). Probably they assume that if so many others do it and seem to emerge unscathed, they too will survive. Most assuredly they are ignorant of the fact that "secondhand smoke" (what innocent bystanders breathe from a smoker) has been proven to affect family members of smokers, including the unborn.³

A prominent Rav declared in public some time ago, that soon those young men who smoke will not be able to find *shidduchim* — because no parent would

² *Gut Voch*, by Avraham Barash; 1998, Mesorah Publications.

³ It can cause low birth weight, premature labor and miscarriages.

¹ *Yated Ne'eman* published an in-depth article several months back by R' Yosef Fleishman discussing the halachic issues of smoking.

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want their daughter (not to mention their grandchildren) to live in a home where she will be exposed to toxic fumes on a daily basis (unless, of course, she was raised in such a home).

Several years ago I read an article entitled, "How to Quit Smoking," written by a patient who had suffered a heart attack and underwent coronary bypass surgery. And *that* is how he stopped smoking. Surely there is an easier way!

*Smoking by yeshiva students in particular upset [R' Yaakov Kamenetsky]. Smokers not only violated the commandment to guard their health, he felt, they are also guilty of causing themselves to forget the words of Torah. He himself had been a heavy smoker, who quit smoking overnight when his doctor first warned him that he was endangering his health. Afterwards, he commented that he had never realized how much smoking had clogged his mind. Asked whether any of his fellow students in Slabodka had ever been drafted into the Russian army despite all the efforts made to avoid military service, Reb Yaakov answered, "Only one. The chavrusa who first taught me to smoke." He made it clear that he saw the draft notice which forced his friend to flee Lithuania as a punishment for having encouraged him to start smoking.*⁴

Every day in *Shemoneh Esrei*, we ask *Hashem* to grant us wisdom, insight and knowledge. Let us not turn a deaf ear when He does, thereby remaining *psa'im* instead.

TOBY COHEN
Brooklyn, NY

⁴ *Reb Yaakov, The Life and Times of HaGaon Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky*, by Yonason Rosenblum; 1993, Mesorah Publications.



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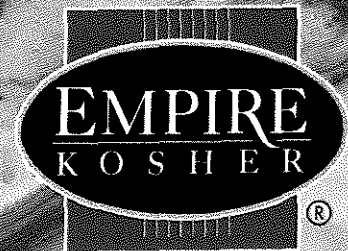
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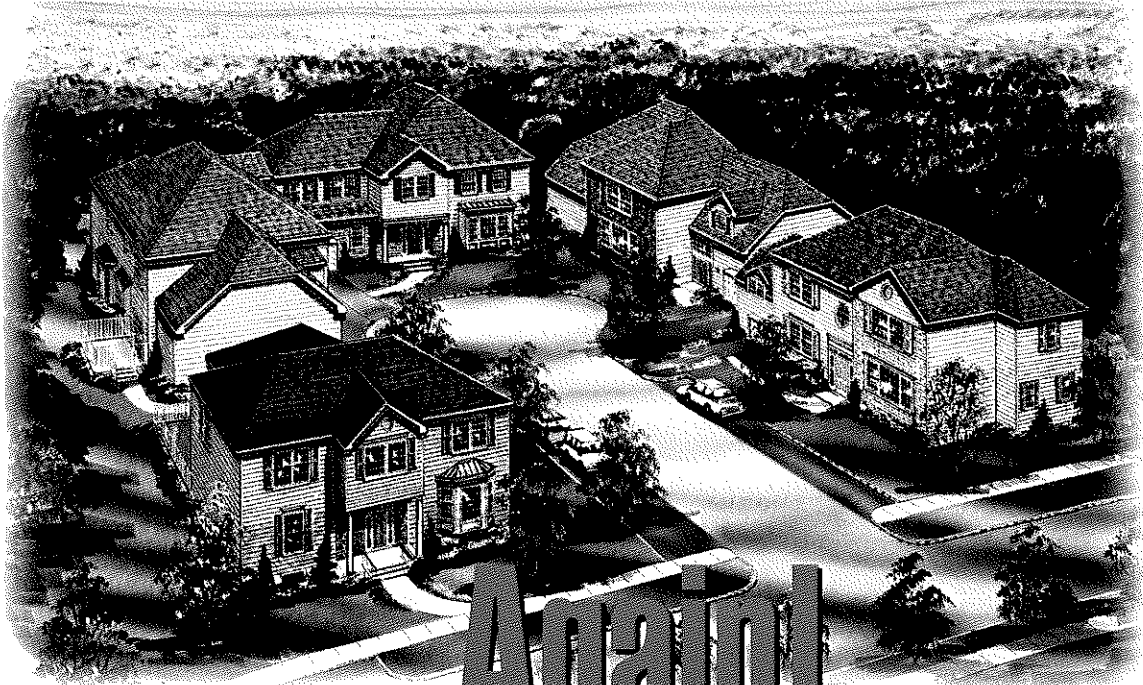
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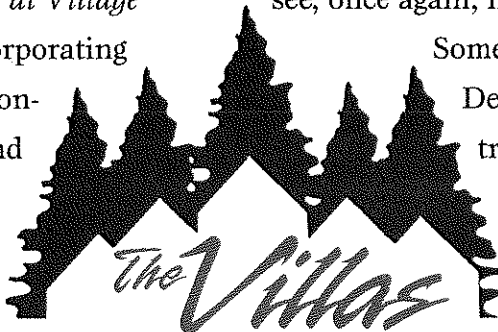
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