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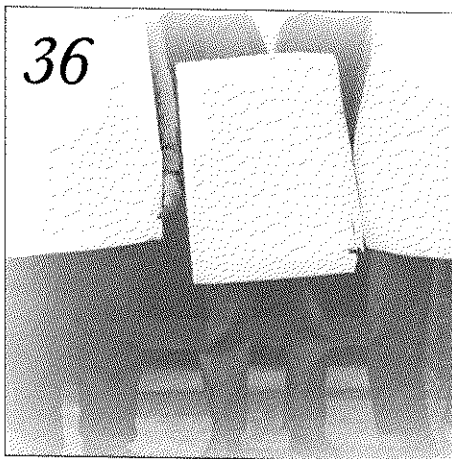
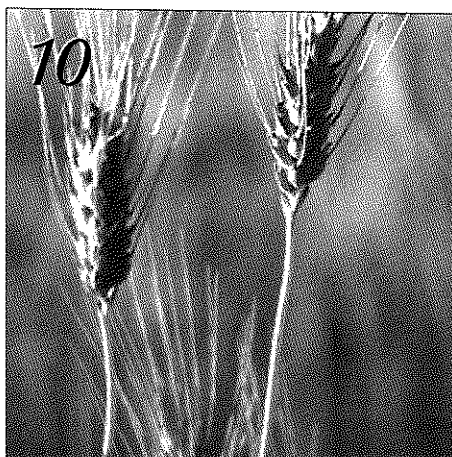
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STATEMENT OF POLICY

THE JEWISH OBSERVER HAS DEVOTED A GREAT DEAL OF SPACE TO THE PERILS OF THE INTERNET AND TO THE NEED FOR EVERYONE TO BE EXTREMELY VIGILANT IN ITS USE. WE HAVE ECHOED THE PLEAS OF OUR GEDOLIM THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE IN USE, UNLESS IT IS AN UNAVOIDABLE NECESSITY, AND THEN ONLY WITH ALL SUITABLE SAFEGUARDS. WHILE ITS DANGERS MUST BE RECOGNIZED AND CONTROLLED TO EVERY POSSIBLE DEGREE, OUR GEDOLIM RECOGNIZE THAT MANY PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES REQUIRE ITS USE, AND THEREFORE IT HAS NOT BEEN BANNED. THIS IS WHY WE ACCEPT ADVERTISEMENTS LISTING WEB-SITE ADDRESSES, BUT IN NO WAY DOES THIS IMPLY THAT THE GEDOLIM OR THE JEWISH OBSERVER CONDONE CASUAL USE OF THE INTERNET.

NOTED IN SORROW

Since the previous issue of *The Jewish Observer*, *Klal Yisroel* has suffered several irreplaceable losses among its Torah leadership. While each of these personalities is worthy of a lengthier tribute, at this time we are mentioning each with a brief description of his unique role within the Torah world.



Rabbi Naftali Halberstam, the Bobover Rebbe זצ"ל

Rav Naftali was born to his parents, Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam and his Rebbetzin, 74 years ago in Bobov, when the family patriarch Rav Bentzion (1874-1941) was *Rebbe*. (They were of the Sanzer dynasty, descendants of the *Divrei Chayim*.) Rav Shlomo and his son were the only family members to survive pogroms and round-ups during World War II. In 1944, Rav Naftul'che (as he was affectionately called) escaped to *Eretz Yisroel*, where he spent four years of intensive Torah study under *gedolei Torah* of the time, including the Slonimer *Rebbe*. He also maintained close contact with the Satmar *Rebbe*, the Gerer *Rebbe* and the *Chazon Ish*, and gained recognition as a brilliant *talmid chacham*.

His father arrived in America in 1947, where he devoted himself to reestablishing the Bobover Chassidus and its network of yeshivos. Rav Naftul'che joined his father and, after several years, assumed much of the burden of running

the Bobov institutions. For over five decades, he exerted an enormous influence over mesivta *bachurim*, as well as the entire Bobover community. He combined in himself awesome humility, untold acts of *chesed*, and an uncompromising view that all human action must be dedicated *bilti laShem levado*. These were the motifs of his life.

Thus, while always modest, self-effacing and shunning the spotlight, he recognized the need to assume a public role with the passing of his father in 2000. He more than filled the task. Rabbi Naftoli Halberstam was *niftar* 12 Adar/March 23. He is sorely missed.



Rabbi Chaim Hakohein Kamiel זצ"ל served as *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Yeshivas Ofakim in the Negev of *Eretz Yisroel* for close to 25 years, after having said *shiurim* in the Mirrer Yeshiva for a number of years. Born in 5693/1933 to Rabbi Yaakov Hakohein Kamiel in *Yerushalayim*, the extraordinary *hasmada* that he exhibited as a child in Yeshivas Tiferes Tzvi was his hallmark throughout his years – as a *bachur* learning under the *Steipler Gaon* in Bnei Brak, as a *yungerman* in Mirrer Yeshiva in *Yerushalayim* – indeed, until his last breath. His total involvement in Torah was uninterrupted by meals, errands, or traditional *bein ha'zemanim* (intersession) breaks.

His vast knowledge in every aspect of Torah, both *nigla* (revealed) and *nistar* (mystical), was unexcelled. And his concern for fellow Jews was accompanied by selfless dedication to helping others in need. His impact on the *talmidim* of Mir was so profound that the present *Rosh Hayeshiva*, Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, *yibadeil lechayim*, would attempt to dance with Rabbi Kamiel on his shoulders on Simchas Torah, since he viewed him as “a living *Sefer Torah*.”

He was *niftar* on Shushan Purim, March 26. In the words of Rabbi Yissachar Meir, *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Yeshivas Hanegev: “It is impossible for us to fathom the depth of his knowledge in *Shas* and *poskim*. His lofty, unusual *middos*, his *yiras Shamayim* and greatness were supports of *Klal Yisroel*. He achieved a status rare in our times – that of cleaving to Torah.”



Rabbi Avrohom Menachem Danziger זצ"ל, the ninth Admor of Aleksander Chassidus – the only surviving son of the previous *Rebbe*, Rav Yehuda Moshe – passed away on 17 Adar/March 27.

Aleksander Chassidus was second in size only to Ger in pre-War Poland, and had established the “Beis Yisroel” Yeshiva network there; it was all but destroyed by the Germans י"מ. Rav Yehuda Moshe had moved with his son,

1934. After the destruction of World War II, he assumed the leadership of Aleksander until his passing in 1973, when Rav Avrohom Menachem succeeded him. He oversaw the growth of Yeshiva Beis Yisroel-Tiferes Menachem in Bnei Brak; published his ancestors' famed *sefarim*, including the *Yismach Yisroel*, *Akeidas Yitzchak*, *Emunas Moshe*, and a *Haggada* and *Pirkei Avos* with commentaries culled from the *rebbe*s of Vorki-Alexander; and – along with incredible *hasmada* and *avodas Hashem*, which began at 2:30 a.m. every day – serviced the needs of his many followers.

The *Rebbe* is survived by sons, daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He also left behind thousands of pages of *chiddushei Torah* in both Torah and Kabbala that have yet to be printed.

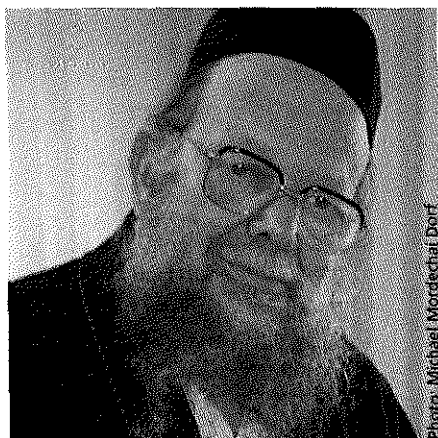


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Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe זצ"ל, Alei Shur

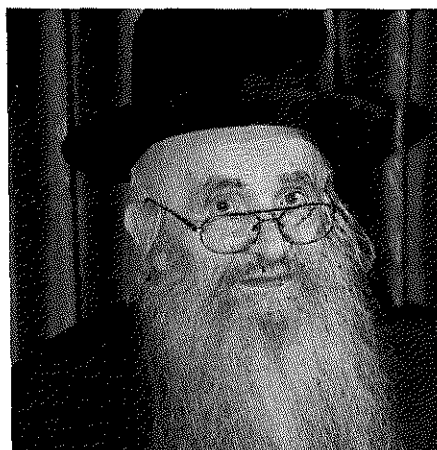
Born in Berlin shortly before the outbreak of the World War I, Rabbi Wolbe's early education was in Berlin, in the Yeshiva of Frankfurt, and then in Rabbi Botchko's yeshiva in Montreux, Switzerland. In the 1930s, he spent several years in Mir, Poland, where he became a close *talmid* of the *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, and after his passing, of Rabbi Chatzkel Levenstein. Throughout Rabbi Wolbe's life, he viewed himself as a *talmid muvhak* of Reb Yerucham, and as a transmitter of the

mussar tradition that traces back to Rabbi Yisroel Salanter.

During the War, he was in Sweden, where he taught and was involved in *kiruv*, and, with Rabbi Wolf Jacobson, established a seminary for women.

After the War, Rabbi Wolbe joined Rabbi Moshe Shmuel Shapiro and opened the Yeshiva Gedola of Be'er Yaakov, with Rabbi Shapiro as *Rosh Yeshiva*, and Rabbi Wolbe as *Mashgiach*, a position he held for over 35 years. Later, he served as *Mashgiach* in the Lakewood Yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel, as well as opening Yeshivas Givat Shaul. Rabbi Wolbe gave *mussar shmuessen* (discourses), *vaadin* (more informal lectures, usually to smaller groups), and *shiurim* in many yeshivos and other public and private forums. He also created *batei mussar* where he delivered *shmuessen* and *vaadin*. His *shmuessen*, which focused on how a *ben Torah* could perfect himself in that role, and in his *avoda* (Divine service), in general, are published in the volumes of *Alei Shur* and *Bein Sheishes LeAsor*.

He was one of the key *mussar* figures of the past generation.



Rabbi Abba Berman זצ"ל

The yeshiva of Rabbi Abba Berman זצ"ל carries the name "*Iyun Hataalmud*," as do his *sefarim*. These words personify the *Rosh Hayeshiva*, both in his pro-

foundly deep and analytical approach to Torah study, and in the full range of his knowledge – the entirety of *Shas* and its commentaries.

He was born in 5679/1919 in Lodz, where his father, Rabbi Shaul Yosef Berman, a *talmid* of the Chofetz Chaim, was *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yehivas Toras Chesed. At the age of 14, he left Lodz to attend the Mir Yeshiva in Poland, where he astounded the *bnei yeshiva* with his command of 1400 *dapim* of Gemara, both in analysis and verbatim recall. He developed a close relationship with the *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz. Although Reb Abba was only 17 when Reb Yerucham passed away, he always considered himself his *talmid*.

With the Mirrer Yeshiva in Shanghai, he distinguished himself with his *hasmada* and *lamdus*, and served as a resource for the published *chiddushim* of Reb Chaim Halevi on *Rambam*. He not only knew the *sefer* by heart, he was constantly plumbing it for new insights. After the War, he came to America, where he said *shiurim* in Mir (Brooklyn), and eventually established his own yeshiva in Far Rockaway, then in Monsey, and ultimately in Eretz Yisroel – first in Bnei Brak, later in Yerushalayim, and then in Kiryat Sefer. His *talmidim* – many of them leading figures in *harbatzas haTorah* today – generally spent many years under his direct guidance, carrying his intense analytical approach with them as they continued to grow in the path he paved for them. Five volumes of Rav Abba's *shiurim* were published in his lifetime, with many more manuscripts remaining to be published.

Reb Abba was *niftar* on 3 Iyar/May 12. He leaves his devoted Rebbetzin, six daughters – married to outstanding teachers of Torah, some of whom head institutions – hundreds of dedicated *talmidim*, and a *Klal Yisroel* enriched by his legacy, now impoverished by his absence. □

RABBI SHLOMO FURST



Rus and Her Vision

From a Regal Past to an Exalted Future

Based on lectures of Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg שליט"א, to his Yeshiva, Torah Ore in Jerusalem

OF RUCHNIYUS AND ROYALTY

An essential part of our *kaballas haTorah* on Shavuot are the lessons we gain from *Megillas Rus*, for the motivations behind Rus's decision to convert are relevant to each of us. Rationally, it seemed pointless for her to give up so much of her youthful life to follow her mother-in-law, Naomi, to *Eretz Yisroel*. Moreover, Naomi argued repeatedly with Rus to turn back. Nevertheless, she chose to accept the Torah to guide her life. In contrast, Orpa, Rus's sister-in-law, was swayed by Naomi's arguments and left. Naomi said to Rus, "Behold, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods; go follow your sister-in-law" (*Rus* 1,15). Amazingly, each time Naomi talked with her, Rus strengthened

her resolve to continue onward.

The next *passuk* recounts Rus's final response: "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people are my people, and your G-d is my G-d; where you die, I will die, and there I shall be buried." This declaration silenced Naomi: "When she saw she was determined to go with her, she ceased arguing with her, and the two of them went on until they came to *Beis Lechem*" (*Rus* 1,18).

This is quite remarkable. After so much dissuasion, Rus's will should have weakened and her desire should have waned. Yet, Rus grew ever stronger in her conviction. Orpa, however, saw an austere future in store for her if she remained with Naomi. Why give up all the excitement and opulent life as a king's daughter? Obviously, she found it difficult to forgo all the pleasures of a regal lifestyle, so she returned to Moav, to the decadence of her home.

How did Rus have the courage to turn her back on all that that world had to

offer? She did what no one else would have done, and it behooves us to understand why.

Normally, one becomes disheartened when faced with a bleak future. No one is enticed by the possibility of difficulty and even failure. If, however, one has hope for something brighter, this will endow him or her with the courage to go on. Inspiration stems from a concrete goal. It sparks the imagination. To whatever extent that goal is understood, visualized and valued, so will one find the ability to persevere, even during times of difficulty and opposition. In fact, any obstacle to realizing a beckoning goal will only generate increased determination to achieve it.

Rus envisioned her goal, and she knew that by clinging to Naomi, she would succeed.

STRIVING FOR A MEANINGFUL OLD AGE

Naomi was a shining example of Torah life. She was a pleasant, gracious

RABBI FURST, WHO IS MASHGIACH RUCHANI IN KOLLEL RUACH CHAIM, IS AUTHOR OF NESIVOS CHAIM - THE TORAH WAY OF LIFE SERIES (THUS FAR ON BEREISHIS AND SHEMOS) BASED ON THE MOTZAEI SHABBOS LECTURES OF RABBI CHAIM PINCHAS SCHEINBERG. HE IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES. MOST RECENTLY WITH "THE ESSENCE AND IMPORT OF TORAH SHEBE'AL PEH," JAN. '05.

person, an *eishes chayil*. In her company, Rus experienced the spiritual glory of living a life in accordance with Torah, and this attracted her to *Yiddishkeit*. Consequently, Rus's statement, "...your people are my people, and your G-d is my G-d," makes sense. The words that follow, however, "...where you die, I will die, and there I shall be buried," need explanation. How does this last statement add significance to Rus's asserting her devotion to Naomi, to her people, and to her G-d?

We have a clue to understanding Rus's declaration from a remark that Bilaam made when Balak, the king of Moav, hired him to curse *Klal Yisroel*. In the midst of his foiled attempts to curse *Klal Yisroel*, Bilaam made a similar reference to death: "May my soul die the death of the upright, and may my end be like his!" (*Bamidbar* 23,10). The "upright" that Bilaam referred to are our righteous forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.

The Torah describes *Avraham Avinu's* passage from this world: "And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, venerable and fulfilled, and he was gathered to his people" (*Bereishis* 25, 8). He had lived a long and full life. The *Ramban* explains this to mean, "He saw the realization of all his heart's desires, and was satisfied with all that was good." The *Ramban* adds that it is unique to *tzaddikim* to leave this world feeling that they have fulfilled what they had sought to accomplish with their lives.

At a ripe old age, *Avraham Avinu* could see how each of his days played a role in helping him reach his life purpose. All of his days combined to create something lasting and eternal. In contrast, Bilaam — a *rasha* — lived entirely for himself, steeped in the pleasures and decadence of this world. Yet, envisioning his end, he wanted to have the same death as our *avos* — Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov — who had accomplished so much in this world.

This, however, was impossible, as the *Ramban* continues: "This is not so about other people, as is written (*Kohelles* 5,9), 'The one who loves money will not be satisfied with money.' To this, the Midrash (*Kohelles Rabba* 1:13)

comments, 'A person does not leave the world having [even] half of his desires in his hand. He has one hundred, and he desires two hundred. He acquires two hundred, and he desires to make it four hundred, as it is said, *The one who loves money will not be satisfied with money.*'"

One cannot live a corrupt life and then die like a *tzaddik*. Bilaam's life ambition was to experience pleasure — with what ultimate result? The sum of all his pleasures combined could never produce a feeling of fulfillment, after a life of waste

chessed for the sake of others. Such nobility of heart enabled Rus to leave the pleasures of royalty behind. When we put aside our own personal interests, shun all the possible benefits and considerations that could accrue, and instead act in accordance with *Hashem's* directives, in response to the needs of others, this is the highest degree of *chessed* possible.

We are all capable of such heights of altruism, for as it is written, "The nobles of the nations gathered — the nation of the G-d of Avraham" (*Tehillim*

HOW DID RUS HAVE THE COURAGE TO TURN HER BACK ON ALL THAT THAT WORLD HAD TO OFFER? SHE DID WHAT NO ONE ELSE WOULD HAVE DONE, AND IT BEHOOVES US TO UNDERSTAND WHY.

and depravity. In contrast, the *Zohar* states that every one of *Avraham Avinu's* days was accounted for. He came to the Next World with all his days.

Similarly, each of our days should be appreciated as a precious gift for us to use to the utmost, for it is written, "Who is the man who desires life? He who loves days..." (*Tehillim* 34,13). We should not be fooled into thinking about weeks, months or years, and imagine that there is plenty of time to accomplish our life goals. No, each *day* counts.

BEYOND GENEROSITY

Rus, surveying the days that lay ahead, realized that she was at a crossroads. She knew that a comparatively drab life awaited her if she chose to follow Naomi. There was, nonetheless, a tremendous potential for *chessed* in it, as well. To help Naomi, Rus was willing to forgo a seemingly bright future. She gave up much more than time or money. She gave up *Olam Hazei* — this-worldly excitement.

Such altruism requires much sensitivity — and sympathy for others — and a desire so strong that it produces unselfish

47, 10). The word "nobles" refers to those who are motivated by selfless intentions. *Rashi* explains "nobles" as referring to "those who sacrificed themselves to be slaughtered and killed for the Holy Name," for the highest form of altruism is to willingly return one's life to the One who created it. *Rashi* continues, based on the Gemara (*Sukka* 49b), explaining the reference to *Avraham Avinu* in the *passuk*: "For he was the first with a generous heart — the vanguard for converts."

Avraham Avinu acknowledged *Hashem* as the One and Only true G-d, and he was willing to give up his life rather than betray his belief in *Hashem Yisbarach*. All succeeding converts to Judaism have emulated *Avraham Avinu*. Thus, Rus, too, had this generosity of heart and, in the footsteps of Avraham, joined Naomi, thus making a full conversion to Judaism.

Rus recognized the importance of Torah to her life, and its concomitant promise of eventual success and contentment that *Hashem* has in store for *tzaddikim*. Therefore, the more Naomi tried to persuade Rus otherwise, the stauncher she became in her belief. She reinforced her sense of purpose in life.

Moreover, Rus had a clear vision of

what her last day could be like. Rus was resolved to make that last moment of her life a happy one, when she would be able to review all her days and rejoice for having accompanied Naomi, joined her people, and chosen G-d; to be happy that she was not distracted by the world's temptations; to be grateful that in the end, she did have a wonderful life by joining Naomi, even though, at the time, there seemed to be nothing to look forward to.

The *chesed* she could do with Naomi — and all the other mitzvos Rus could perform by becoming a Jewess — gave Rus

materially fade from remembrance. Therefore, *tzaddikim* work for a lasting goal, and consequently enjoy their accomplishments. They can look back and rejoice over the example they set for others, the Torah they learned, their mitzvos and acts of kindness. These noble deeds endure forever and ever. Death, then, is not the final, very end.

Rus, too, desired *Olam Habba*. From her perspective, death would be the beginning and not the end. Can there be a more compelling reason to embrace the Torah way of life?

RUS DESIRED OLAM HABBA. FROM HER PERSPECTIVE, DEATH WOULD BE THE BEGINNING AND NOT THE END. CAN THERE BE A MORE COMPELLING REASON TO EMBRACE THE TORAH WAY OF LIFE?

a beacon, a brilliant ray of clarity, which enabled her to envision her entire life. She recognized that the worldly pleasures do not mean much, for in the end, they do not achieve lasting results. Therefore, in the prime of her life, Rus turned her back on it all.

PATHWAY TO A PRODUCTIVE LIFE

This is a very relevant lesson, for many times we spend much of our potentially productive, youthful years pursuing fun, entertainment and adventure. These distractions can be very tempting, and without a higher goal to guide us, we become confused by all sorts of drives and temptations. With time, however, we mature and age. These urges dwindle. In retrospect, not much is left to pursue, and few true accomplishments remain.

Eventually, even favorite pastimes become impossible to enjoy. The feet simply do not move as they used to — basketball and tennis are history, not to be enjoyed again. Even the greatest, most delectable joys and pleasures will ulti-

Hence, everything the world had to offer her as daughter of a king meant nothing to her. She could have married anyone she wished, and instead, she chose a life with Naomi. When she did marry, it was to Boaz. He was the *gadol hador*, but a very old man. She looked beyond his many years and saw his timeless spiritual greatness. Her heart was set on achieving *nitzchius* — eternity — and it was for this reason that the more Naomi attempted to dissuade her from continuing with her, the more Rus resolved not to leave her.

Thus, we learn from Rus the value of understanding the purpose and importance of life. If we view life through the limited perspective of the present moment, we must perforce wage a continual and fierce battle against the world's many luring temptations. There is no shortage of ways to become confused and discouraged — from trivial distractions to treacherous pitfalls.

Although the enticements of the world are overwhelming, we can counter their influence by looking ahead and making a *chesbon hanefesh* — a spiritual accounting. Rus calculated how to

insure happiness at the end, as opposed to thinking about how she can make herself happy now. The yearning for lasting contentment gave her the will to succeed.... "Where you die, I will die, and there I shall be buried."

THE UNIQUE HUMAN DIMENSION

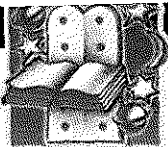
The unique significance of the human mind is the ability to look ahead, and to realize the consequences of our choices and actions. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* blessed us with this ability in order to serve Him. The passions of youth, however, often hinder the calm, thoughtful process of forethought that is required to make a *chesbon hanefesh* and see clearly into the future. Desire for immediate gratification interferes with our thoughts, and we lose sight of what is truly important.

Rus successfully soared above the smoky confusion that youthful fires produce. She ignored the present and chose the future. We, like Rus, must choose to look ahead. *Hashem* carefully noted Rus's determination and sacrifice, and rewarded Rus for her efforts.

Although Boaz died soon after she married him, *Hashem* allowed her to conceive and give birth. *David Hamelech* ז"ל descended from the offspring of this marriage. Rus's vision extended far into the future, and, she thus could sacrifice the present for a future that she envisioned and knew to be true.

We, too — with *Hashem's* help — can do the same as we wait for the moment, may it come speedily in our days, when the seed of *David Hamelech* will usher in an era of perfection. *Moshiach* will enlighten the world with the truth of *Hashem's* Torah. The recognition of *Hashem* as the One and Absolute G-d will be complete.

Our counting of *Sefiras Haomer* is a yearly lesson in looking forward to something precious and eternal — Torah. It is vitally practical for us all. On Shavuot, if our *kabbalas haTorah* is genuine, we can all contribute to making that great, long-awaited day a reality.



TORAH UMESORAH

Machon Bais Yaakov
Hilda Birn High School,
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Instructor: Prof. Hanoch Dubitsky, Yeshiva University; NY, NY

JULY 11,12,13,14 / 10:15am-12:35pm

2. COMMUNICATING WITH THE STUDENT

Acquire the skills and ability to understand your students, assist them in resolving conflicts, and build their self-esteem
Instructor: Rabbi Yitzchok Merkin, Headmaster, Yeshiva of Greater Washington; Silver Spring, MD

3. HANDLING THE CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Become familiar and comfortable with the various difficulties that arise when discussing and integrating Torah Hashkofos, attitudes and Jewish history in a classroom.
Instructor: Rabbi Tzadok Froimowitz, Rebbe, Mesivta Chofetz Chaim; Flushing, NY

JULY 11,12,13,14 / 1:30pm-3:50pm

4. CREATING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Participants will gain an understanding of discipline practices, philosophy, and the ability to implement effective discipline methods in their class and school.
Instructor: Rabbi Binyomin S. Ginsberg, Dean, Torah Academy, St. Louis Park, MN

5. MAKING TEFILA AND DINIM MEANINGFUL

Practical methodologies to teach both Dinim and Tefila in an interesting, informative, and motivating manner. The course will also define the ten components of teaching Dinim
Instructor: Rabbi Dov Leibenstein, Educational Supervisor; Chicago, IL

JULY 11,12,13,14 / 4:05pm-6:25pm

6. TEACHING THE WHOLE CLASS

Methodologies for teaching all the students in a heterogeneous class. Differential instruction for the weaker and gifted student along with strategies for effective grouping.
Instructor: Rabbi Dov Leibenstein, Educational Supervisor; Chicago, IL

7. PRINCIPALS'/ADMINISTRATORS' SEMINAR

Enhance our mission through positive school spirit. Hands-on workshop dealing with teacher supervision; leadership styles; community, parent and board relationships.
Instructor: Rabbi Binyomin S. Ginsberg, Dean, Torah Academy, St. Louis Park, MN

JULY 18,19,20,21 / 10:15am-12:35pm

8. ANATOMY OF THE LESSON

Learn and review the basic components needed to organize a class focusing on lesson objectives and Bloom's Taxonomy of thinking skills.
Instructor: Rabbi Elimelech Gottlieb, Menahel, ELEM. School, Hebrew Academy of Five Towns and Rockaway; Lawrence, NY

9. LEARNING STYLES

Gain an understanding of the various types of learning styles which both you and your students use in order to learn. As a result you will make it easier for your students to learn by creating more meaningful and interesting lessons.
Instructor: Rabbi Moishe Bak, Founder of Tachbulos-Strategies Inc.; Lakewood, NJ

JULY 18,19,20,21 / 1:30pm-3:50pm

10. THE KEYS TO DISCIPLINE

Various ideas to use in order to prevent discipline problems from occurring.
Instructor: Rabbi Moishe Bak, Founder of Tachbulos-Strategies Inc.; Lakewood, NJ

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12. MANAGING THE CLASSROOM

Learn how to create the environment which prevents
discipline problems.
*Instructor: Rabbi Zev Meisels, Menahel, Joan Dachs
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13. CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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14. CHUMASH IN THE UPPER GRADES

Learn to create interesting, practical and motivational
worksheets and methods of review to increase
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*Instructor: Rabbi Menachum Meisels, Rebbe, Hebrew
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15. FUNDAMENTALS OF TEACHING

This course will teach various methods and ways
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active participation, mental set, retention and
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*Instructor: Rabbi Shalom Storch, Menahel, Yeshiva
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16. EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

Learn how to structure the classroom setting through
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order to produce a positive learning atmosphere.
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17. BUILDING SKILLS IN THE YOUNGER GRADES

Practical techniques to help the child learn the skills
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18. TEACHING GEMORAH

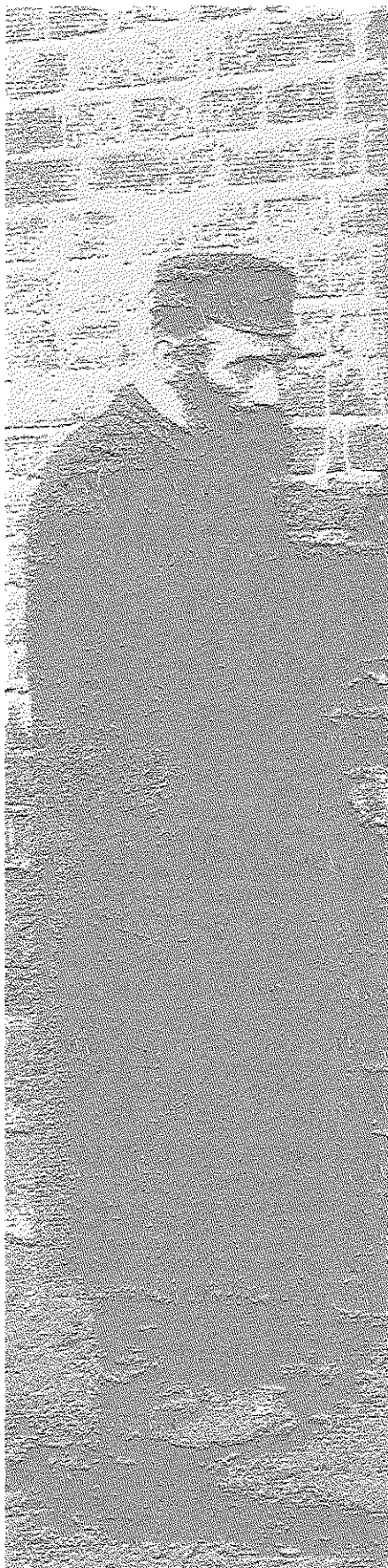
How to systematically present the Gemorah, develop
thinking skills, and build language skills.
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RABBI JOSEPH ELIAS



Introduction

In the summer of 1999, Torah Umesorah was approached by an educational organization with an offer to plan a curriculum for our schools dealing with the Holocaust. Generally speaking, when the war ended, there was hesitation to deal with this so-very-painful and difficult topic, and most of our children had little or no knowledge about *Churban Europa*. Whatever information they had came, in large measure, from museums, books, and stories that were ignorant of or antagonistic to our Torah approach. When I told the Philadelphia *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Elya Svei שליט"א, about the offer made to us, his answer was very definite: "Yes, the time has come to teach this – but it must be we who do it!"

Thus, Torah Umesorah, following the guidance of the Rosh Yeshiva יבלי"ח and Rabbi Pam זצ"ל, with the active encouragement of the Novominsker Rebbe שליט"א, embarked upon the "*Zechor Yemos Olam*" project, taking its title from the mandate in *Parshas Haazinur*: "Remember the days of yore, understand the years of each generation" (*Devarim* 32,7). The first task was to train instructors to teach the teenagers in our educational institutions about *Churban*

Europa and its profound lessons for *Klal Yisroel*. We had to guide schools in how to introduce it, and we needed to provide the requisite teaching materials.

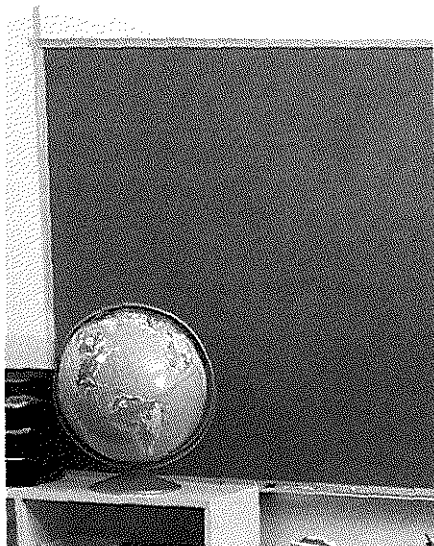
In the years since, significant progress has been made. Over 400 teachers have attended training seminars and curricula have been published.

Yet, only a beginning has been made. Many more schools need to introduce the subject of *Churban Europa* and its lessons. At the last National Convention of Agudath Israel, a symposium on the topic, mostly featuring survivors, was offered. Their speeches, some of which* are reproduced here, vividly show the importance of teaching our children to dedicate themselves to the sacred and heroic heritage that our *Kedoshim* left to us.

Other articles on the topic in this issue are an interview with Mrs. Yuta Moskowitz, a review article by Rabbi Zev Leff on learning from survivors' experiences, as well as a *hashkafa* discussion by Rabbi Elya Meir Klugman on designating those who lost their lives in the *Churban* as "*kedoshim*."

* Chaim Kupperwasser, Rabbi Shmuel Dishon and Mr. Joseph Friedenson.

CHAIM KUPPERWASSER



Sixty Years Since Churban Europa

THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED AND HOW TO TEACH THEM

A CRYING NEED

On May 8, 1945, World War II in Europe was over. Until just a few weeks before then, the gas chambers and crematoria at the various death camps were working overtime, pushing the total of *karbanos* to the six million mark. American Jewry was oblivious to it then, and, to a great extent, has forgotten about it by now. Our *she'eiris ha'peleita Yidden* – the Holocaust survivors – are slowly passing on to a better world, leaving their grandchildren, and especially their great-grandchildren, with no more than a chapter in a history book to refer to. There were, and still are, so many lessons to be learned – lessons in *emuna* (faith) and *bitachon* (trust), *yiras Shamayim* (fear of Heaven) and *gevuras hanefesh* (inner strength). How can these be salvaged from the ravages of time?

I believe we can divide this discussion into three segments:

One, remembering the past, which we must never forget.

Two, highlighting the present: the

beautiful infrastructure that we have today, which was rebuilt and put into place by many of our post-war *gedolim* and lay leaders, most of them either survivors or children of survivors, who used their inner strength to accomplish this superhuman task.

And three, mapping the future: teaching our children and grandchildren never to look away from challenges, no matter how difficult they may appear to be. With *emuna* and *bitachon*, our *hish-tadlus* – our human efforts – can bear fruit.

SECOND GENERATION SURVIVORS

There is a school of thought that teaches: Don't discuss the Holocaust. Blend in. Be normal. Forget the past; look ahead. I respect those who do not tell their stories. It is too painful. But our agenda is to find ways to share experiences and learn lessons in *emuna* and *bitachon*.

Although I was born after the war, my brother and I were privy to all of the horror stories.

How many times was I awoken in the

middle of the night, hearing my parents scream out from nightmares, running to their room. It was always the same dream. My thirteen-year-old sister, Hendele *היידל*, being torn away from my father's arms during the *selektzia* at Auschwitz. He went to the right, she to the left. When I would ask about his nightmare, it was always the same answer. He heard her screaming and pleading with him: "*Tatteh*, please don't leave me!" His bed linens would need to be changed, drenched in sweat and tears.

Then there were my mother's screams in the middle of the night. She was always reacting to the ferocious German shepherd dogs chasing her. As in most survivor homes, the stories flowed freely Pesach night at the Seder, or on Tisha BeAv after *Kinos*. We asked. We listened. And we learned to be survivors.

Our parents *אבות ואמהות* used their experiences to infuse in our veins how we must accept everything from *Hashem* with *emuna peshuta*, and face up to every challenge confronting us, no matter how difficult. Although our parents consciously saw to it that we had everything necessary for a normal childhood, they were unable to shelter us from the horrors. We,

MR. KUPPERWASSER, WHO LIVES IN LAKEWOOD, NJ, WAS REPRESENTED BY "PORTRAIT OF AN ISH HACHESSED: REB LUZER BRODT, זצ"ל ON HIS FIRST YAHREZEIT," IN JO, DEC.'99.

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too, were survivors. It was implanted in us in our homes.

My father זצ"ל once was asked: In what merit was he *zocheh* to survive and rebuild? He answered: "*Ich hub kein muhl nisht gefregt kein kashes* – I never asked any questions." He had a vibrant *emuna* and *bitachon* in Hashem, always thanking Hashem for giving him another chance to rebuild.

Although their grandfather never learned in yeshivos, as they did, my children still learned so much from his life story. Had my parents sheltered us, I believe we would be spiritually and emotionally impoverished.

TODAY'S INSENSITIVITIES

People who should know better seem to have a blind spot to the horrors of sixty years ago. Allow me to illustrate my point:

A close friend of mine took his son to a yeshiva high school for a farher. Upon asking the head of the yeshiva how his son did, he was told: "Your son did okay. He would probably fit in nicely. But unfortunately, I can only accept 24 out of 100 applicants, and I'm forced to put the bachurim through – for the lack of a better word – a *selektzia*."

My friend, in total shock, asked the head of the yeshiva to explain what he meant by that term. His response: "You know, like in Nazi Germany. Some boys will go to the right, and some, unfortunately, to the left."

In all fairness, he only meant that he felt a tremendous responsibility; telling a boy that he is not accepted in a yeshiva may leave him with lasting scars. He was truly troubled by the fact that his decision was one of *nefashos* – a life-and-death matter. But what an analogy! How does one compare this type of problem to the torture our parents and our grandparents went through in the war?

We all know how disturbing and time-consuming cell phones can be. Many gedolim in Eretz Yisroel have forbidden them amongst their talmidim. Trying to express the severity of the issue, one rosh yeshi-

va said during a lecture, "The danger of cell phones is greater than any danger that faced our nation in Nazi Germany."

One talmid expressed his exception to this analogy to another bachur, upon which he was told: "What's the big deal? He was just trying to bring out a point."

Our generation is so distanced from the events of sixty years ago that there is a lack of sensitivity to the horrors of *Churban Europa*; it was just another era in which *Klal Yisroel* found themselves in the pains of *galus*.

THROUGH THE HEARTS - AND PENS - OF GEDOLIM

When a policeman stops a reckless driver and issues a summons, what is that policeman? "A Nazi."

When a judge sentences a Jew for an infraction, what is that judge called? "A Nazi."

Two great leaders in our time - the

Bobover Rebbe רבי בובווער and Rabbi Shimon Schwab רבי שמואל - felt compelled to compose new *Kinos* for *Tisha BeAv* on *Churban Europa* because, since the time of the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, no set of atrocities of such magnitude has ever befallen us. How can intelligent people equate social injustices with Nazism?

The only answer, in my opinion, is that lack of education causes insensitivity. Members of the generation after the Holocaust are either forgetting the stories they had heard, or they never heard them in the first place. It is incumbent upon our leaders to educate our children, in accordance with *daas Torah*, as to why we must not forget, and what lessons are to be learned.

In addition, the Rabbi Moshe Sherer Community Center, to be housed in the new building of Agudas Yisroel of Boro Park, will contain a Holocaust Memorial Library Educational Center. We hope and pray that meaningful lessons of the Holocaust will be conveyed in this new edifice, and will live on in this and future generations, as we, along with our chil-

dren and grandchildren, become informed, enlightened, and inspired.

Torah Umesorah's *Zechor Yemos Olam* Program, headed by Rabbi Joseph Elias, has been training educators in yeshivos and day schools in teaching the Holocaust with a Torah *hashkafa*, as mentioned in his introduction. By means of audio-visual and literary materials, *Zechor Yemos Olam* is "successfully transmitting the Torah lessons of the Holocaust to be passed on as an eternal legacy to our students." □

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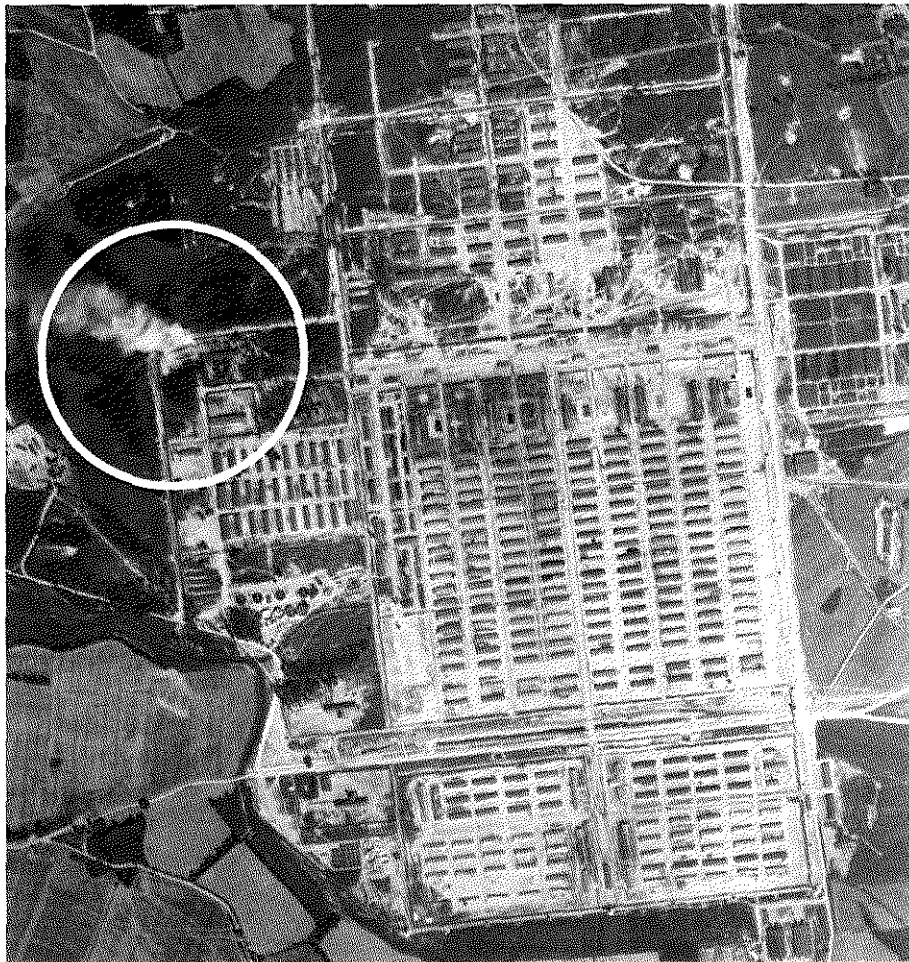
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RABBI ELIYAHU MEIR KLUGMAN

HUMAN SMOKE

שימני כחותם על לבך כחותם על זרועך כי עצה כמות אהבה קשה כשואל קנאה רשפיה
רשפי אש שלהבתיה

– Bring our exile to an end, Hashem, for strong as death is our love for You, as powerful as Gehinnom is the jealousy which the nations harbor against us. Their hatred for us smolders like the coals of the fires of Gehinnom.
(Targum, Shir HaShirim 8:6)



More than five million aerial photographs from World War II have been stored in the British National Archives in London. Among the photographs, taken in the beginning of the summer of 1944, are some that show prisoners lining up at Auschwitz and the heavy pillars of smoke that billowed from the infamous ovens in which the lifeless bodies of the gassed Jews were burned.

The image of smoke emanating from the chimneys of Auschwitz is the most frighteningly powerful depiction ever of Jewish existence in *galus*.

It is human smoke—the smoke, the ashes, the smoldering remains of millions of upright, *erlicher* fathers; kind, caring mothers; intelligent, zealous young boys; gentle, soft-spoken young girls.

Do you have little children, or little brothers and sisters, wholesome bundles of joy, whose smiles tug at your heart, whose every hurt cuts to the quick? Try, then, to imagine, even *one* of those million and a half sweet, innocent *kinderlach* being butchered to death by any one of tens of thousands of bloodthirsty thugs. You contemplate this, you shudder, a tear forms in the corner of your eye, you may even weep. But you move on. Because you really are incapable of grasping the horror, the pain, the extent of the tragedy.

And six million is only the number of those who were murdered. What of the million-plus who suffered through this unspeakable hell and lost all their family, health and place in this world? The lips, the pen can perhaps express the numbers and attempt to describe a minuscule portion of millions of unspeakable horrors, but the human heart, and mind, can have no real comprehension of the reality.

WITHIN THE SMOKE... LIVES

But is it smoke? Are they ashes? Does this image represent the final stage of the complete obliteration of six million men, women and children drifting, wafting, twisting in the wind, disappearing into nothingness?

What is this smoke? What are those ashes? *Who* are those ashes?

They are lives.

That smoke is men, women, children. Human beings with promise, hope, happiness, pain, striving, growing.

RABBI KLUGMAN, WHO LIVES IN JERUSALEM, IS *ROSH YESHIVA* IN NEVEH ZION, WHICH IS LOCATED IN A JERUSALEM SUBURB. HE IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES.

Is all that no longer?

Were their lives in vain? Were their promises unfulfilled, their ideals a farce, their hopes a mirage, their pain wasted, their striving without meaning? Have their entire lives vanished?

Or are they yet alive? Are they with us today, not only their memory but their essence, guiding, inspiring, encouraging?

Do you want to understand their lives? Do you want an insight into their hopes, their promises, their strivings? Do you want to grasp the reality of who they were?

Look, then, at those who survived. Examine the lives, the vibrant, *emuna*-filled lives of those who rebuilt the Jewish People after the death camps. Look at their ideals, their powerful, unswerving dedication to serving their Creator despite the loss of everyone and everything. And look at their families.

Look at those who came out of the European inferno with nothing, no family, no possessions, no home and no position. Contemplate the lives of those who watched their parents, their spouses, their children being brutally tortured and murdered before their eyes, and then rebuilt their own lives from nothing. Consider their lives carefully, and you will begin to understand the fire, the holiness, in the ashes of those in whose place they could have been. Look closely at the survivors, our parents who are *mekadeish Sheim Shamayim* in the endless, varied vicissitudes of life, and you will gain a glimpse of the thoughts, the ideals, the purity of those who lived, and died, *al kiddush Hashem*.

WHO CAN COMMENT?

At the outset, we ask forgiveness for entering and treading on the hallowed ground of the largest *Beis Hakevaros* in history, and for touching the deep and painful wounds of those whose suffering we cannot even begin to fathom.

Those who did not experience the atrocities of the *Churban* have no right to comment on the issues and lessons to be learned from suffering of a scale and magnitude unparalleled in the

annals of man. Even the children of those whom *Hashem* saw fit to keep alive may not explain, may not theorize, may not pontificate. We were not there. And one who was not there can never, ever, understand.

But we are the next link in the three-millennia-long chain, forged in fire, stretching back to *Avraham Avinu* in the flames of *Ur Kasdim*, and we must understand our responsibilities toward that chain and that fire. We are obligated to

soaked with Jewish blood, the *Rishonim* (early commentators of the 11-15th century) formulated for us the authoritative response to Jewish suffering and destruction at the hands of the *goyim*. This formulation – the *Av Harachamim* that we say on *Shabbos*, before *Mussaf* – remains the credo of Jewish *galus* suffering, and every word illuminates the path that the children of survivors must tread.

Hashem is *Av Harachamim*¹ – not

WE ARE THE NEXT LINK IN THE THREE-MILLENNIA-LONG CHAIN, FORGED IN FIRE, STRETCHING BACK TO AVRAHAM AVINU IN THE FLAMES OF UR KASDIM, AND WE MUST UNDERSTAND OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD THAT CHAIN AND THAT FIRE.

bring those embers to life, to stoke the flames of their holiness into a roaring fire which will illuminate our world, and to warm ourselves, our children, and subsequent links in the golden chain of *Am Yisroel* with the beacon-fire of their devotion in life and in death.

"AV HARACHAMIM"

The scope and magnitude of the suffering and slaughter in the Holocaust are without precedent in history. Despite all the death and destruction of two millennia in *galus*, never before were so many millions of Jews burned to smoke and ashes, without any physical remains.

But the Jewish People's *galus* experience is replete with persecution and pogroms, deportation, destruction and death. In the wake of the horrors of the Crusades, when thousands of Jews were butchered, countless communities destroyed and the ground of Europe

merciful Father (*Av Harachaman*), but Father of mercy. *Rachamim* is not an adjective here, Rabbi S. R. Hirsch explains, but rather a noun. *Hashem* is *Av Harachamim*, the Father, the source, the essence of compassion. Everything He does is merciful. The connotation of *Rachamim* is *rechem*, the mother's womb. As a mother's womb totally and completely nourishes, sustains and protects her child within, *Hashem*, *Av Harachamim*, nourishes, sustains and protects His children at all times and in every situation.

So what are we to make of the events of sixty years ago, which would seem to be the antithesis of mercy and compassion?

In a conversation in the Warsaw ghetto during the early part of the war, the Sochatchover Rebbe, Rabbi Dovid Borenstein זצ"ל, who was later killed by the Nazis, explained the Divine direction of events in those years. The purpose of the existence of man, he said, is to per-

fect one's *neshama*, and to bring the world toward the completion of the purpose for which *Hashem* created it. That can be accomplished only through spiritual efforts and physical endeavors to perform His Will during one's lifetime. Most people, however, do not discharge their assignment properly. To the contrary, the earthly endeavors of many may even wreak damage on the Divine plan that everyone in the universe acknowledge His Presence. As a result, the Almighty, Who views Creation from beginning to end, will often bring the world closer to its ultimate goal through means other than human endeavor, and will instead give man the opportunity to earn his eternal life in but a few moments: *yeish koneh olamo besh'a achas*.²

But why at this time, in that place, and of that magnitude?

The only legitimate response to the question of when and why is that *Hashem* is *shochein meromim* – He dwells on high. The calculations of *rachamav ha'atzumim*, of His powerful, all-encom-

passing compassion, take the whole of human history and existence into consideration, and are beyond the comprehension of short-sighted, mortal man who does not share that vantage point and all-pervasive *rachamim*.

We do not, cannot, and will never understand why. "*Ki gavhu shamayim mei'aretz, kein gavhu derachai midarche-ichem umachshevosai mimachshevose-ichem* – As high as the heavens are over the earth," says *Hashem*, "so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts" (*Yeshayahu* 55,9). That human inability to comprehend Divine ways – which *Hashem* posited to *Moshe Rabbeinu* when he asked to understand the suffering of the righteous – will always be the reality upon which man's relationship with G-d is predicated.

"*Vera'isa es achorai* – You may understand My actions in hindsight," the *Chasam Sofer* explains *Hashem's* reply to *Moshe*, "*upanai lo yeira'u* – you will not, however, comprehend My ways when

they are happening," when you are "face to face" with them. We are still at the point where this entire saga stares us in the face. We cannot understand why.

"Hu yifkod berachamim – He will recall with compassion"

– with all-encompassing, protective mercy. How?

If earthly life is the sum total of man's existence, this is meaningless. If, however, one's years on this world are but a tiny fraction of the eternal life that one shares in the protection of one's Creator, then when one's life, and death, have served to bring him closer to His Father in Heaven, the magnitude of that eternal pleasure in *Hashem's* company far exceeds the tragedy of the earthly suffering and early death which facilitated that eternal relationship.

"*Shemasru nafsham al kedushas haSheim* – those who gave their lives for the sanctification of His Name"

But were they all *moseir nefesh*? Are they all *kedoshim*? Why describe their deaths as *mesiras nefesh* when they did not even have a chance or a choice? Did those whom Mengele sent to the right – to their death – have a choice? Were they given the option of conversion – an option which they refused? Most didn't know they were being killed *al Kiddush Hashem*, and many did not have the presence of mind to think about anything at all. Surely, there were many who gave their lives with a profound sense of love for *Hashem*, and they fulfilled the mitzvah of *Kiddush Hashem* in spirit and in deed. But how can we consider the deaths of the others as *Kiddush Hashem*?

And how can one speak of all the six million as *kedoshim*? What of the multitudes who were non-religious or even virulently anti-religious, assimilated and even intermarried? Surely they did not have thoughts of *Kiddush Hashem* when they were killed?

Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 47a) tell us that *harugei malchus* – Jews who are killed by non-Jews – even if they are sinners, even if they are *ovdei avoda zara*, are forgiven their sins immediately upon their death, even before burial, because they were killed without cause.³ Ultimately, then, there were no sinners among those

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whom the Nazis murdered. But why do we consider them all *kedoshim*?

A clear understanding of the real meaning of *Kiddush Hashem* is critical.

Hashem's benevolent influence on this world is unchanging. Nothing man does can affect Him in the least. Man, however, through his being and through his actions, can determine the intensity of the Divine presence, of the Divine "light" which will shine through to this world. A *Chillul Hashem* (desecration of *Hashem's* Name), derived from the word *challal* – void – is any action or situation that appears to lessen the Divine benevolent influence on the world. This is also known as *hester pannim*, when *Hashem* "conceals" His face, as it were. His shining light – His countenance – is illuminating, giving and influencing all the same, but mortal man's actions can make him and the rest of the world incapable of seeing and feeling that Divine benevolence; it becomes hidden from view.

The Torah specifies the mitzvah of *Kiddush Hashem* in passive terms: "*Venikdashiti besoch Benei Yisroel—I will be sanctified among the children of Israel,*" rather than as a positive requirement: "*Vekidashitem es Hashem—you shall sanctify His name.*" Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky זצ"ל explained that there is a fundamental difference between the performance of the mitzvah of *Kiddush Hashem* and all other obligations. Whereas with other mitzvos, one's actions and *kavana* determine whether, and to what extent, one has discharged one's obligations, as regards *Kiddush Hashem*, the main concern is the result: that *Hashem's* Name is sanctified.

Just as Chazal tell us (*Kiddushin* 40a) "*Ein makifin beChillul Hashem, echad shogeig ve'echad meizid—no credit is extended to one who desecrates G-d's name, whether unintentionally or intentionally*" – the same applies equally, and even more so, to *Kiddush Hashem*. Even if one did not intend to be *mekadeish Shem Shamayim*, even if he intended a *Chillul Hashem*⁴ – if the end result was a *Kiddush Hashem*, that person has fulfilled the mitzvah of *Venikdashiti*, because through him a

Kiddush Hashem took place.⁵

It was to destroy the essence of Judaism and the Jewish People that Hitler ש"י took on the entire world and amassed the most powerful and vicious military force in history. "The primary battle is between two camps: Germany and the Jews," Hitler declared as early as 1940. "All the rest is only for the sake of appearances."⁶

Although the Jew felt primarily the physical destruction, it was his entire being, physical and spiritual, which

infuriated Hitler and his minions, and which they wanted to destroy. It was the shuls, the *rabbanim*, the beard and *payos*, the *tashmishei kedusha*, the overt signs of *Yiddishkeit*, that so enraged the murderers.

What was that essence?

It was precisely the apparent weakness of the Jew versus the superiority of the powerful Aryan race which was the central theme of Hitler's doctrine, as outlined in *Mein Kampf* and his other rantings. In the very last words of his will,

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THE VORT

- The Vort celebration is to be discontinued. The *L'chaim* (held at the time that the engagement is announced) should also not turn into a Vort.

THE WEDDING

- For typical families, only 400 invited guests may be seated at the *chasuna seuda*. (The Guidelines make provision for exceptional circumstances - see full text.)
- The *kabbolas panim* smorgasbord should be limited to basic cakes, fruit platters, a modest buffet, and the caterer's standard chicken or meat hot dishes.

- The menu for the *seuda* is limited to 3 courses followed by a regular dessert.

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- A band may consist of a maximum of 5 musicians (one of the musicians may act as a vocalist) or four musicians and one additional vocalist.
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written hours before his death, Hitler charged "... the leadership of the nation...with the strict observance of the racial laws and with merciless resistance against...Jewry."

The Jewish People is weak. The *kedoshim* knew that, and saw their Guardian in their own powerlessness. They knew that they were only a weak, transient instrument in the hands of the

them, did they not? Their ideals, their convictions, are vibrant and flourishing. Anti-Semitism notwithstanding, the ideals and worldview of the Nazis and their collaborators rot in the dust heap of history.

The miracle of the survival of the weak and defenseless Jewish nation is the ultimate *Kiddush Hashem*. The continued existence and flourishing of the *Am*

**THEY KNEW THAT THEY COULD NEVER BE
DEFEATED. THEY SANG "MIR VELLEN ZEI
ÜBERLEBEN - WE WILL OUTLIVE THEM" ON THE
WAY TO THE OPEN GRAVES, TO THE CHAMBERS
OF DEATH. AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE DID
OUTLIVE THEM, DID THEY NOT?**

powerful Guardian of the ages, Who wished to achieve through them His eternal goal: to build His everlasting Kingdom of glory in the sphere of man.

Whether they were butchered, burned at the stake, their houses set aflame, or their wives and children murdered, they knew that whoever fought against them, fought against G-d and His kingdom on earth. They knew that they could never be defeated. They sang "*Mir vellen zei überleben - We will outlive them*" on the way to the open graves, to the chambers of death.

And the Jewish People did outlive

Hashem, the scattered, unarmed, most insignificant, and most defenseless handful of people, constitute living proof of His power to direct and control the affairs of men and nations. Their lives, their deaths and the subsequent renaissance of Jewish life demonstrated in the clearest possible manner, that if *Hashem* wants the Jewish People to continue to exist, longer than any nation in history, we will endure, despite the most untenable circumstances... despite persecution, pogroms, exile and annihilation for three millennia by the most powerful nations on earth.

* * *

"Hane'ehavim vehane'imim bechayehem uvemosam lo nifradu - Who were beloved and treasured by G-d in their lives, and even in death were not separated from Him."

Not at the moment of death and not ever after were they separated from Him. To the contrary, their deaths and the events that led to them, served as the most powerful, enduring adhesive, ensuring that their *neshamos*, their *cheilek Eloka mimaal*, will always be at one with their Source.

In the hell of Treblinka, they did not swerve from *emuna BaShem*. The thunderous voices reciting "*Shema Yisroel*," acknowledging that *Hashem* is the only power in the universe, penetrated even the sealed doors of the gas chambers. In their last moments, the murdered called out to *Hashem* in Heaven: "*Nechshavnu ketzon la'tevach yuval, uvechol zos shimcha lo sha'chach'nu*—Although we were slaughtered like sheep [lit., We were considered as sheep hauled to the slaughter], we did not forget You, *Hashem*."

"Mi'nesharim kalu - They were lighter than eagles"

An entire world had joined forces to drag them down into the dirt of poverty, misery and torture, and to transform them into self-seeking, degenerate people. In the midst of degradation, the Jew kept his thoughts pure and his spirit aloft. Truthfulness, right, and morality were

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practiced fully. Despite the terror of the death camps, he knew that he must sustain his more indigent brother and keep his family together. He evinced an almost impossible humaneness, and despite the most inhuman conditions and the constant and consistent attempts to transform him into an animal he kept his *tzellem Elokim* intact.

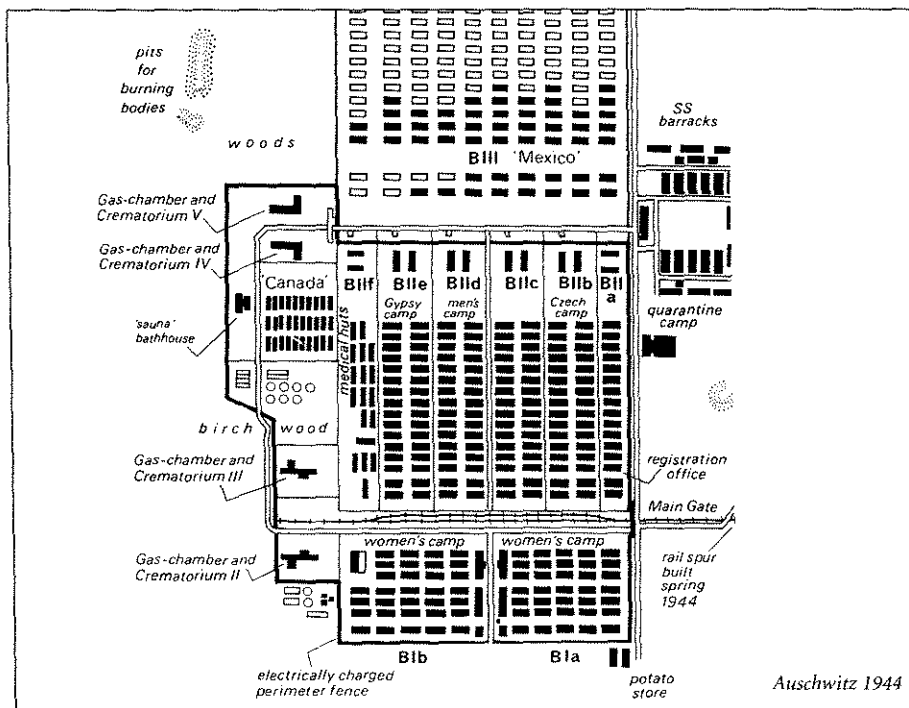
"Umei'arayos gaveiru – And more powerful than lions"

Those with strength of character knew the purpose of their death and were able to employ it in His service. They knew that what *Hashem* wanted from them was not to overcome the threat of *shemad*. In that case, the choice would be clear, but that was not even an option. Their *avoda*, their *nisayon*, as Rabbi Dessler put it, was infinitely more difficult. Their *nisayon* was to be truthful in their own hearts – to be *mekadeish Hashem* in the inner sanctum of their hearts, and to subordinate their selves, their desires, their hopes, totally and completely to Him – *ein od milvado*. They saw it as their challenge to rejoice despite the terrible torture, they saw it as their goal to attain the complete happiness of genuine *deveikus baShem*.

Tanna'im and *Amoraim*, Rabbi Dessler points out,⁷ were afraid of these *chevlei Moshiach*. They said "*Yeisei velo achminei* – Let *Moshiach* come, but let me not suffer the accompanying events [lit. behold him]." Yet, in our weak times, many of our ancestors attained this level, withstood the great *nisyonos*, and were *daveik baShem* in purity and truth.

Shlomo Zelichovsky, a Gerrer Chassid, who sang "*Ne'ila*" on the first day of Shavuot to a packed congregation of Jews in the marketplace of Zdanska Volia, as he and nine other Jews were hung on the gallows, rejoiced in his *deveikus baShem*. When his voice called out the words of "*Ezker Elokim—u'vechol zos anu leKa ve'eineinu leKa*," he was but one of many shining examples of the powerful love and gripping devotion evinced by these lions of the spirit.

"*Ashreinu ma tov chelkeinu*," sang Reb Doniel Mowshovitz and the Bais HaTalmud of Kelm on their way to the Lithuanian killing squads, as did Gerrer



Chassidim en route to the murder ovens of Poland. They viewed their ordeal as an opportunity for them to perfect their *emuna* in *Hashem's* righteous will and direction under the most supremely difficult circumstances possible. They learned Torah, performed mitzvos and gave their lives in the most powerful affirmation that the *devar Hashem* is the only important value, and that without its proper observance, life is not worth living.

That contentment extended further. Many of those who faced the Nazi beast had the courage and presence of mind to declare their satisfaction that they had no share in the laws that were enacted, in the concentration camps that were constructed, in the funeral pyres that were erected, and in the killing chambers that were built for them. In the midst of the inferno, they understood that they were the Chosen People, because they were the oppressed rather than the oppressors, the victims rather than the hangmen. And they expressed this serene contentment at the most difficult moment of their lives.

Churban Europa, then, was both dark and luminous, terrible and sublime, desperate and blissful—dimmed by the tears of death, and yet, suffused with life. Because life is not primarily physical life, but rather the blissful, eternal, spiritual connection with *Hashem*.

AS FOR THE SILENT NATIONS...

So to the countries who perpetrated this, to the nations who collaborated and to the rest of the world who stood silently by, we say in Rabbi S. R. Hirsch's immortal formulation:

"*Harninu goyim amo* – Cause His people to sing joyfully, O nations of the world. Make the lot of His people a happy one, *ki dam avadav yikom*—for the blood of His servants He will avenge."

The treatment accorded to the Jews is the yardstick by which *Hashem* measures the allegiance due to Him: "*Venakam yashiv letzarav* – And He returns vengeance unto His enemies."

And so we declare with pride:

"We are the descendants of those whom you, the nations, cut down, whose hearts you broke, whose necks you bent, whose homes you looted, at whom you jeered, and whom you pursued and penned in as one pens in a predatory animal. Our parents knew that as *avadav*, they were suffering for the sake of His service, so that their persecutors were at the same time, *tzarav*, the opponents of His Kingdom on earth. This gave them strength to persevere, and to give their lives with His

Name on their lips.

"When you nations of the world will perceive the truth of the One, Unique G-d in unbecloaked truthfulness, you will see that He is the avenger for all spilled blood, for every guiltless, injured feeling, for every blameless, broken heart, for every person deprived of the happiness of his life. Then, the dreadful injustices you perpetrated on the Jewish People throughout history will weigh upon you and will bring G-d's retribution."

ASHES ON THE ALTAR OF DEVOTION

What is this smoke? What are those ashes?

Is that not smoke on the *mizbeiach* of *Kiddush Hashem*? Are those ashes not the cinders of the ultimate *korban*? Are Auschwitz, Treblinka, Maidanek, Buchenwald and a dozen other killing camps not the most significant *mizbeichos* in history?

What is a *korban*? It is neither offering nor sacrifice. An offering implies a prior request or need on the part of the one to whom the object is offered. *Hashem* needs nothing.

A sacrifice connotes annihilation, destruction, loss. A *korban* is none of those.

It is rather, as the word *kareiv*

describes, the attempt to draw closer, to arrive at a more intimate relationship with *Hashem*, to attain G-d's nearness by dedicating one's physical, earthly self to the illuminating, purifying, life-giving fire of His Word.

These six million *korbanos*, then, men, women and children, attained G-d's nearness by giving their entire earthly existence back to He Who granted it to them. They were *korbanos ola*, complete fire offerings. So, although their bodies were consumed, their *neshamos*, their true essence, their *cheilek Eloka mimaal*, returned to its source and became at one with G-d.

Yitzchak Avinu was prepared to give his life as a *korban*, even though he did not initiate the *akeida* and in essence, had no choice. His ashes, his readiness to be a *korban*, slaughtered and burnt, has protected his descendants ever since, even three millennia later.

Are not the *kedoshim*, then, the successors of *Yitzchak*, prepared to die, with the realization that this is His will? They died as Jews because they were, like *Yitzchak*, the children of *Avraham*. Are their ashes, then, not of a piece with those of *Yitzchak Avinu*, *tzavur*—piled—*al gabei hamizbeiach*, on the greatest *mizbeiach* in history?

Is that not what Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman זצ"ל meant when he explained calmly, moments before he became a *korban*, that it is in the *zechus* of these millions of *korbanos* that we, their descendants in America and elsewhere, will be given the strength and ability to build and flourish in unprecedented manner, that the very fires that consumed their bodies will be the ones that will rebuild the Jewish People?

SACRED SMOKE AND CINDERS OF THE SOUL

The day before Rosh Hashana 5704, the Nazi guards in Auschwitz rounded up all boys aged eighteen and under. There were about 1,600 of these boys, who had until then managed to escape the gas chambers. The Nazis gathered their

catch in an empty lot and erected a plank of wood at a certain height. Each boy would pass under the plank; those whose heads reached the plank would live. Those who did not would be sent to a sealed barracks to await their fate.

At the end of the exercise, 1,400 boys were immediately taken to a sealed barracks. They were not provided with any light, food or drink. They were to wait there until the next evening. The Germans knew they could trust the guards to deliver 1,400 victims at the day's end; any missing boys would be compensated for by the guards themselves.

Many of the boys inside the airless barracks had fathers, brothers, or close friends in the camp. These relatives approached the guards, begging them to free their dear ones. The *kapos* were open to bribery, and some fathers used hidden stores of money or jewelry to free their children. Yet, before letting one prisoner free, the guards would always make sure to take another in his place. In this way, the Germans would still receive the same number of victims.

That entire Rosh Hashana, the camp was overtaken by feverish activity. Desperate fathers borrowed, bartered, and gave up their last remaining possessions to save their children. As the day went on, the clock danced to a macabre rhythm, counting away the last few hours left to free the captives.

Yet, amidst the desperate activity, there were a few who realized the awful price to be paid for their sons' freedom.

An unpretentious Hungarian Jew approached the revered Weitzener Rav, Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Meisels, for a *pesak*. "Rebbe," he asked, "my only son is in there with all the other boys who are fated to die. I have the means to save him. But I know, without a doubt, that the guards will take another boy in his place. And so I am asking the Rav to rule whether the Torah permits me to save my son.

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Rav rules is what I shall do."

Rabbi Meisels trembled in fear and tried to evade the Jew's request. "How can I possibly rule on this complicated matter?" he said. "Matters of life and death are never decided by one lone rav; they used to be determined by the Sanhedrin. Here I am in Auschwitz, without any other rabbanim to consult with, without any sifrei halacha to research, without even a clear head."

But the Jew would not give up. He begged Rabbi Meisels to give him an answer. "Rebbe," he asked, "if it was your child, would you say it was permissible? If you can honestly tell me not, then I will accept your verdict with love."

Rabbi Meisels implored him, "My dear friend, I didn't say it is permissible, nor did I say it is forbidden. Do as you would have done had you never asked me this question."

The father would not give in. He continued to beg for an answer. When the Weitzener Rav could not

honestly tell him it would be permitted to free his son at the expense of another Jewish child, the "simple" Jew understood. With great emotion and feeling, he said, "Rebbe, I wanted to know what the Torah requires me to do. I asked a rav. There is no other rav to ask. If you could not assure me that it was permissible to free my son, then it must be that the Torah forbids it. For after all, if it would have been permissible, you would certainly have told me to save my only child. If my son shall go to his death because that is what Torah and halacha determine, then I shall accept it with love and happiness. I will do as the Torah commands."

And so it was. The father did not bribe the kapo to release his only son. He would sacrifice his Yitzchak for the sake of G-d. That entire Rosh Hashana day, this "simple" Jew kept repeating to himself with deep joy that he had merited to sacrifice his only son, despite his ability to

redeem him—because that was what the Torah commanded.

That father and his son, and millions like them, are the cinders of which the smoke of Auschwitz is composed. They are the smoke, the *reiach nichoach*, on the twentieth century *mizbeiach* of *Kiddush Hashem*.

They are the fire, the devotion, the inspiration which will illuminate our lives, light our path and warm our beings until we are reunited with them, speedily in our days. □

¹ Several of the ideas and formulations in this section are from Rabbi S. R. Hirsch's essays on the month of Iyar.

² Rabbi Yehoshua Moshe Aharonson, *Alei Meroros*, Bnei Brak, 1996, p. 259

³ See *Teshuvos Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah* 333; *Rambam, Iggeres Hashemad*.

⁴ For that reason, even a child, who is not required to perform mitzvos, is included in the obligation and performance of *Kiddush Hashem*.

⁵ *Emes LeYaakov, Bereishis* 27:40

⁶ Hermann Rauschning, *The Voice of Destruction: My Conversations With Hitler*, 1940 (Heb.), p. 305

⁷ *Michtav MeiEliyahu III*, p. 347

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JOSEPH FRIEDENSON



Lessons from the Flames

WHAT SURVIVORS OF CHURBAN EUROPA WANT US TO KNOW

ALL THE WRONG LESSONS

For many years, I have been bothered (I can even say "pained") by the way so many prominent Jewish "leaders" – politicians, thinkers and writers – are teaching wrong lessons about the Holocaust. May I share three of them with the reader?

Lesson number one: The Holocaust is an outgrowth of anti-Semitism, which is the result of prejudice, which comes from ignorance. Therefore, Jews should be in the forefront of education and enlightenment, and, indeed, for many years they have been among the greatest sponsors and benefactors of universities, libraries, museums, media projects, and so on.

This lesson, of course, is totally wrong. Seventy years ago, the Germans were the most educated people in Europe, perhaps in the entire world. They were called "the nation of poets, thinkers, and artists." In fact, the great philosophers, thinkers, poets and leading composers of the previous generation were almost all German. And yet, the Holocaust was a German creation.

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The killing of millions of human beings was perpetrated by Germans, and many of those involved in these murders were highly educated. Among the ten governors of Occupied Poland, more than half of them had PhDs. And many of the atrocities were directed and ordered by people with university degrees. After the war, the great Jewish linguist and leader of the Yivo, Max Weinreich, published a book with the title *Hitler's Professors*, where he lists many famous German scholars who willingly supported Hitler.

Considering all that we know now, can anyone really think that education and scholarship is the solution to Jew-hatred? That that is the key to a better world?

Lesson number two: Nazism was the result of dictatorship. Most crimes committed by a government on a national scale are carried out by dictators. And so, after the Holocaust, Jews ought to be the champions and promoters of democracy among nations. To put it in good German, the motto for Jews should be "*Demokratie uber alles*."

Again, this is an incorrect lesson. Hitler did not come to power through a violent revolution, but, rather, through an election. He became the German chancellor through a democratic vote in the German Reichstag. It also is interesting to note that the renewed anti-Semitism in our days is the creation of highly edu-

cated people, many of them in universities, who are fully committed to so-called democracy, justice, etc.

Lesson number three: The Holocaust is the result of our inherent weakness. Because we were strangers, political pundits argue, we had no state of our own and no say in our fate. Some even have the audacity to say that we were victimized because we did not have the strength to fight back.

Again, wrong. The Russians were very strong. They had a great army, and nonetheless, large numbers of them perished not only on the battlefield, but were also murdered in masses like the Jews, because the Germans were just stronger. We are, we must remember, "the least of all nations." We can never be physically stronger than our many more powerful enemies. While we may resort to whatever tools and media of persuasion or influence that are available, we know that we have limitations. Our unique strength is that of the spirit.

TWO VIABLE LESSONS: A MATTER OF HASHGACHA...

If all the above lessons are wrong, what are the right ones? I would suggest two of them.

First: Churban Europa, despite all its

vast destruction and terrible deaths, teaches us that there is *Hashgacha Prattis*, Divine Providence. There is a G-d Who directs all events – every minute in every hour of every day. He also protects and saves us. I know it, because I have seen it. I was a victim and a witness to all of this.

My own little story can illustrate these points.

I am a writer by profession. When it comes to menial work, however, I am the biggest *shlimazel*. To this very day, I don't know how to hold and use a screwdriver. When I reported for work in a labor camp, they assigned me to a machine that sharpens steel tools. Not only did I break the implements, I even broke the sharpening machine. So they ordered me to push coal in a carriage. Before I even raised its handles, I turned it over. Such *shlimazels* had no place in a labor camp, and indeed the majority of them perished. Eventually, the Germans simply did away with them.

But it seems that *Hashem Yisbarach* wanted me to survive, so He sent a *shaliach*. One day, I met the German boss of *Kleine Schmide* (small smithy) and he needed a translator. When he spoke to me, he took note of my command of German and Polish, and he gave me a job whereby I could be useful for them, and I survived.

Now let me tell you – I was not the only one who had a special story. Almost every survivor whom you meet has his unique story of how he survived only through *nissim* – miracles.

As a matter of fact, they say that the Belzer *Rebbe*, who was also saved quite miraculously, said that every Jew who survived the war was escorted in those *Churban* years by two *malachim*. There is no other explanation for the survival of so many people, so many *shlimazels* like myself. They survived only because something happened to them, they were endowed with some *chein* (charm), and they survived... because that is what the *Hashgacha* wanted. By the same token, the *Hashgacha* wanted me to survive, so He handed me over to a German boss to whom I was useful.

I always wondered how anyone who

was not there, in the camps, is able to say "*Nishmas*" (every *Shabbos* morning) with the proper *kavana* (intention). As I see it, only these survivors can say such words as "... *mibeis avadim pedisanu, beraav zantanu... meicherev hitzaltanu...* – You liberated us from the house of bondage, in famine You nourished us... You saved us from the sword...."

... AND OUR UNIQUE STATUS

Another lesson from the *Churban*: We Jews are exceptional, unique, different, a nation apart. In addition, we are eternal, immortal, indestructible, and everlasting.

Here, too, I am a surviving witness. I think about the spiritual *gevura* that I witnessed in the Warsaw ghetto and in various camps I was in, encountering Jews who can say, "*U'vechol zos Shimcha lo shachachnu* – In spite of it all, we did not forget Your Name." In the worst of times, in the darkest of days, they lifted their eyes to *Hashem Yisbarach* and said, "*Baruch Atta* – Blessed are You..." as frequently as they could.

I witnessed the *chesed* that Jews extended to one another, demonstrating how they did not become dehumanized.

In social-political discussions of the conditions in the ghettos of minority populations in America and abroad, there is usually focus on crime and violent friction between different groups. In the wartime ghettos, Jews never fought with one another, but went out of their way to help each other. Our people, believing people, *maaminim bnei maaminim*, *yeshivaleit* and Bais Yaakov girls, even non-religious Jews, were many times *moseir nefesh* to be of assistance to their suffering brothers and sisters under the Nazis, preserving the eternal legacy of Jews being *rachmanim*, *bayshanim*, *vegomlei chassadim* (compassionate, modest, and helping).

And I saw all this at every step.

I saw it in the Warsaw Ghetto. I saw it in the *arbeitslager* of Starachowitz. I saw it in Auschwitz ... and I saw it in Buchenwald. I especially remember how the *Rav* of Drohobitz, Rabbi

Yaakov Avigdor, זצ"ל would somehow manage to learn day and night, and would usually succeed in getting us together on *Shabbos* morning to make a *minyan*. Rabbi Avigdor knew the entire *Chumash* by heart, and he would "*lein*" the week's portion for the group. Here, too, I am a surviving witness.

Somehow, the *Rav* had a *Midrash Tanchuma* in his possession, from which he studied and which he gave to the others to study. Not seeing a holy book for more than three years, this *Midrash* was like a healing potion for me. It gave me a new lease on life.

Talking about Buchenwald, I will of course never forget how a young friend of mine, David Kahan, whom I befriended in the Starachowitz Labor Camp, shared with me the contents of the Red Cross food package that he received in his Youth Block. Of course, very few had the *koach* (strength) to do this. But some did, and as I said, it gave us the *koach* to survive.

OUR MIRACULOUS SURVIVAL

In 1942-43, when the great deportations of the Jews to the extermination camps took place, and even later, in 1944, during *churban Ungarn*, the Germans were determined "*lehashmid laharog u'le'abeid es kol haYehudim, minaar ve'ad zakein, taf venashim* – to wipe out, to kill, and to destroy all the Jews, from the youngest to the aged, child and women," and we saw it. When the Germans had a suspicion that a Jewish child was hidden somewhere in a village, they were capable of mobilizing a battalion of 50 to 100 men, just to find this one child and kill it. "This child must not survive."

In the Starachowitz Labor Camp, a few Jews succeeded in hiding their children for a while. One day, an S.S. inspection took place, and the heads of the inspection group found one of these children and shot it. I remember the commander then came to the Jewish camp leaders and loudly declared: "No Jew will survive us! No Jewish soul will escape us!" And they succeeded with the

majority of the Jews.

But we also know that a day came when this all changed, when *Hashem Yisbarach* said, "Enough!" In 1945, during the final months of the war, the

Germans still had about 300,000 Jews in their camps, in Matthaussen, in Buchenwald, in Auschwitz, in Bergen-Belsen... and they hated us as much as ever. They still wanted us not to sur-

vive. And they had the power to kill us. Yet, they did not do so. This can only be explained as a result of the *Hashgacha*.

The day had come when *Hashem Yisbarach* saw fit to fulfill His *havtacha* (promise) to *Yermiyahu Hanavi*, who had predicted the *Churban*, "*Biyosam be'eretz o'yevehihem lo me'astem... velo e'eseh bachem es'chem kala* – Even as they are in the land of their enemies, I will not despise them – nor will I cause them to be destroyed." I will not permit an end to this. Only this can explain how *Klal Yisroel* is an eternal people. (Interestingly, the *Maharal* wrote a *sefer* mourning the *Churban*, which he called "*Netzach Yisroel* – *Yisroel* is Eternal.")

May *Hashem Yisbarach* bless us all, especially those who survived the great *Churban*, to see *yeshuas venechamas Yisroel*, the saving and comforting of our people. We pray, "*Samcheinu kimos inisanu* – Make us rejoice as we suffered." This is our *tefilla*. ✠

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I would like to imagine that 800 people will respond to this request, offering \$50 each, closing this \$40,000 deficit on behalf of our children. Checks made out to Cong. Ohavei Torah – Kallah Fund (tax deductible) will put your contribution to immediate use, and bring happiness and security to orphaned children in Jerusalem, and *Hashem's* choicest blessing to you.

As *Rashi* says: "The Levi, the stranger, the orphan and the widow – four that are Mine... corresponding to the four that are yours – your son, your daughter, your servant, your maid. You bring joy to Mine, and I will bring joy to yours" (*Devarim* 16,11). May the Father of *yesomim* grant you joy in all your undertakings.

Zvi Eliyahu Malov

To be mailed to:

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Hagaon Rabbi Moshe Halberstam שליטת. *Chaver Habeis Din Tzedek, Jerusalem, Rosh Hayeshiva Divrei Chaim, Jerusalem*: "Rabbi Malov devotes his time and energy to helping others in need. Now he is in need, and we should one and all try to be of help to him!"

Hagaon Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv שליטת: "I join Rabbi Halberstam in his endorsement of Rabbi Malov's cause. All who respond to this plea should be blessed with all of the best!"

Hagaon Rabbi Yosef Moshe Schneerson שליטת. *Rosh Yeshiva Chebin/Jerusalem*: "My late father זצ"ל never issued letters of approbation. A notable exception was the four letters that Rabbi Zvi Malov merited to receive from him."

The following rabbis affiliated with Gur in Jerusalem also affixed their signatures to this letter:

Rabbi Meir Zilberstein שליטת,
Rabbi Chaim Bunim Shatz שליטת,
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Rabbi Dov Landau שליטת,
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Rabbi Nisson Wolpin
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USA
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Zvi Malov
33 Sorotzkin
Jerusalem,
Israel
Tel: (02) 538-6217

MRS. YUTA MOSKOWITZ



Holocaust Studies With a Different Slant

Although I have been teaching Holocaust education for approximately two and a half decades, I claim no expertise on the subject, the reason being that neither my goals nor my teaching methods are based on academic principles. Please allow me to clarify:

Approximately twenty-five years ago, Rebbetzin Tzila Orlean Sorotzkin visited the U.S. from Israel. We had been *lager shvester* (fellow inmates) in Auschwitz for three years, and under those circumstances, had developed a closer relationship than sisters born of the same mother. A welcoming party was held for her in Williamsburg by fellow Auschwitz alumnae and others, at which Tzila spoke. When she concluded her remarks, I rose and shared some of my own memories with the assembled.

The following day I received a message from Bais Yaakov Seminary. Rebbetzin Vichna Kaplan נ"ע, who had attended the gathering, was inviting me to teach Holocaust Studies at her premier institution. I was nonplussed. At the

time, I was baby-sitting my grandchildren while my daughter taught in Bais Yaakov, and considered the loving care and *Yiddishe* values that I instilled in my grandchildren too vital to relinquish. Rebbetzin Kaplan arranged matters so that I would teach after my daughter returned home.

The first year, I found it too emotionally draining to relive those terrible memories, and I left. The next year, however, Rebbetzin Kaplan insisted that I try again. I did – successfully, *Baruch Hashem* – and have been teaching the subject ever since.

OF GOALS AND GUIDELINES

What had been of primary interest to Rebbetzin Kaplan had been the timeless lessons I had extracted from our inhuman experiences.

The raw knowledge of the facts must be related, coupled with sound *hashkafa* to forestall developments that would be quite contrary to *emuna*. I take my cue from the Torah itself. Torah is not a history book. It relates the facts we need to know and learn from. So, too, I try, in

my own small way, to present the facts not in a spiritual vacuum, but in a way that will inspire the students to follow in the footsteps of the *kedoshim*, to emulate their holy example.

Therefore, the goals of the Holocaust Studies course I have been teaching for a quarter of a century have not been to impart academic information and statistics that may be obtained through studying historical accounts of the period. Rather, my three-pronged goals are of a loftier nature – to preserve and foster belief that the Holocaust atrocities, in all their detail and gruesome magnitude, actually occurred; to teach, through first-person account, and the accounts of others, profound lessons in *mussar*; and to instill in the students such gratitude to *Hashem* for the lives they lead that they will lead happier lives as a result.

• *The first goal* may strike the reader as somewhat strange: that belief in the Holocaust needs to be instilled in descendants of the survivors. Sadly, however, it is true. With the passage of time, the gradual passing of the survivors, and the worldwide trend to minimize the extent of the horrors perpetrated, even

THE ABOVE ARTICLE WAS PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY TOVA GAMZU.

in some of the concentration camps, the danger does exist that the accounts of this cataclysmic, horrific event in the history of *Klal Yisroel* may, *challila*, come to be seen as exaggerated.

I, myself, cannot muster the courage to visit Auschwitz. Now, grass growing between the blocks that housed the prisoners has replaced the piles of dead bodies that I remember being strewn about. The mountains of shoes taken from the arrivals in some camps have been reduced to more "politically correct" levels. Non-Jewish camp personnel speak

in terms of the thousands murdered, rather than hundreds of thousands and millions. The smokestacks no longer exude the black smoke and stench of burning human flesh. Visiting these places, or Holocaust museums, is not sufficient in and of itself to sear the suffering of our forebears permanently into the *neshamos* of the generations who did not experience it personally. Only by the continuing education of our youth will the accurate accounts be preserved on all levels of our national consciousness.

• *The second goal* – that of imparting

mussar through retelling the events – is also of profound importance. Knowledge of the lives of holiness lived by the *tzaddikim* who perished in the War, and the realization that it was precisely their total immersion in the living waters of Torah that fortified them in their incredible spiritual heroism during their unimaginable ordeals, leave an indelible impression in the hearts of the students. Retelling the many miracles that every survivor experienced also serves to foster *emuna* and *bitachon* in their hearts. A dry mastery of the facts will enter only their brains. Our *tafkid* (mission) is "*Vahasheivosa el levavecha*," to internalize cerebral comprehension, and make it part of our beings. Only a multipronged approach to education accomplishes that.

• *The third goal*, that of Holocaust studies leading to happier lives, may seem startling at first, but borne out by experience. I vividly remember the student who came from a troubled family and suffered from a very difficult relationship with her mother. After hearing me describe my bout with typhus in Auschwitz, and how I yearned for my mother's comfort in my suffering, she realized how fortunate she was "just" to have a mother! I learned later that her relationship with her mother improved greatly as a direct result of her exposure to this one story.

To Jewish Hungarian Victims of Nazi Persecution and their Heirs A Class Action Settlement Could Affect You

PROPOSED SETTLEMENT A class action lawsuit, *Rosner, et al. v. United States of America*, involving personal property looted from Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust is pending in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida ("Court"). A settlement of the lawsuit could affect you if you or your relative might have had property on the Hungarian Gold Train. If the Settlement is approved and you qualify, you may be able to apply for assistance from Jewish social service agencies. Or, you can object to the Settlement by informing the Court of your objections. Or, if you so choose, you can exclude yourself from the Settlement altogether.

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT? The Hungarian Gold Train consisted of twenty-four freight cars containing personal property seized by the Hungarian government during World War II from Hungarian Jews, which was taken into U.S. custody in May 1945 in Austria. The U.S. has agreed to settle claims that it mishandled this personal property. The Settlement is not an admission of wrongdoing or an indication that any law was violated.

WHO'S INCLUDED? You are a Class Member if you are a Jewish Hungarian victim of Nazi persecution who might have had property on the Gold Train, or the heir of such a person.

WHAT DOES THE SETTLEMENT PROVIDE? The U.S. government has agreed to pay up to USD \$25.5 million to fund the following three items: (i) approximately USD \$21 million for social services that will benefit Jewish Hungarian Nazi victims who are in need (proposed plan will be available on website on June 10, 2005); (ii) USD \$500,000 for the collection of documents and artifacts relating to the Gold Train and the looting of Hungarian Jews; and (iii) lawyers' fees and expenses, and incentive awards for Named Plaintiffs, in an amount not to exceed USD \$4 million.

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS? If you stay in the Settlement and are a Jewish Hungarian Nazi victim, you may be eligible for benefits. Even if you are not currently in need, you may stay in the Settlement to allow the funds to assist other Jewish Hungarian Nazi victims who are. You may file comments or objections to the Settlement which will be available for the Court's review prior to any final decision regarding the Settlement by the Court. Unless you exclude yourself from the Settlement, you will be legally bound by it and not able to sue the United States. If you exclude yourself, you will not be eligible for benefits. Any communication related to the Settlement – comment, objection, exclusion request – must be in writing, postmarked no later than August 1, 2005, and conform to specific Court requirements. You may appear through counsel of your choosing at your own expense. An information package from the contacts provided below, describes the specific requirements for such communications.

WHEN WILL THE COURT ACT ON THE SETTLEMENT? The Court will hold a fairness hearing on this proposed Settlement on September 26, 2005, at 10:00 a.m., at which time it will consider whether to approve the Settlement and the lawyers' request for fees and costs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: This is only a summary of a Court-approved Settlement Agreement. The full terms of the Court-approved Settlement Agreement govern. Please check the website for periodic updates on this Settlement at www.HungarianGoldTrain.org. To contact Class Counsel, please email: brent@hbsslaw.com.

To see the full terms, or to request instructions for exclusion from, commenting on, or objecting to the Settlement please go to:

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CLERK'S OFFICE FOR INFORMATION.**

NEGOTIATING WITH HIGHER "COMFORT" STANDARDS

Today's American-raised youth, reared in a country blessed with opulence, take luxurious living for granted. The standard of living keeps rising, and (may I say it?) the children become more and more spoiled. Principals and teachers attest to the declining levels of decorum in and out of the classroom. Mothers work, at least in part, to maintain these levels of comfort without which they and their children would be considered below par socially. When older teenagers hear a first-person account of how I wore the same lice-infested clothing for six months, without it being washed – they

are brought up short. They begin to realize not only how much they have, but how much more they have than they actually need!

They stop taking their good fortune for granted, and start acknowledging and thanking *Hashem Yisbarach*, and their parents, for their plenitude. Some are even influenced deeply enough to resolve that they will live their lives dedicated foremost to spiritual pursuits, and not spend their lives pursuing money.

One of my former *talmidos*, a mother now, told me that she retained the notes she took in my classes. Now, years later, when any of her children starts to sulk because he or she desires something which the mother deems is unnecessary to purchase, she whips out her notes and reads to them from its pages – not only what the camp inmates did without during the war, but what they managed to live without before the war ever began! Her children then actually do begin to understand that they are truly blessed with what they have, and learn to tolerate not having what their parents cannot afford to buy.

In the classroom, I describe life in pre-war Czechoslovakia (where I grew up), Hungary, France and Belgium. (I don't focus on Poland because anti-Jewish discrimination existed there long before 1939.) The students learn what life on a shoestring budget was like, and how it was possible to live happy lives without most of the amenities taken for granted today.

I describe my home, parents and family. My students are startled to learn that despite the fact that my parents were truly poor, they aspired for all their sons and sons-in-law to learn full time. This, in Czechoslovakia, where *kollelim* were unheard of! No one, absolutely no one, got married before they had a steady income. From where did my parents get such values? From *their* parents, of course.

My mother's parents lived in a one-room apartment, without heat, yet they took my father, a yeshiva *bachur*, as a son-in-law, due to their unshakable desire for a family steeped in Torah. My mother related that when her children were born,

she had to blow on their diapers to warm them before putting them on her babies. I remember playing with rag balls. Bought toys were a luxury never found in our house.

When my oldest sister got engaged, I was eight years old. I accompanied my mother to the store to purchase staple food items. The grocer inquired if my new brother-in-law was a doctor, or perhaps a lawyer. When I answered proudly that he was a yeshiva *bachur*, the grocer asked: "And who will supply food? The birds will bring food through the window?" I answered bravely and proudly:

HEARING MIRACLES RECOUNTED BY THOSE TO WHOM THEY HAPPENED HAS A PROFOUND AND LASTING IMPACT ON A PERSON. I THEREFORE TELL MY STUDENTS THE STORIES THAT OCCURRED TO ME.

"With *emuna* and *bitachon*, they will have food!"

My father was a *shocheit* and a *dayan*. We never saw him, even in bed, without a *sefer* in his hands. He learned at night by the light of a kerosene lamp. Electricity was not to be found in our humble dwelling. And we were happy. This is the point I instill in my students – the future mothers of *Klal Yisroel*. Happiness is a by-product of a life lived by the guidelines of Torah. When happiness is pursued, it eludes us. When Torah and mitzvos are pursued, happiness naturally follows in their wake.

These words, which come straight from my heart, enter the hearts of the students. Some absorb it into the very fiber of their being, and it changes them for the better. They come to see that suffering and affliction can be utilized to one's advantage. People can grow as their tribulations cleanse them, and they emerge strengthened from their ordeals. People are capable of accepting suffering from *Hashem*, and some are even capable of doing so with love. Many are able to find things to be grateful for even amidst mind-numbing tragedy.

Hearing this not in the abstract, but as part of first-person stories is very, very powerful. I have received many letters from students testifying to this, and these letters have served to strengthen me in forging ahead and keeping at my difficult task.

FOR WHICH STUDENT BODY?

The question has been raised as to the advisability of teaching Holocaust studies to youngsters. Do they develop nightmares, exhibit nervous symptoms,

become traumatized? My experience has shown that it can be safely taught to the vast majority of students aged sixteen and above. In every large group, there may be a few who will feel sickened by the discussion. They should be excused from the classes without penalty.

It has been noted that no similar volumes, detailing in such explicit detail the suffering of the martyrs of the Inquisition, the Crusades, or the Cossacks were written by the victims. There are no records or courses being taught on these subjects.

Why, then, do we feel it obligatory to do so now? Two possible answers come to mind.

Firstly, no previous slaughter of Jews eradicated six million *nefashos*. The extermination of one third of the world's Jewish population is unparalleled in history. It needs to be studied, and lessons extracted from it. Why teach the American or French Revolutions, the history of the Incas, or that of the Roman empire, and leave our own history to be forgotten? Is it not incumbent upon us to preserve and give over our own heritage, shocking and appalling as some of

it may be?

Secondly, the *kedoshim* themselves begged to be remembered. Countless stories attest to the myriads of people who pleaded that those who survive let the world know what happened. That is a task we survivors hold sacred. Letting the world know what happened to us takes precedence over stories about the rest of the world. Letting the descendants of the survivors know is our primary obligation.

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

The *mussar* masters teach us to record incidents of *Hashgacha Prattis* that we notice in our lives. Doing so reinforces our *emuna* and *bitachon*. How much more so do stories of miracles or near-miracles serve that noble purpose! Hearing stories of miracles recounted by those to whom they happened has a profound and lasting impact on a person.

Therefore, I tell my students the sto-

ries that occurred to me.

In Auschwitz, I contracted tuberculosis. The first miracle was that I was admitted to the hospital there. Usually, sick prisoners were forced to continue working until they expired. The second miracle was that a doctor prisoner was able to send me for an x-ray. Imagine! An x-ray in Auschwitz! The doctor advised me that a higher-calorie diet would be beneficial to me. Try filling that prescription in that Gehinnom on Earth! The Kol Yachol sent me a friend who managed to procure extra bread and margarine for me every day! She insisted that the miracle occurred in the zechus of my parents. Both of our respective families had been poor, but hers had been even poorer than mine. Despite that, my parents aided hers, and so I was zocheh to have her come to my aid when I was in need.

We Holocaust survivors avoided recounting the horrors of our experiences for decades after the war. Our initial, primary mission was to refill the diminished ranks of *Klal Yisroel*, and to replant Torah

wherever the *Hashgacha* sent us. Now, however, it has become our duty to embed that history in the *doros* (generations) that follow ours. Just as it is a mitzvah to recount the *nissim* of the Exodus from Egypt in as great detail as we are able to, so do we feel that we must record forever the miracles that we were vouchsafed.

Contrary to the expectations of many, the students sit mesmerized – and ask for more. When the bell signaling the end of the lesson rings, no one moves. They beg for a few more minutes of my time and stories.

Some years ago, I was invited by Rebbetzin Shulamis Keller, principal of the Bais Yaakov in Chicago, to speak to the students of three schools in that city. I informed her that I would need ninety minutes to get my message across. She claimed that the audiences tire after 40 or 45 minutes, but I stood my ground. Finally, the Rebbetzin, with great misgivings, capitulated, and I spoke. When I was done, the audience clamored for more. Why? Because there is a hunger for information about the lives of their own forebears prior to and during the war. Youth seeks knowledge and understanding of these events that defy rational comprehension. They thirst to know how, why, and wherefore. I cannot supply all their answers, but only a survivor can truly relate what transpired in first person.

The slowly diminishing ranks of our still-living survivors make it imperative that our stories be preserved for posterity. The plethora of biographical works by survivors are filling a great void. But there's no substitute for the *devarim hayotze'im min haleiv* (words that flow from the heart), which are *nichnasim el haleiv* (enter the heart) with unrivaled power. I choose to engrave mine upon the hearts of my students, rather than on paper. It is my fervent hope and prayer that they will retell those stories to their children and *talmidos*, and so, in that way – as well as through the books being written – the *kedoshim* and their trials will be remembered until the day when *Hashem Yisbarach* will take *nekama* on our oppressors, and eradicate *Amaleik* from our midst.

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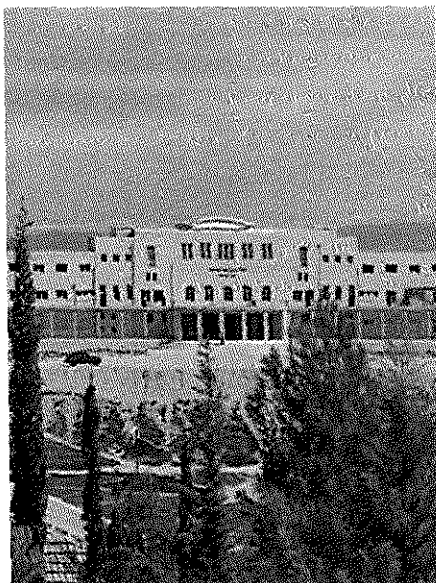
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on the ashes of
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Men With a Mission

Survivors and Their Heirs

Yeshayahu Hanavi says, "Therefore – thus said *Hashem*, who redeemed Avraham, to *Beis Yaakov* (the House of Yaakov)" (*Yeshayahu* 29,22).

The Midrash gives us a fascinating insight. When Avraham Avinu was thrown into the *kivshan ha'eish* (fiery furnace), the *Beis Din shel Maala* (Heavenly Court of Justice) had to decide whether or not to save him: to do so would require performing an open miracle, something the *Hashgacha Ha'Elyona* – the Almighty – is reluctant to do; obvious Divine intervention takes away the *bechira* (free choice) from humanity. Nonetheless, the *Beis Din shel Maala* did decide that Avraham should survive the deadly fire.

When Rabbi Aharon Kotler זצ"ל would quote this Midrash, he emphasized that Avraham Avinu was not redeemed in his own merit, even though *Hashem* knew that in the future he would pass the remainder of the Ten Tests, including the *nisayon* of the *Akeida*. Avraham Avinu was redeemed because

he would father a son, Yitzchak, and Yitzchak, in turn, would father Yaakov Avinu, progenitor of the Twelve Tribes, *Shivtei Ka*, who were the foundation on which *Klal Yisroel* was built... *Klal Yisroel*, which would ultimately stand at the foot of *Har Sinai* and proclaim, "*Naaseh venishma* – We will do and we will hear," thereby fulfilling the purpose of Creation.

This is the meaning implicit in the *pasuk*: "*Lachein* – Therefore – thus said *Hashem*, who redeemed Avraham [from the *kivshan ha'eish*], to *Beis Yaakov*."

And Reb Aharon זצ"ל would emphasize this point: It was because of the building of the House of Yaakov that Avraham was redeemed from the *kivshan ha'eish*.

SAVED FROM THE FIERY FURNACE

Klal Yisroel passed many trials and tribulations from the time that *Hashem* exiled us from *Eretz Hakodesh* (the Holy Land). But none of them compares to the fiery furnace that *Klal Yisroel* endured from 1939 to 1944. Today, sixty

years later, it is still too early for us to assess its damage. It is far beyond human comprehension.

In His ultimate mercy and compassion, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* rescued some of *Klal Yisroel's* greatest *manhigim* (leaders) from that fiery furnace. Among them, in *Eretz Yisroel* – the Belzer Rebbe זצ"ל, who personally had lost 13 children; the Gerrer Rebbe, who writes in his *tzava'a* (last will) that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* had blessed him with close to 100 descendants, although he had lost a great majority of them in the War; and the Ponevezher Rav, who came to *Eretz Yisroel* a bereft individual, having lost his wife and most of his children in the war.

Among those who had escaped to America were the Klausenberger Rav, who had lost his 11 children, and the great *roshei hayeshiva* of *Telshe*, who remained solitary survivors from their entire families. Rabbi Aharon Kotler came here as a lonely man, without his yeshiva.

They all realized that they had to overcome and conquer their personal feelings – feelings that some of them nevertheless did express. They found it harder to survive than to perish along with the rest of *Klal Yisroel* who had

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remained behind. They had to wrestle with the difficulty of getting up every morning, burdened with the memory of what they had lost.

But they had a mission. The first order of the time was to rebuild the glorious past – in most cases, under very difficult conditions, in an alien country. At the same time, they were determined to inject a *ruach hachaim* (a life force), and a *ruach emuna* (a spirit of faith) in the *atzamos hayeveishos*, the dried bones, that had survived.

In 1944, the Belzer Rebbe זצ"ל arrived in Eretz Yisroel, where he met the Imrei Emes זצ"ל. Can we imagine the meeting of two towering Torah figures who only five years earlier were the recognized leaders of tens of thousands of Chassidim, and now were alone? When the Belzer Rebbe remarked to the Gerrer Rebbe: "Yungeleit huben mekadeish geven Sheim Shamayim – The young generation sanctified Hashem's Name," the Gerrer Rebbe quietly told him: "Mir darfen unfangen als nei – We have to start everything all over again."

When the Ponovezher Rav stood on a sandy hill in Bnei Brak – at that time, a wasteland – and said, "Here is where I am going to rebuild Ponovezh," people viewed him as caught up in delusory fantasies: "Look what the war did to the poor Ponovezher Rav!"

In America, the situation was similar. Yet, the survivors were dedicated to rebuilding the institutions that were laid to waste.

They formed an army of giants – individuals who were able to maintain their strong *emuna* in the *Ribbono shel Olam*, despite the Divine concealment that they had experienced. Where did they derive their strength from? Again, from *Yaakov Avinu*.

TWO BROTHERS - BASIC DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSE

There are two *pesukim* that tell us about the fundamental difference between the reactions of Yaakov and Eisav to a loss. "Vayazed Yaakov nazid – And Yaakov Avinu cooked a stew," and

"*Vayavo Eisav min hasadeh, vehu ayeif*—Eisav came from the field, and he was tired." This took place on the day that Avraham Avinu had left this world. *Eisav Harasha*, with his brilliant mind, could not comprehend that death struck his grandfather, and proclaimed: "*Zakein zeh*—this old sage—was smitten with the strict measure of justice. There is neither justice nor a judge." This notion of a leaderless world brought out the worst in him. As Chazal tell us, Eisav committed five major *aveiros* on that day.

What did Yaakov Avinu do? Halacha dictates that the *aveil* eat a *seuda* when he comes back from the burial. The components of that *seuda* are all indicators of *kabbalas din Shamayim*—acceptance of Divine judgment and a declaration of the intention to continue life in accordance with Hashem's will.

As Rabbi Avigdor Miller ז"ל said: Some approach a difficulty as an excuse for failure, and some perceive it as a challenge from which to grow. Eisav viewed the difficulty as an excuse for failure, and Yaakov recognized it as an impetus for growth. The culmination of that experience was when Yaakov Avinu met Yoseif for the first time after 22 years of separation. The Torah records that Yoseif hugged Yaakov and kissed him, but there was no reaction from Yaakov. Chazal tell us that he was saying "*Shema Yisroel*" at that time. Why precisely at that moment? One school of thought says that Yaakov Avinu knew that this was a peak moment in life, and he wanted to direct his heightened feelings towards *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

But there might be a deeper understanding in that response. Yaakov Avinu was talking to himself when he saw Yoseif. We know that when *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* appears to us with a flow of kindness, the Torah uses the Name "*Hashem*" (*Yud Kei Vav Kei*). When He is dealing with us with the strict measure of *din*, the Torah refers to Him as "*Elokim*."

Yaakov turned inward and said: "*Shema Yisroel*—listen Yisroel (Yaakov)—*Hashem Elokeinu*—until now you thought that at times, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* deals with us as *Hashem*, with kindness. Other times as *Elokeinu*, with

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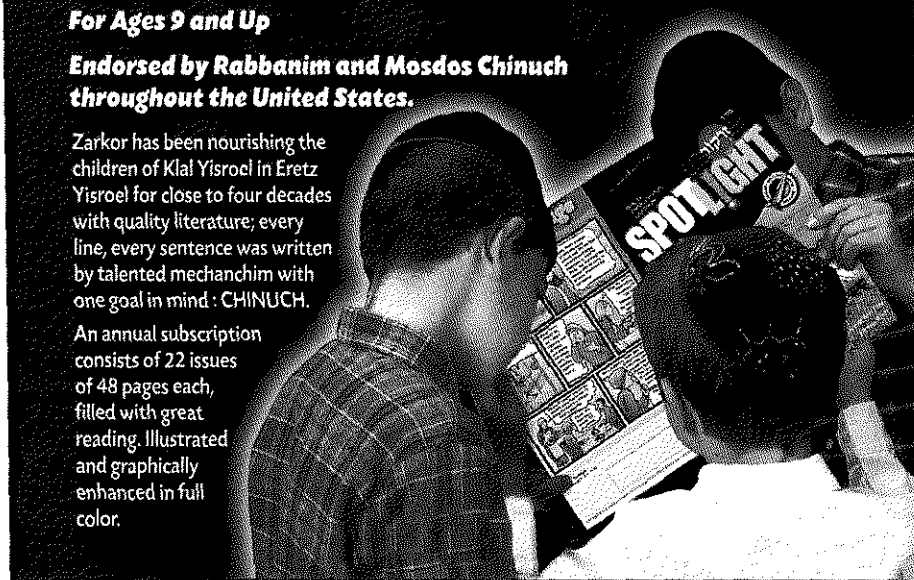
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middas hadin, His strict sense of justice. But now that you see Yoseif, you realize that everything in the past that you viewed as *hastara* (concealment) was part of a Divine Master Plan for the survival of *Klal Yisroel* in *Mitzrayim*. Hashem is *Echad* – One. All that transpires is but an expression of kindness.”

Yaakov Avinu implanted in his descendants the ability to say “*Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*.” Even in the midst of the *hastara*, when everything surrounding them appears to be dark and cloudy, they still say “*Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*.” We do not lose our faith. It is a *seudas havra’a* – a challenge to our *emuna*, to which we rise with the conviction that one day *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will reveal to us how all that befalls us is *chesed verachamim* – mercy and compassion. This is part of a Divine Master Plan for our survival.

A WORLD OF AVRAHAMS AND YAAKOV

Today’s Jewish world is fortunate to have both: the Avrahams who were saved from the *kivshan ha’eish*, and the generation after, the *Beis Yaakov*. The survival of the Avrahams was for our sake. They were giants. Next to them, we are but midgits.

One morning, a Vizhnitzer Chassid, Reb Sender Leiman, told us that he wants us to join him in a *lechayim*. He has *Yahrtzeit* – Whose *Yahrtzeit*? His first wife and their five children. After the exchange of appropriate good wishes, he said that he was never *meharheir achar midosav shel Hakadosh Baruch Hu* – he never questioned Hashem’s judgment.

To be sure, we have no right to judge those who lost their faith in those difficult days – far be it from us. But at the same time, *midda tova meruba mimiddas puranuyos chameish mei’os pe’amim*. Hashem’s bounty of mercy exceeds His strict judgment five-hundred-fold. How we must respect and give *kavod* to those who did not lose their faith!

During his final hours in the Kovno Ghetto, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל, the late Rosh Hayeshiva of Baranowitz, spoke to his *talmidim* with a message for all of *Klal Yisroel*, and perhaps the entire human race.

This speech is published in the back of Koveitz He’aaros, as recalled by Rabbi Ephraim Oshry זצ"ל, who was there on that day when Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman left this world.

He told his *talmidim* to sanctify themselves and be *mekadeish* themselves as offerings to Hashem. He added that, apparently, “in *Shamayim* halt men unz far groise *mentschen* – in Heaven they think of us as great people, for we were chosen as a *kappara* (atonement) for our American brothers.”

Yes, Reb Elchanan believed that he and his *talmidim* were a *korban kappara*, not a *karban* in vain. He then offered a prediction.

He said that at *Mincha* on *Tisha BeAv*, we say, “*Ba’eish hitzata* – You burned *Yerushalayim* with fire, *uva’eish atta assid livnosa* – and with fire You will rebuild it in the future.”

There are no two separate fires! The fire that consumed our bodies will rebuild *Klal Yisroel*!

Reb Elchanan, in effect, was saying that the ashes of the *kedoshim* were not going to scatter and disappear. They would become seeds that would be replanted and turn into a beautiful garden, *Gan Beis Hashem*.

Gedolim and *tzaddikim* were terrified of the American environment. Maybe the ashes of the *kedoshim* became seeds for what, *bli eiyn hara*, we see here today. As representatives of “*Beis Yaakov*,” we have a great responsibility to those who perished, and to ourselves.

REMEMBERING AND UNDERSTANDING

The Torah tells us: “*Zechor yemos olam, binu shenos dor vador* – Remember the days of yore, understand the years of each generation” (*Devarim*

32,7). The Torah commands us to remember that there was a *mabul* – deluge – that flooded the world, over four thousands years ago. If we are obligated to learn the lessons of the *mabul*, we certainly are expected to learn the lessons of the *mabul shel eish*, the fire storm, that consumed so much of *Klal Yisroel* sixty years ago.

Yes, there are museums that tell part of the story. We did not have monies to spare for building Holocaust museums. Our community used its funds to build living memorials – *yeshivos* and *Bais Yaakovs*, *kollelim* and *mekomos haTorah*, as well as institutions of *chesed* unrivaled in the past.

One who visits the Holocaust Museum and sees evidence of various uprisings knows that there is an inspiring component missing in this memorial. Far be it from us to undermine any armed resistance – but the description of the type of resistance that we want to recount to our children is not to be found in the Holocaust museums. It is chronicled in the *sefer* of Rabbi Moshe Prager זצ"ל – *Eileh Shelo Nichne’u* (Those Who Did Not Yield).^{*} It chronicles the heroic exploits of *bachurim* who decided to assume the *hanhaga* (practice) of *she’as hashmad*, a time of forced conversions, when one must be willing to sacrifice one’s very life rather than concede the smallest iota of Judaism. The Germans were astounded over the inner strength of these young *bachurim*.

A Chassidishe *bachur* had decided to defy the Nazis and leave his *payos* on. When caught, he was tortured to the very brink of death – and suddenly he started to dance. The German asked him, “Are you out of your mind?”

He replied, “No, I am not. You took away my *yarmulke*. You took away my clothing. You took away my *payos*. And now you’re about to take away my life. But you cannot take the *Ribbono shel Olam* away from me!”

Can any other nation comprehend such *gevura*, such inner strength, let alone duplicate it? We have a responsibility to tell the younger generations about the *gevura* of the *Chassidishe* underground

in the Ghetto Warsaw.

In *Michtav MeiEliyahu* (Vol. III, pp. 346-7), Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler describes the proud march of the talmidim of the senior mussar yeshiva, the Talmud Torah of Kelm, to their martyrdom – it was like Simchas Torah. They took the sifrei Torah out of the beis hamidrash and actually danced to the edge of the deep ditches that the Nazis had prepared for them.

And – just as on Simchas Torah – they sang “Ashreinu – How fortunate we are – ma tov chelkeinu – how good is our lot (that we are Jews and joyfully fulfill Hashem’s will!)”

It is our responsibility to tell our children and our grandchildren about this *gevura*. “*Zechor yemos olam binu shenos dor vador.*” If, when confronting a moment of difficulty, one accepts it as a challenge, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* endows a human being with a *gevura* that mortals are not believed to possess.

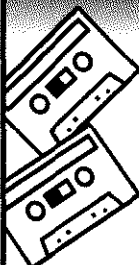
When we see the current status of *Klal Yisroel* and take stock of the incredible kindness that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* has bestowed on us, we witness the fulfillment of the words of Reb Elchanan – the ashes turned into seeds, seeds that made beautiful orchards grow, the *Gan Beis Hashem*.

So, we lift up our eyes and tell the giants who are here with us today, and the *kedoshim u'tehorim* who are no longer with us, and the spiritual giants who survived and have since gone *le'olam shekulo tov* – the world of uncompromised good – the continuation of the words of *Yeshayahu Hanavi*: “*Lo atta yeivosh Yaakov* – Yaakov will not be ashamed now, and his face will not be pale. Now – when he sees his children, My handiwork, in their midst – who will sanctify My Name – they will sanctify the Holy One of Yaakov and revere the G-d of Israel” (*Yeshayahu* 29, 22-23).

With these children, we will be marching to welcome *pnei Moshiach tzidkeinu* and there unite with all those *kedoshim u'tehorim*. JO

* See Rabbi Nosson Scherman's review article on *Sparks of Glory*, an English translation of Moshe Prager's book, *Nitzotzei Gevura*, JO, June '74.

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A REVIEW ARTICLE BY RABBI ZEV LEFF

Greatness in Spite of Adversity... Because of Adversity

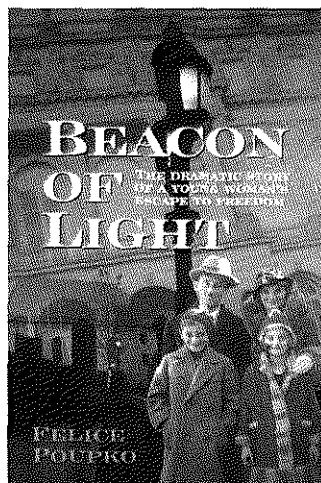
Beacon of Light by Felice Poupko (published by Targum Press, Jerusalem, \$17.95)

LEARNING FROM SURVIVORS' EXPERIENCES

Aside from the general mitzvah of "Zechor yemos olam binu shenos dor va'dor" (Devarim 32,7), remembering history and learning the Torah lessons inherent in it, there are many other mandates and benefits that apply to the study of the Holocaust and the importance of the testimonies of those who lived through it. Practically speaking, as the Holocaust recedes into the past and fewer and fewer individuals who actually lived through it remain, it is important that those individuals share their recollections so that subsequent generations can benefit from their experiences and be able to identify with this painfully significant period of Jewish history through the eyes and hearts of human experience, and not only through the perspective of cold historic documentation. Additionally, the emergence and proliferation of Holocaust deniers make these testimonies even more crucial.

Another aspect of these accounts is the fact that the mitzvah of thanking *Hashem Yisbarach* for one's deliverance from danger and misfortune entails not only a private thanksgiving, but as we recite in *Shemoneh Esrei*, "nodeh lecha u'nesapeir tehilasecha" – We will thank You and relate Your praises," one must recount to others one's experiences so that they, too, can benefit from the awareness of these manifestations of Divine providence and kindness.

It also behooves all Jews to remem-



ber the trials and tribulations of collective Jewish history, the miracles of the salvation of individuals from those ordeals, and the memory of those who suffered and made the ultimate sacrifice *al Kiddush Hashem*.

Reading narratives such as these also evokes emotions of sympathy and empathy for fellow Jews who were victimized and revulsion and hatred of the cruelty and evil of their oppressors, which are emotions worthy of engendering.

From testimonies such as these, one also gains an appreciation of the intrinsic greatness of the Jewish soul. *Chazal* relate that *Klal Yisroel* is compared to an olive, which gives its choicest oil under pressure. It is particularly in times of misfortune and adversity that the greatness of the Jewish soul is manifested.

Chazal point out that the eye sees not from the white portion but rather from the black, alluding to the fact that it is specifically from the darkness that one gleams the greatest insights. Similarly, the Gemara comments on the verse in *Eicha* (3,6), "He caused me to sit in darkness as the dead of the world" – this refers to Talmud *Bavli* (*Sanhedrin* 24a). The *Chofetz Chaim* explains that it was specifically the darkness of *galus* that induced

and enabled *Klal Yisroel* to produce its greatest achievement – *Talmud Bavli*.

Additionally, it is not in spiritual giants and leaders alone that this greatness is manifested, but even in the simple, plain Jew. Moreso, it is even found in the renegade Jew who has strayed from the path of Torah. The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba*) conveys that *Yitzchak Avinu* was motivated to bless *Yaakov* because he recognized the innate holiness and greatness inherent in *Yaakov's* descendants, even in this type of Jew. As the Torah says (*Bereishis* 27,27), "He smelled the aroma of his clothing." The Talmud tells us: "Read not *begadav* (his clothing), but rather *bogdav* (his renegades)". (*Sanhedrin* 37a). The Midrash then gives two examples of renegade Jews who, due to traumatic experiences, realized their inner purity and holiness, and exhibited the intrinsic greatness of the Jewish soul. Most certainly, one can see this greatness manifested in the experiences of the rank and file of observant Jews during the Holocaust, in the strength of the influence of their family structure and Torah education, their self-sacrifice and concern for others, and their heroic observance of Torah in the most difficult times, and under the most trying and oppressing circumstances.

It is not necessarily in the heroic, superhuman feats that one finds the true strength and vitality of the Jews, but rather, in the ongoing, day-to-day existence, with the constancy and consistency of faith, commitment and obedience to G-d, Torah and one's fellow man. In this light, the verse proclaims:

"Those that put their hope in *Hashem* shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not be tired" (*Yeshaya* 40,30).

It is not in the running alone that their greatness lies, but rather in the consistent, constant walking without faltering and becoming tired.

A BOOK THAT CONVEYS THE LESSONS

As a case in point, we have *Beacon of Light*, the dramatic story of Felice Poupko's escape from the Holocaust, which indeed embodies all the components we have mentioned as being significant in the testimonies and remembrance of this period. Her story is saturated with recognition of the ever-present Divine Providence. One senses the reverence for Torah and Torah learning and the *yiras Shamayim* that permeate her family members and the friends that make up the circle of people whose lives are portrayed here. The account of her trials and tribulations is written in a manner that evokes the proper emotions.

She describes family life in Germany before the Holocaust, and through her description, we are able to discern the beauty and power of the "amcha Jew," the strength of the Jewish character that emanates from and finds its constant vitality in the roots of the Jewish family and Torah education.

She also relates the progressive stages of persecution from the time of Hitler's ascent to power. And she includes glimpses of the interaction of the non-Jewish community with their Jewish neighbors as the Holocaust developed. Her family's decision to flee Germany and how they accomplished their escape make interesting reading, and also shed light on the attitudes of the Jewish population in the period preceding World War II, and how those views impacted on their recognition of the true dangers that faced them, and the need to flee. Her experiences in the *galus* of Havana and in *Eretz Yisroel* in its tumultuous pre-Statehood years are especially interesting and inspiring. The book is accompanied by extensive notes and sources that enhance its historical aspect.

As I wrote in my preface to this book,

the Torah enjoins us to "remember the days yore, understand the years of each generation. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders (sages), and they will relate it to you" (*Devarim* 32,7). We must know the facts of history and seek to understand the lessons each period has to teach. To accomplish this, we must ask our fathers and mothers to tell us what they experienced. Then, we must seek the wisdom of our Torah sages to explain the meaning and implications of these occurrences. The period of destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis (may

their name be blotted out) was a most tragic era for the Jewish people. It is crucial for us to hear from those who were witnesses to this trauma what they experienced, so that we can somehow feel and understand their suffering, martyrdom, and spiritual and physical heroism. It then behooves us to seek the guidance of our spiritual leaders to put these experiences into a Torah perspective which takes into account the totality of Jewish history. Reading this account in *Beacon of Light* is definitely a fulfillment of this Torah mandate.

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Deformed "Rights"

The total disconnect between the Conservative and Reform movements on the one hand and Torah Judaism on the other hand is not exactly a hot news flash. In fact, we are so accustomed to viewing the various positions of these heterodox groups as being beyond the pale of Judaism that we tend to ignore their every new violation of the immutable guidelines of Torah perspectives on life as "nothing of significance." But to do so is truly at our own risk. There is a vast, uneducated, well-meaning public that finds comfort in their egalitarian expressions of inclusiveness. It fails to realize that these innovations destroy any possibility of accepting heterodox movements as alternative courses within the "three [or five] streams of Judaism." It is important – for ourselves, and for the sake of the broad public out there – to reiterate the point that they have not only abandoned any pretense of being Jewish; they have virtually ceased to masquerade as religions of any kind.

An analysis of heterodoxy's new detours from the Torah, then, will repay some dividends.

DUTY VS. RIGHTS

The concept of *duty* is a necessary corollary of any religion based on the existence of a Supreme Being, Who remains connected to His creation. Yet

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the heterodox movements, after the modern fashion, know only *rights*. The only duty they acknowledge is the duty to never tell anyone else what to do or to suggest that right and wrong may not just be matters of personal taste.

The Torah, which does seem to embody some pretty definitive views on right and wrong, as well as impose 613 obligations, becomes in the hands of heterodox clergy not an all-inclusive guide to life, but rather a large collection of quotations to be carefully culled in support of the regnant intellectual orthodoxy or whatever personal decision a congregant has already made without recourse to the Torah.

A recent petition to the Israeli Supreme Court by the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), the legal and public arm of the Movement of Progressive Judaism in Israel, provides a classic example of heterodoxy's fixation with "rights." The petition singles out EFRAT, an organization devoted to reducing abortion by Jewish women in Israel, as unfit to receive national service volunteers (almost all of them girls from the national religious sector performing national service in place of army service).

Last year, EFRAT provided assistance to over 1,400 women, the vast majority of them married, who had been contemplating abortion for socio-economic reasons. Referrals to EFRAT come almost entirely from social workers and friends of the women in question. Initial discussions with those women are handled by one of EFRAT's 3,000 volunteers (many of whom are past beneficiaries of EFRAT's services) and a

professional social worker.

IRAC declares that "involvement in preventing abortions in the Jewish sector cannot be recognized as an appropriate welfare issue." One of the IRAC attorneys told Shofar News that IRAC would not have objected if EFRAT also provided assistance to Arab women. In IRAC's eyes, no distinction between Jews and non-Jews is permissible. For the heterodox movements, all references to Jews as the "chosen people" are anathema, and IRAC's stance is merely a reflection of that.

Alas, the refusal to acknowledge that Jews and non-Jews could be different in any way not only places the Reform movement in opposition to the Torah, but to classical Zionism as well. As Professor Amnon Rubinstein wrote recently, the Zionist goal of creating a Jewish homeland is nonsensical in the absence of a Jewish majority, for "without a Jewish majority, there is no Israel." If Israel can encourage that Jewish majority through the Law of Return, which grants automatic citizenship to Jews from anywhere in the world, surely it can also provide indirect aid to an organization combating the demographic threat to Israel by saving Jewish babies.

Even in terms of "rights," IRAC's claims are ludicrous. Providing pregnant women with information about financial assistance and emotional support available to them, according to IRAC, violates their basic rights to human dignity, privacy, and freedom of conscience. Far from reducing a woman's freedom of choice, however, EFRAT increases her ability to make an informed decision by

relieving her of some of the economic pressure pushing her towards abortion. According to Dr. Eli Schussheim, director of EFRAT, not one of the 17,000 women aided by EFRAT has ever expressed regret about her decision to give birth. Moreover, these women are approaching EFRAT, making it *their choice*.

IRAC's petition provides a classic example of how unmoored the Reform movement is in Jewish sources. Judaism does not view one's body as his private property to do with what he will. Rather, the body is a trust from G-d to be sanctified through His commandments.

Even more astounding is how quickly a "woman's right to her own body" morphs, for the Reform movement, into the view that abortion is a positive good. According to the petition, it is absurd for the State to permit abortions, under theoretically limited conditions, and to simultaneously seek to reduce them. The only absurdity, however, is the petitioner's logic. Just because something is permitted doesn't mean the State must encourage it.

And so does a movement calling itself "Jewish" come to "promote" abortions, something halacha views, in most cases, as a form of murder.

THE "RIGHT" TO DIE

The recent court-ordered execution of Terri Schiavo provides another example of the easy deformation of "rights." In her case, the "right to die" quickly transmuted into the duty to die and/or a husband's right to kill by dehydration an inconvenient wife.

And once again, non-Orthodox Jews and their clergy were in the vanguard of the movement. David Klinghoffer, the author of *Why Jews Rejected J.*, tells of the collective gasp that went out from an audience of Conservative Jews when he lauded Christian activists for their efforts to save Terri Schiavo's life: "The crowd reacted with a sharp intake of breath, shocked murmurs, as if I'd said a kind word about the Spanish

Inquisition."

The *Baltimore Jewish Times* polled a cross-section of local Jewish spiritual leaders for their perspectives on the Schiavo case. The results were fascinating and saddening. For those cut off from halacha, the classical sources become nothing more than a collection of possibly relevant statements from which the individual congregant can fashion the narrative that best suits him or her. Elizabeth Bolton, spiritual leader of Congregation Beit Tikvah, for instance, takes "great comfort in the range of perspectives offered by various Midrashim

and tales of our martyrs." She views her role primarily as supporting the ethical decisions of families, presumably by supplying the relevant quotations to buttress their decisions.

Many of the other heterodox spiritual leaders directed their main wrath at the clumsy efforts of the U.S. Congress to save Terri Schiavo's life rather than at those trying to murder her. Bradd Boxman described it as atrocious "that big government has stepped in the way it has," adding his personal vote for death, if that's what she wanted. Though it did not seem to be that relevant to his per-

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sonal views, Boxman claimed that there are sources in Judaism to support his view, some of them “*even in the realm of halacha [emphasis mine].*”

And Mark Loeb saw no problem with letting Michael Schiavo make the decision concerning his "wife's 'best interest.'" His primary worry was that one theological view – whether it be that of the Torah, or the Christian Right, or the Roman Catholic Church – should not trump all others. His clerical role seems limited to protecting secularism in the name of pluralism.

THE INALIENABLE "RIGHT" TO BE ABOMINABLE

But the ultimate proof of the total disconnect between the heterodox movements and the Torah came on April 18, when the leaders of the various heterodox movements in Israel – which are generally considered more “traditional” than their American counterparts – called a press conference to declare their strong support for a parade in *Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh* publicly celebrating behavior explicitly termed an

abomination by the Torah.

Just as for much of the Left, the Palestinians have become an oppressed, colonized people, who can therefore do no wrong, so deviants have become for the heterodox movements a group of people deprived of their "rights," who must, ironically, be given even more "rights" than others. It is hard, for instance, to imagine the heterodox movements waxing so enthusiastic about a parade of deviants openly professing their private practices, no matter how mainstream they might be. No doubt they would recognize that not everything has to be public.

But, lo, when it comes to deviants, all the rules change. Ehud Bandel, the head of the Masorti Movement (Conservative) in Israel, which claims to be a halachic movement, could find no other explanation for the opposition to the march by a coalition of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian religious leaders other than "intolerance, extremism, and fanaticism." One might have thought that the Torah's explicit prohibition would deserve mention. But by then, Bandel was busy donning the hat of constitutional lawyer rather than spiritual leader, and proclaiming the march "a basic democratic right."

Bandel did not completely forget his rabbinic role. He declared, "We are here to convey the message that Judaism is based on respect for each and every human being." Apparently that respect, in the mind of Bandel and his counterparts, entails condoning and even celebrating anything anyone may wish to do, as long as they are sincere. And, indeed, that is pretty close to the Conservative position. As the late Seymour Siegel, one of the movement's leading theologians, once wrote, "So long as a [Jew] is serious about his responsibility and concerned about his Jewishness, he is doing the right thing in the sight of the Lord."

Meanwhile, the March of Deformed Rights, although postponed for a year, is scheduled to go on, and the heterodox movements have placed themselves at the front of the parade.

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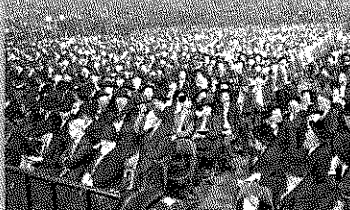
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READERS' FORUM



In Dec. '04, *The Jewish Observer* featured an article "Grasping the *Kedusha*, Avoiding the Pitfalls: When American Families Move to *Eretz Yisroel*," by Rabbi Yair Spolter, which discussed the opportunities for spiritual growth in aliya, devoting much space to analyzing the specific challenges that these *olim* would be dealing with. It was the author's – and the magazine's – inten-

tion to inform the reader what to anticipate and how to best prepare for such a major step.

The article inspired an extraordinary volume of responses, most of them positive, some of them strongly critical. We have selected letters to reflect the full range of reactions, followed by a reply from the author.

ARTICLE FACILITATES SMOOTH TRANSITION

To the Editor:

I would like to commend Rabbi Yair Spolter for his outstanding article on the subject of transitioning children to the reality of aliya – and to commend the Editorial Board of *The Jewish Observer* for having the courage to address such an emotional subject.

Having conducted dozens of parenting lectures in *Eretz Yisroel* over the past 9 years and having counseled hundreds of American *olim* – many with issues noted by Rabbi Spolter – I am intimately familiar with the issues he has raised. His analysis of the facts on the ground and his thoughtful recommendations make his essay required reading for any parents considering aliya.

To those who are concerned that airing this issue will discourage people from moving to *Eretz Yisroel*, I propose that his article will be a *positive* development for aliya as parents strategically plan for the inevitable challenges they will face as they follow their dreams and relocate to *Eretz Yisroel*. Smoother transitions for the children of *olim* will inevitably result in more families contemplating aliya.

With much admiration.

(RABBI) YAKOV HOROWITZ

Rabbi Horowitz is the Menahel of Yeshiva Darchei Noam of Monsey and the Program Director of Agudath Israel's Project Y.E.S.

HARDSHIPS – PART OF THE ALIYA PACKAGE, AND WORTH IT

To the Editor

Our family made aliya eight years ago from a large out-of-town American community. Our family included two girls

in high school, three elementary-age children and a toddler.

The adjustment from being an American out-of-town yeshivish family to being an Israeli chareidi one was not easy. We are still learning chareidi norms, and some of our children have adapted to them more easily than others. Due to our children's relatively weak academic level and Hebrew language skills, as well as their *chutz la'aretz* style of *frumkeit*, some of them attended chareidi schools here that were geared to weaker segments of the population.

While it is true that our children didn't and perhaps still do not quite measure up to the Israeli chareidi yardstick of success, it does not measure who our children are today. When I encounter American seminary girls and yeshiva boys who come here to learn, and on my rare visits to America when I encounter American children and teens from what are considered yeshivish families, I inevitably find myself comparing their dress, attitudes, leisure-time pursuits and level of learning with those of our children. *Baruch Hashem*, our children, even our weaker ones, are way head of most of their American contemporaries in learning levels, and way behind (thankfully) in their materialism, awareness of American culture, and pursuit of *narishkeit*!

Yes, one of our teenage daughters had a difficult adjustment, and after high school and seminary here, returned to our hometown. Yet, we feel that she is *frummer* than she would have been had she spent only her seminary year in *Eretz Yisroel*. She is married and a mother, and we are very proud of how she turned out.

Our son had a difficult time academically for many years here (he was also weak in his American *cheder*). However, this opportunity to see firsthand the relevance of his learning by living in the land

of *Tanach* and Gemara, combined with less exposure to American culture, has worked wonders. He is now thriving in an American post-high school yeshiva program in Yerushalayim, which he entered after finishing 11th grade (*shiur gimmel*) of *yeshiva ketana* here. In fact, after one year there, his *rebbe* offered him the option of skipping a *shiur* level! We have witnessed firsthand *Chazal's* statement that the air of *Eretz Yisroel* makes one wise. While our son's weak academic performance in the U.S. would have put him at high risk for going off the *derech*, his lack of exposure here to American culture was a lifesaver.

We have seen the benefits of moving to *Eretz Yisroel* with another of our daughters as well. Though she does not fit into any particular religious stereotype here, she has recently become aware of her strengths. After she finished eleventh grade in a chareidi high school for weaker students, she was admitted into a seminary program for Anglo-Israeli and *chutz la'aretz* girls. She and a former classmate are way ahead of their American peers! Although they entered seminary a year early, they had already learned many of the *hashkafa* concepts being presented for the first time to their new classmates. Homework that was supposed to take an hour took them only five minutes.

Our youngest two children (the youngest one born here) are typical Israeli chareidi children. Our entire family is constantly amazed by how much our first grader knows and *davens*, and by his drive to learn Torah. Of course, he loves to play outdoors like any normal American child, but his life ambition is to be a "*Rav gadol beYisroel*, to be a *rosh yeshiva* of 100 yeshivos." While much of his capability is due to the fact that Hebrew is his best language, we also give much credit to the

lack of American-style distractions, leisure-time pursuits, and materialism that beckon his American peers.

The quantity and quality of my husband's learning has improved immeasurably since we have moved to *Eretz Yisroel*.

While we may not fully measure up to Israeli chareidi society's standards, we are way ahead of who we were in

America, and we cannot guess how our family would have evolved had we stayed there. Aliya is not an easy venture; yet, with all our struggles and our spiritual shortcomings, we feel that the move was ultimately a positive one for our family.

"*Eretz Yisroel nikneis beyisurim*" – people quote this statement as an excuse not to make aliya. The Gemara also says that Torah and *Olam Habba* are acquired

through *yisurim*. I humbly suggest that American Jewry should analyze honestly why the *yisurim* of pursuing Torah and *Olam Habba* do not deter them, while the *yisurim* of settling in *Eretz Yisroel* do.

MRS. ROSE GAFNI
Yerushalayim

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TIMELY, BUT TARDY

To the Editor:

The article advising Americans how to make the most of their hopes to be *oleh* to *Eretz Yisroel* was on target, and should be of value to all would-be *olim*, except for two points.

It should have been published 20 years ago, when it could have helped countless thousands of others do it right.

An important omission: there is no such thing as an American type Mesivta-high school, with general studies, under Israeli-chareidi auspices. One should be aware of that before making the big move.

(RABBI) DOV LEDERMAN
Bnei Brak

ACCURATE... AND HELPFUL

To the Editor:

I was very excited to read Rabbi Yair Spolter's article on moving to *Eretz Yisroel*. I shed real tears when I read the article because it expressed everything that I have gone through since remaining here as a *bachur*, marrying, and living in *Eretz Yisroel* for the last 10 years. What he described is what many if not most "*chutznikim*" are going through or went through when moving here. This article hopefully will help those who are thinking about moving here understand what lies ahead of them and even help them get through the ups and downs, which are many, especially in a foreign country. Yes, *Eretz Yisroel* is a foreign country to someone coming from abroad! *Chaval* that Rabbi Spolter did not write this 10 years earlier.

YAAKOV LICHTER
Jerusalem

PROCEED, YET PROCEED
WITH CAUTION

To the Editor:

I enjoyed reading the article, "The *Kedusha* and the Pitfalls; when American Families Move to *Eretz Yisroel*."

It was realistic and informative; I especially like the success story. My only objec-

tion is the title. How can there be pitfalls in a mitzvah? A more appropriate title would have been "How to Make Aliya, and Do It Right," or "When and How to Make Aliya." I think it's important to be very positive toward this mitzvah, as Caleiv said, "We shall surely ascend and conquer it, for we can surely do it" (*Bamidbar* 13,30), and as Caleiv and Yehoshua said, "The Land is exceedingly good" (*Bamidbar* 14,7).

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

"THIS IS WHERE HASHEM
WANTS US TO LIVE"

To the Editor:

As an American living in Israel, I appreciate Rabbi Spolter's well-organized article, informing potential *olim* of the possible "pitfalls" of moving to *Eretz Yisroel*. However, I am concerned that the potential *oleh* is bound to dismiss his noble plans after reading the dismal picture presented by the author.

I totally agree with the opinions quoted from the esteemed *mechanchim* presented in the article regarding the importance of becoming informed of the differences between Israeli and American society, and in general not making such a momentous move without consultation. However, the overall tone of the article was very negative, and the tremendous opportunity of living in *Eretz Yisroel* was not properly presented. *Eretz Yisroel* is extolled in *davening*, time and time again. One of the main focuses of *bentching* is gratitude for *Eretz Yisroel*.

Soon after our move to *Eretz Yisroel*, someone asked our 6-year-old whether she liked living in America or in Israel better. When she answered that she loved living in Israel, the questioner asked why. "This is where *Hashem* wants us to live," was her answer. "And also, the *parsha* happened here, so it feels so much more real."

In short, I hope that all your readers give serious thought to whether aliya is for them and make an informed decision based on various data, and then *daven* for *siyata diShemaya* that *Hashem* bless their choice.

We made aliya with children of all

ages. *Baruch Hashem*, all are very happy to be living in *artzeinu hakedosha*. We have many friends with similar success stories and I find it hard to believe the bleak statistics quoted in the article. It is my pleasure to serve as a resource for any families contemplating aliya.

REBBITZEN MALKA KAGANOFF
Neve Yaakov, Jerusalem

MORE EMPHASIS, PLEASE, ON
"GRASPING THE KEDUSHA"

To the Editor:

We read and reread the erudite article written by Rabbi Y. Spolter. The title led us to believe that the article would contain tips and pointers for successful integration into life in *Eretz Yisroel*. What a disappointment! He may succeed in frightening would-be *olim*.

In order to assess the effects of a change of location and to evaluate the educational system, it is first necessary to perform an objective analysis: What are the dangers inherent in any move when children are a certain age? Do these dangers occur in all global areas, or are they more prominent when moving to *Eretz Yisroel* due to language barrier, culture problems, etc?

Is the Israeli chareidi educational system successful in educating boys and girls to take their rightful places in society, or are there kinks in the system that need to be ironed out or addressed? Why ask children to conform to a system if we do not agree with its tenets? Is *kollel* life suited for all children? Do we mold all our children in one way, or do we remember *Shlomo Hamelech's* advice, "Educate the child according to his personality [lit. way...]"?

The fact that there is a language barrier points to one of the defects in the systems abroad. Why shouldn't yeshiva children abroad be taught to communicate reasonably well in Hebrew? After all, it is necessary in order to pursue Torah learning, since more and more high school graduates come to Israel for study. Communication in Hebrew would facilitate their stay and would be an immeasurable asset for successful aliya.

Since there is a clash of mentalities,

perhaps the "transformer" idea is not so terrible. Some of the *chutz la'aretz* values could be successfully integrated into Israeli society, e.g., enhancement of appreciation of fellow men, while the *has-mada* of the Israeli Torah student would be emulated.

Rabbi Spolter's frightening message is bound to inspire a reluctance to embark on aliya in your average reader. We need to look to the Torah for the answers to this fear. "*Alo naaleh*" was Caleiv's response. If entire communities would come to *Eretz Yisroel* to settle, the

"*Naaleh*" would overcome many problems and the chances for success would be greatly enhanced.

RABBI & MRS. MOSHE MENDLOWITZ
Jerusalem

TRUNCATED ALIYA, BUT NO REGRETS

To the Editor:

My husband and I and our five children made aliya to *Eretz Yisroel* about seven years ago, but returned to Baltimore six years later. It was the *chin-uch* issue and the mainstreaming of our children that ultimately sent us back. As I picked up the Dec. '04 issue of *The Jewish Observer*, I braced myself for what I was sure would be an exaggerated account of trials, tribulations and tragedies ("The *Kedusha* and the Pitfalls – When American Families Move to *Eretz Yisroel*"), but instead found the article to be quite honest and on target, if somewhat sadly so. For this, the author is to be congratulated.

However, I was disappointed that there did not seem to be equal time given to the *kedusha* side of the coin nor enough *chizuk* to those who feel they *have* done their homework, who *do* know themselves, their children and their economic situation as well as humanly possible, and who *are* in consultation with their *rav* on the matter. While I certainly understand firsthand the author's warning to families with children, I would have liked to read stronger words encouraging couples to consider moving to *Eretz Yisroel* "before the children are born and after they're married."

We invested much energy, emotion and hard-earned money in our aliya and return. But we do not consider any of this in vain, for there is no reward as great as that which is gained from living in our Holy Land; indeed, from enduring the challenges until they are overcome – even if "overcoming" might mean a total reevaluation. Not a *lechatchila*, to be sure, but in our case, a *bedi'eved* with no scars or regrets, *Baruch Hashem*, and with many cherished memories and *gaguim* (longings) to return. In fact, our daughter is already back – at an American seminary in Yerushalayim.

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To those who will attempt the quantum leap, *kol hakavod* to you – and *hatzlacha rabba, be'ezras Hashem*. Keep in mind what our Chazal have said. *Eretz Yisroel* is *nikneis beyisurim*. This does not have to mean horrific tests of your dedication to the cause, *chas veshalom*. But no matter how well you've done your homework, always expect the unexpected while keeping your eye on the prize. To those for whom *aliya* isn't a realistic option at this time, may you merit to visit *Eretz Yisroel* soon and often, and to return to your temporary homes in the Diaspora with *gaguim* for our Holy Land and City. Because at the end of the day, and with all its pitfalls and challenges, there is still no place like home.

SHARON N. GALKIN
Baltimore, Maryland

AMERICANS IN ERETZ YISROEL
– AN ALIYA THAT CAN LAST

To the Editor:

Kislev's JO article detailed various difficulties of the American family moving to *Eretz Yisroel*. While the article was meant to perform a valuable public service by laying out a number of issues the *olim* and family have to contend with, and potential dangers which must be contended with, its tone was pessimistic and negative. Every single person I spoke to who had read the article perceived it as carrying a message, saying: "Do Not Come." "Come At Your Own Risk." "Keep Out!" The article became a prime weapon in the hands of those attempting to dissuade others from moving to *Eretz Yisroel*. It was faxed to people contemplating the move, with the message: "Don't do it!" (In one case I know of, a family received it four times, from four different sources!) It was *not* perceived as a friendly offering of a "how-to" manual, but rather, as an advisory pamphlet warning people to stay away. One person, who has been here over 25 years, laughingly said, "It's a good thing I'm here already. If I were coming, I'd rip up the tickets and head back home!"

But it is no laughing matter. People who have successfully lived and raised children here for many years have

expressed dismay, anger and resentment at the portrayal of life here. They agree that the article was well-intentioned, but feel that it did not portray the actual reality of living in *Eretz Yisroel*. With dedication, perseverance and hard work, the obstacles can be, *and were*, overcome. These very people, who have given up large houses, nice salaries and positions of prominence in their communities in *chutz la'aretz*, and have worked hard to acclimate to life in *Eretz Yisroel*, felt that they were being told that they were foolhardy and had exposed their families to

great spiritual dangers. They felt *humiliated!* There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of families who have moved here and do not regret it for a moment.

Certainly, it is important for anyone considering such a major move to come with open eyes, intelligent planning and preparation. Certainly, stating all relevant facts and potential pitfalls is a great help. But the all-important context is that *Eretz Yisroel* is the land that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Himself chose for all Jews to live in, and that so many people have already come and *have been suc-*

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cessful in settling here. It must also be stated that, of the problems encountered, many are normal "life problems" that exist in any modern society. Of course, they have to – and they can – be dealt with. In fact, challenges in life – avoiding dangers, dealing with problems, and growing in the process – are how Chazal themselves characterized life in Eretz Yisroel (Berachos 5a).

How can it be left unsaid that life in Eretz Yisroel is a life with an unusually close relationship with Hashem, the *raison d'être* of a Jew's very being? That the average person living in Eretz Yisroel learns more Torah, davens with more kavana, does more varied chessed, has more and deeper emuna, bitachon and appreciation for Hashem's gifts, and lives with more spiritual values and less materialistic ones, than in any other place in the world? That one can move here and be successful? And the message thus can easily be: "Come, my children! Veshavu vannim li'gevulam – And the children will return to their borders."

Permit me to summarize the article, with some short comments in brackets.

A) - The article begins with the obligatory "Great place to live – in theory." But then comes that discouraging concept: *Effess. However* – or, in more modern terminology, "Not so fast, Yankel and Sarah. Don't get carried away. There are issues, problems, obstacles – intractable issues that call into question the wisdom

of such a move in the first place." (See Ramban to Bamidbar 13,27, who explains the effect of that "But" word.)

B) – "Can you be so sure you will benefit spiritually? In fact, there is a good chance your spirituality will be lessened! After all, here in chutz la'aretz, we have an ongoing relationship with Hashem. Who knows what will happen if we risk it by such a move!"

[Hashem's master plan for the Jewish people is to live in Eretz Yisroel, and therefore the potential for kedusha and bonding with Hashem is greater here than anywhere else in the world.]

C) – "The religiosity there is too intense. Who can live like that? Eretz Yisroel is very demanding – You're living in the Palace of the King. Maybe you'd be better off staying away."

[Living in the Palace of the King is indeed a privilege, where the opportunities for growth are boundless. Virtually all who go there feel the difference, and are glad they took that risk. Just ask them!]

D) – "There are reports of children going off the derech. And it's getting worse and worse. What will be with our children?"

[Though this tragic situation exists here, it unfortunately exists as well in Flatbush, Monsey, Baltimore, Lakewood, Far Rockaway, the West Side, etc. How unfair to point to world-wide problems and lay them at the door

of Eretz Yisroel! As it is, various shades of possibilities of chinuch exist in greater numbers in Eretz Yisroel than in chutz la'aretz. A multitude of institutes and mosdos has sprung up to deal with our children's varied needs. Yes, you have to do your homework and search them out, and not be embarrassed by being associated with the non-conventional. But it is there for the taking. There are also many institutes that have undertaken to advise people initially as to which yeshivos to send their children. Use them! [And "20% of teenagers go off the derech" is a non-scientific-arrived-at statistic, plucked from thin air. And the extrapolation, "3 teenagers = 40% chance of becoming non-frum," lowers the unlikely to the ludicrous.]

E) – "There are so many issues to work out! Schools, transportation, camp – everything is new."

—"Finding means of parnassa is no easy task."

—"Remember, moving there will not automatically solve your problems."

[It is wrong to assign the blame for all this to Eretz Yisroel. These difficulties are true for any long-distance move one makes. Who is not aware of painful parnassa problems in chutz la'aretz? And isn't Eretz Yisroel the land that is constantly under Hashem's direct scrutiny: The eyes of Hashem are on it at all times" (Devarim 11,12). What more could one want? Of course, one has to have a

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basic game plan – that in itself is *Hashem's* requirement for us. But once one has one, there should be no need to dot every i and cross every t. True, your income will be less, perhaps significantly so. But your needs are also less, as well – significantly less. Many people point to the fact that making ends meet is much easier in *Eretz Yisroel* due to this difference. And you will be richer in vastly more important ways.]

F) - "Society there is so polarized."

[The differences – especially among "regular folk" – are not nearly as great as is made out. And besides, people ultimately find their niche. And on the contrary, the unity exhibited in *Eretz Yisroel* – especially in times of crisis – is tremendously inspiring. And then there's the constant *chesed* one encounters, which crosses all lines, and the constant interaction with all types of Jews.]

Yes, the Land is an exceedingly good land. If *Hashem* wants to, He can give it to us – i.e., help us overcome the difficulties (as so many have, indeed, already done). Yes, we know the problems, but we do not fear them. After all, *Hashem*, who takes care of us in *chutz la'aretz*, will surely not forsake us in His Land! (See *Bamidbar* 13,30; 14,7-9; *Devarim* 1,29-33; *Ramban* to *Bamidbar* 14,9.)

Don't hesitate to talk to people who have "been there, done that" – i.e., to people who have moved here. Ask them if they regret it. Ask them how they dealt with their children's *chinuch*, the issues, and the problems. Read about the fierce love our *gedolim* had throughout the generations for the Holy Land, and the self-sacrifice they showed to come settle here. The hardships. The difficulties. The rewards when those difficulties were overcome. Talk to people how, after a period of adjustment, they found their place in the multi-tiered *frum* society in *Eretz Yisroel*. How in the last 5, 10 years, so many "pockets" of Anglo communities have sprouted, enabling those coming to even more easily acclimate themselves, to have a *kesher* with *rabbanim* who understand "where they're coming from," and help answer

their multitude of questions regarding coping with their new life. How these newer communities offer guidance, help, *chizuk*, suggestions, schools (at all levels and to all "types"), help in all issues of *chinuch bannim* and *bannos*, and all other kinds of support. How the husband (and wife) are learning more Torah than ever before. How their *davening* has improved. How they feel the closeness to *Hashem* that is promised to those who live here and are open to it. The *davening* at the *Kosel*, of course. *Kever Rachel*. *Me'aras Hamachpeila*. *Tzefas*. The multitude of *kivrei avos*, by which one is inspired to pour one's heart out to one's Creator.

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld זצ"ל decried those who express a vision of *Eretz Yisroel* highlighted by its problems. Rather, one's attitude should be: "We will withstand all the tests. We will persevere and grow. It is, in fact, incumbent upon us to go up and withstand all the tests" (*Guardian of Jerusalem*, ArtScroll, pages 234-235).

Let us close with Caleiv's exhortation: "We will go up and occupy the Land – we will be able to overcome and conquer it!" (*Bamidbar* 13,30)

And may *The Jewish Observer* publish its next issue from *Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh!*

RABBI CHAIM MALINOWITZ
Jerusalem

THE AUTHOR RESPONDS:

The Dec. '04 article on American aliya was initiated by *The Jewish Observer* at the behest of *gedolei Torah* and *mechanchim* in *Eretz Yisroel*, in response to a very real problem that these *rabbanim* are dealing with on a constant basis.

I am pleased that the article has inspired so much dialogue, whether in positive or negative responses. The fact that people are talking means that the article fostered a greater awareness of the issues facing *olim*. Mission accomplished. It is in the spirit of encouraging further dialogue and awareness that I offer my response.

The letter writers failed to mention one of the greatest sacrifices that making aliya entails – being away from family. For my wife and me, moving to *Eretz Yisroel* meant separation from both my wife's and my parents, brothers and sisters and their families, in Silver Spring, Detroit, Lakewood, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Brooklyn. We miss family *simchos* and get-togethers, and our children are missing the opportunity to know their cousins. At times, this is very difficult. But, along with all the other sacrifices, it is certainly well worth it. There is nothing like living in *Eretz Yisroel*, where just walking *daled amos*

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gives one an extra *zechus*. As I expressed in the article: "*Hashgacha prattis* is more tangible in *Eretz Yisroel*... life here is more naturally imbued with meaning and spirituality.... Living in *Eretz Yisroel* means *kirvas Hashem*... *siyata diShemaya* in *limud haTorah* and *kiyum hamitzvos*." Yes, I wrote it – and I meant it. Additionally, the *chinuch* opportunities in *Eretz Yisroel* and the ability to raise children here in a wholesome, sheltered, Torah-inspired environment are unparalleled anywhere else in the world. *Ashreinu ma tov chelkeinu!*

I understand the reluctance of Rebbetzin Kaganoff and others whose hearts are filled with *ahavas ha'aretz* to believe the sobering facts that I was bombarded with in the dozens of interviews that I conducted. But please, let's not mislead people. The tone of the article precisely reflects the situation that a typical family making aliya faces. People must know this. Especially people who will – and *should* – be making aliya. Wanting everything to be rosy is okay. But imagining that it really is at the expense of others is not okay.

In response to the Mendlowitzes' vision of an Americanized social and educational system in *Eretz Yisroel*: I'm sure that many Americans share your dreams, but until they become a reality, people have to realize the dangers of hanging on to their American ways within the Israeli chareidi environment. (Incidentally, I found their reference to "Spolter's frightening message" at the end of a letter that berated the Israeli system to be quite ironic. Who here is "frightening would-be *olim*"?)

The Galkins' disappointment that more space was not devoted to encouraging aliya was quite surprising. Other families with similar stories of having to return to *chutz laaretz* have expressed their feelings of gratitude for the miracle that their family survived the experience; they certainly were not encouraging others to follow their lead. The Galkins' ability to reflect positively on their own experience is truly inspirational, but isn't sending others down

the same road going a little overboard?

And yes, a mitzvah can be a pitfall, as Chazal explain the *passuk*, "*Yesharim darchei Hashem, vetzaddikim yeilchuvam ufoshim yikashlu vam*": If a mitzvah is not performed in the intended fashion, the *darchei Hashem* themselves can indeed become a *michshol*, a stumbling block. When a family approaches *yishuv Eretz Yisroel* without proper *yishuv hadaas* (clarity), or without consulting *daas Torah*, the end result may be that despite their pure and good intentions, they turn a mitzvah into a pitfall.

OFFERING FACTS AND ADVICE – NOT MERAGLIM

While I am honored that a person of the stature of Rabbi Malinowitz took the time to comment on my article, I must point to some fallacies in his argument. Contrary to his bleak perception of its message (his assertions are backed exclusively by paraphrases in quotation marks; he offers no actual quotations to support his claim that the article had a negative tone), the article simply said: "Be aware of the difficulties involved in making aliya." It was not meant to persuade people to make aliya or dissuade them. Rather, its message was designed to *assist* those families who are inspired to make aliya and want to integrate successfully into Israeli society, as well as to alert those who, according to *daas harabbanim*, would be better off postponing such a move due to their current personal circumstances. By reading what the experts have to say and following their advice, families will be better equipped to grasp the *kedusha* of *Eretz Yisroel* while avoiding the pitfalls that an uneducated aliya can lead to.

Obviously, this message in no way resembles the "*effes*" of the *Meraglim* (the Ten Spies dispatched by *Moshe Rabbeinu*), which is properly translated as "impossible" (see the *Ramban* that Rabbi Malinowitz himself refers to, in *Bamidbar* 13,27). The *Meraglim* claimed that conquering *Eretz Yisroel* was an insurmountable task. In the JO

article, it was clearly stated numerous times that the obstacles that stand in the way of *olim* can be dealt with and can be overcome by following the advice of those in the know. In fact, in the few months since its publication, many families, both pre- and post-aliya, have reported that the article has helped them in understanding and dealing with the issues that they are facing.

The attempt to parallel the JO article to the *cheit hameraglim* is clearly off the mark from the outset. One cannot compare the Jewish People today to the nation that existed 3300 years ago, as they prepared to enter the Land of Israel. After they had experienced the miracles of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, Hashem commanded *Bnei Yisroel*, "See! I have given the Land before you; come and possess the Land..." (*Devarim* 1,8). The Jewish people were guaranteed to miraculously inherit the land without even lifting a sword (*Rashi* *ibid.*). Certainly, any words of dissuasion at that time, even if they would have been based on facts and common sense, were pure heresy, for they contradicted the word of G-d. Today, when there are no guarantees, Caleiv's "*alo naaleh*" cannot be unequivocally applied. Yes, those families who have made a successful aliya are certainly to be commended and admired – *sheyirbu kemosam!* But the many who have refrained from doing so because of legitimate and responsible calculations should not be portrayed as being complacent or negligent in their *emuna* and *dikduk bemitzvos*.

Rabbi Malinowitz paints a wonderful picture of the adventure of being faced with the challenges of moving to *Eretz Yisroel*, as if everyone succeeds in the end, coming out stronger, happier, and more religious. The fact is, however, that many people are really suffering as a result of making an uneducated aliya. Rather than denying the plight of those who are, unfortunately, struggling, the article offered aliya families the honest guidance and advice that they are seeking. Shouldn't we channel our energies towards helping these people by informing them,

advising them, and encouraging them to take the right steps to prepare their families? Or should we look the other way, burying our heads in the sand while humming tunes of "build-up-the-Land" idealism?

Rabbi Malinowitz charges that it is wrong to assign blame to *Eretz Yisroel* for problems that can result from any major move. I couldn't agree with him more. Uprooting an entire family to any new country with an unfamiliar mentality, a new school system, different language, etc., would have the same effect. But people aren't making aliya to Uganda – they're moving to *Eretz Yisroel*. Nowhere in the article was the blame pinned on "*Eretz Hakodesh*." Yes, "kids at risk" is, unfortunately, an epidemic that is plaguing Jewish communities everywhere. But the changes inherent in making aliya can significantly enhance the risk factor for any child, and pose a serious challenge to his or her ability to cope. If a family is coming at the potential expense of their children's spiritual development, can we honestly call it an "aliya"? Is it really worth moving to *Eretz Yisroel* at any expense, as Rabbi Malinowitz implies? ("It is in fact incumbent upon us to go up and withstand all the tests.")

CONSULTING DAAS TORAH

In sharp contrast to the JO article, Rabbi Malinowitz's letter makes no mention of any *rabbanim* or *gedolei Yisroel* who support his views. His quote of Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld is taken completely out of context (please see *Guardian of Jerusalem*, pp. 234-235, where Rabbi Sonnenfeld was saying a *p'shat* in *Parashas Shelach*, not commenting on contemporary issues), and to use his words to imply that, according to *daas Torah*, people should make aliya regardless of the natural consequences, is a misapplication of his message. Are there not *gedolim* alive today to address the *she'eilos* currently facing *Klal Yisroel*?

A final reference to the *Meraglim*: their misleading report resulted in an entire generation not being allowed to enter *Eretz Yisroel*. There were people,

however, who insisted on "going up" despite *Hashem's* subsequent decree. They mistakenly believed that it was only because of their flawed *bitachon* that the *Ribbono shel Olam* would not allow them to enter the Holy Land (*Ohr Hachayim*). If they would have perfect *bitachon*, they thought, then they could rise above the natural circumstances and overcome any obstacle that would stand in their way. Despite *Moshe Rabbeinu's* warning that *Hashem* would not be with them, they attempted to go up and conquer the

land. These people are called the "*mapillim*," which means people who are living in darkness, who are blind to *daas Torah* (*Rashi*). They suffered a terrible fate. The only way to determine whether we are *Meraglim* or *Mapillim* (*chas veshalom*), or whether we are fulfilling the *ratzon* of the *Ribbono shel Olam*, is to ask the *Moshe Rabbeinu* of our *dor*, to seek the advice of the *gedolim* of our times. I did – and I invite Rabbi Malinowitz to do the same.

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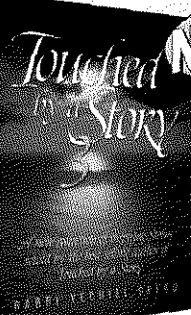
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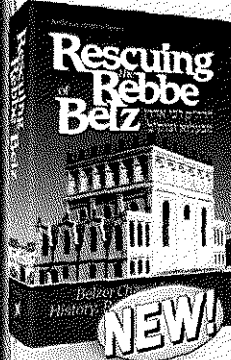
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