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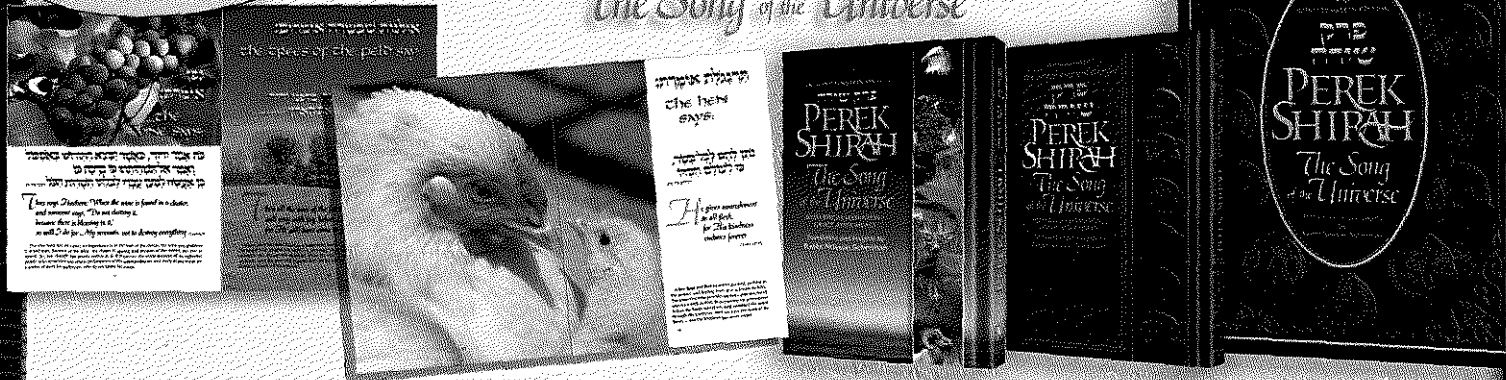
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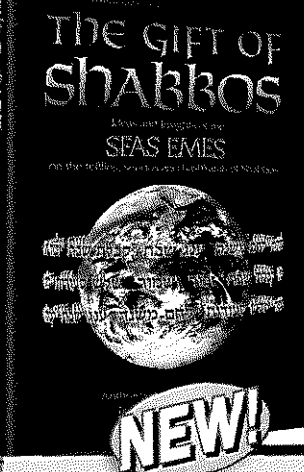
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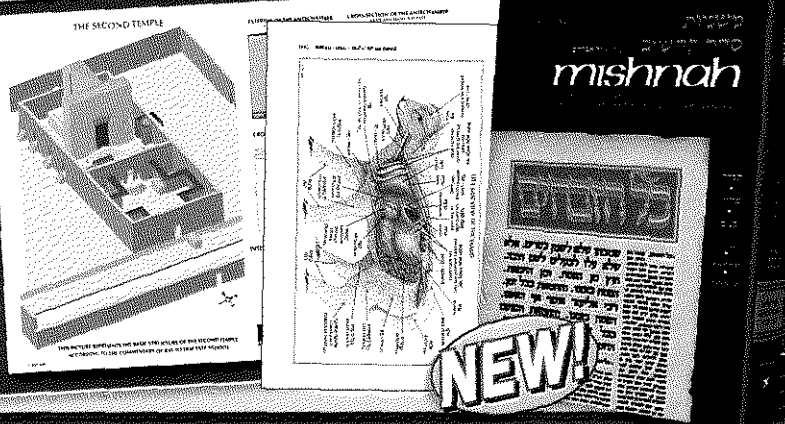


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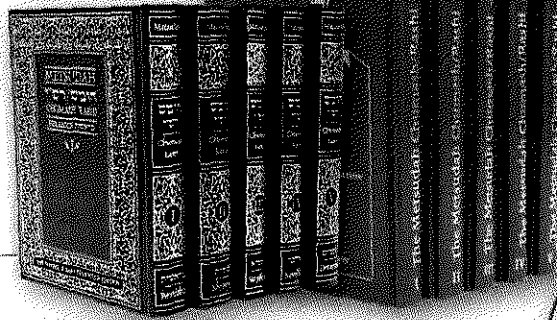
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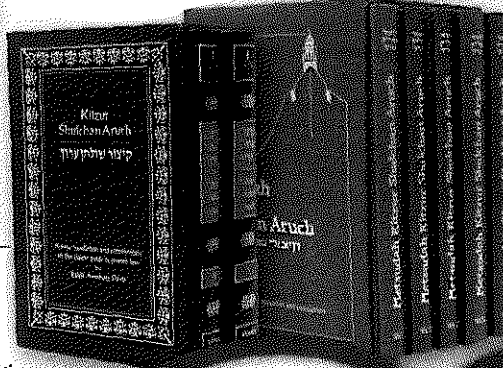
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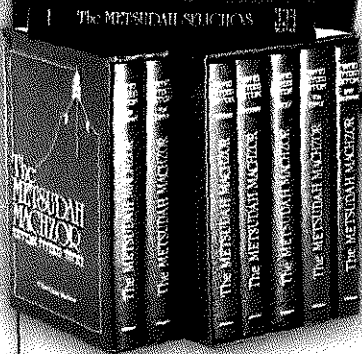
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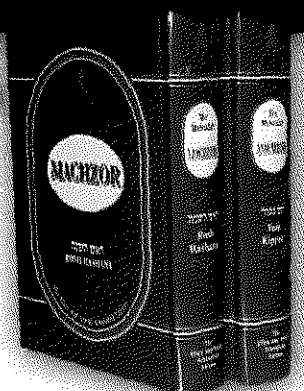
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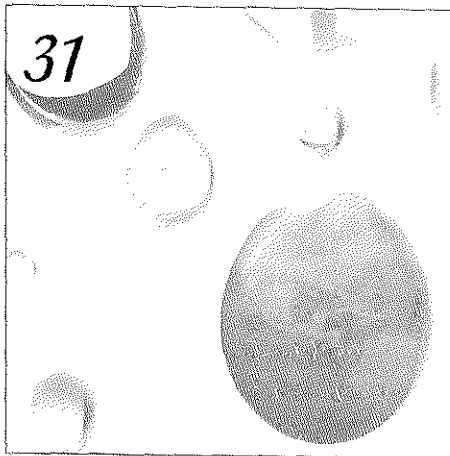
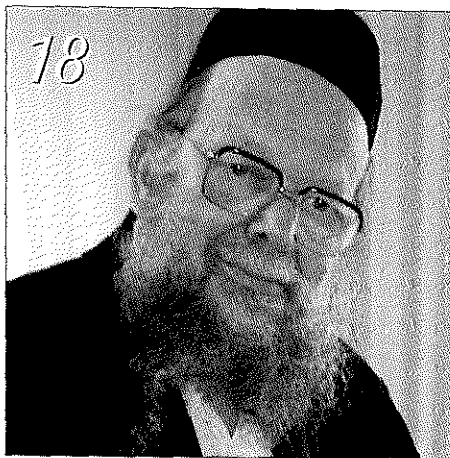
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YONOSON ROSENBLUM



Taking Leave of Gaza

THE TRAUMA OF WITHDRAWAL

CHAREIDIM AND THE GAZA WITHDRAWAL

The chareidi community in *Eretz Yisroel* has assumed the role of onlookers to the unfolding drama surrounding the Gaza withdrawal. Though United Torah Judaism has been part of the governing coalition in recent months, the party's participation was by no means crucial to the process. Once he brought Labor into his coalition, a determined Prime Minister Sharon had numerous options to secure Knesset approval for the Gaza withdrawal without UTJ's presence in the government.

United Torah Judaism's decision not to join the anti-disengagement forces reflects the strong preference of the Torah leadership to avoid casting the decisive vote on matters of national security, and especially not against the will of the majority of Israeli citizens.

The great Torah leaders of *Eretz Yisroel* have been almost completely silent on the Gaza withdrawal. The most that

RABBI ROSENBLUM, WHO LIVES IN JERUSALEM, IS A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR TO *THE JEWISH OBSERVER*. HE IS ALSO DIRECTOR OF THE ISRAELI DIVISION OF AM ECHAD, THE AGUDATH ISRAEL-INSPIRED EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH EFFORT AND MEDIA RESOURCE.

can be said with confidence about their views is that they do not view the withdrawal from Gaza, or other parts of *Eretz Yisroel*, to be halachically forbidden. If they did, UTJ could never have joined the government. In addition, the Torah leaders do not feel that the security/diplomatic calculus is so clear-cut as to render the withdrawal halachically forbidden on grounds of *pikuach nefesh*.

THE CHAREIDIM: BY NO MEANS INDIFFERENT

Though the chareidi community has played only a minor role in the political process, it would be wrong to describe the community as indifferent to what is taking place in Gaza. Most of the chareidi press has been replete with coverage of the disengagement, including photo features about the plight of those about to be evicted from their homes and news items raising questions about the security threats posed by the withdrawal from Gaza. In my own Har Nof neighborhood, orange ribbons (symbol of the anti-disengagement forces) proliferate, and not just on cars and apartments belonging to those who identify with the national religious world.

Rarely in history has a democratic government willfully inflicted such deep harm on a certain segment of the population as that befalling the Jewish residents of the Gaza Strip. The vast majority of residents of the tight-knit Gaza communities will not be able to relocate together. Neighbors and extended families, some of whom have lived together for three decades, will be separated.

It is almost impossible to imagine that the lush, verdant Gaza communities were wrested from sand dunes since 1967. It is even harder to imagine them being rebuilt elsewhere.

Those residing in 400-square-meter homes, surrounded by yards and gardens, will find themselves living in trailer homes one-quarter that size after the withdrawal, if they are lucky enough to have a temporary home at all. Meanwhile, their possessions will be stored in a maximum of two containers on Negev IDF bases where the heat inside the containers will rise to nearly 200 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Gaza growers, who presently produce 12% of Israel's agricultural output, will lose two growing seasons, and many of the farmers say that they no longer have the strength to rebuild what they did twenty or thirty years ago.

Equally troubling to the chareidi community is the specter of 26 shuls and yeshivos slated for destruction.

A recent statement of Agudath Israel of America, published after consultation with its *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah*, calls on all Jews "to pause and share in the pain of our Jewish brethren in Gaza." The statement goes on to describe the vast majority of Gaza settlers as "idealistic, dedicated Jews, [who] are being forced by circumstances entirely beyond their control to give up their homes, their yeshivos, their shuls and their cemeteries, to be relocated abruptly to new surroundings." That statement pretty much sums up the feelings of most of the Israeli chareidi community as well.

NOT UNIVERSALLY NEUTRAL

At the same time, the Agudah statement maintains a studied neutrality as to whether the "imminent withdrawal" is "politically or militarily correct." Chareidim – even those who entertain grave doubts about the wisdom of the Gaza withdrawal on security grounds – have been notably absent from demonstration against the withdrawal. (They were better represented at the massive prayer gathering at the *Kosel* just before Tisha B'Av.)

For all their sympathy with those being removed from their homes in Gaza, most chareidim are still deeply ambivalent about the settlement enterprise. From the beginning, Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach, זצ"ל, opposed settlements, especially in areas heavily populated with Arabs, as only likely to arouse the animosity of the nations.

That attitude was derided by the national religious world as reflective of a *galus* mentality. And indeed it is. For unlike the national religious world, the Torah leadership never doubted that even in the State of Israel Jews remain in *galus*, and that the world is still a very dangerous place, filled with many sworn enemies. The great Torah leaders always feared that the continual emphasis of the national religious world on Jewish military strength, and the glorification of

Upon consultation with its rabbinic leadership, Agudath Israel of America has issued the following statement:

A CALL TO SHARE THE PAIN OF ACHEINU BAIS YISROEL

These are terribly trying times for *Klal Yisroel* in *Eretz Yisroel*. And it behooves us all, no matter our opinions on the wisdom of the imminent Israeli withdrawal from parts of our Holy Land, to pause and share in the pain and anguish of our Jewish brethren in Gaza.

Those residents are, overwhelmingly, idealistic, dedicated Jews. They are being forced by circumstances entirely beyond their control to give up their homes, their yeshivos, their shuls and their cemeteries, to be relocated abruptly to new surroundings. Whether or not the decision necessitating that relocation is politically or militarily correct, its effects are, unarguably, a deep personal tragedy for many thousands.

And so, during these days of Jewish mourning over the destruction of the *Batei Mikdash*, it is only proper that we include in our hearts and in our tefillos all those precious Jewish souls who are scheduled to be uprooted from the land to which they have been attached for many years. May *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* see fit to return His *Shechina* to *Tziyon ve'yolcheinu komemius le'artzeinu*.

military service as the highest calling, could veer dangerously close to an attitude of *kochi ve'otzem yadi*.

The swagger of settlers, with a gun inevitably attached to their belts, has always been faintly unnerving to those for whom the term *galus* Jew is no insult. Admittedly, no one would travel the roads of Judea and Samaria without a gun at hand. But to the chareidim, the insistence on exposing oneself, not to mention one's wife and children, to mortal danger on a daily basis, has always seemed vaguely fanatical.

The recent killing of four Israeli Arabs by a nineteen-year-old AWOL soldier, whose mother had repeatedly warned the army that he was armed and dangerous, and the killing of another four Palestinian workers by a 38-year-old father of two from the West Bank settlement of Shvut Rachel, on the first day of the Gaza evacuation, will only heighten the wariness of the chareidi world.

It would be grossly unfair to tar the entire national religious world with their actions. Those actions are anathema to nearly the entire national religious community, and only succeeded in robbing the community of all remaining shreds of public sympathy.

But neither can the national religious community completely wash its hands of them. Shehzak Tanweer, one of the July 7 suicide bombers in London, may have been until recently a cricket-playing young Englishman. But he blew himself up as an Islamic fanatic. Similarly, the

young soldier may have been raised in a secular family in Petach Tikvah, before recently connecting to a Kach group in Tapuach through the Internet. But he killed with a yarmulke on his head. And the Shvut Rachel resident was a long-time member of the community, with no known extreme political views. Their actions will provide chareidi Jews with one more reason to steer a wide berth around a strain of thought that they have always rejected.

THE SCHISM WITHIN

Ever since Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unveiled his proposal for unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the plan has served to both reveal a deep schism in Israeli society between the secular and national religious communities and to deepen that schism. The general public has been infuriated by the invocation of Holocaust imagery – yellow stars, prison camp uniforms, comparisons of soldiers involved in the evacuation to Hitler's S.S. – by opponents of disengagement.

Those opposed to disengagement are regularly portrayed as dangerous religious fanatics answerable only to the word of G-d, as interpreted by them, who pose a mortal threat to Israeli democracy. The civil disobedience campaign advocated by many opponents is widely perceived as a denial of the sovereignty of Israel and a denial of

legitimacy of Israeli democracy.

Secular Israelis appear shocked to discover that the ultimate loyalty of religious Jews is to the Divine commandments. And they have been free with their imprecations against the "messianic rabbis" and their followers. As long as that messianism was confined to proclaiming the State of Israel to be "the first flowering of the Redemption" and imbuing it with the status of *Malchus Beis David*, secular Israel had no problems. But now that the state and the settlers and their rabbis are in conflict, all has changed.

Even the pretrial imprisonment of three young teenage girls for more than a month for relatively minor offenses failed to raise an outcry in the secular world. The girls' incarceration became in the eyes of many secular Israelis only further proof of the fanaticism of their parents, who refused to ensure that their children would not engage in further illegal demonstrations.

Calls upon religious soldiers to refuse orders to participate in the uprooting of the Jewish settlements have raised grave suspicions about the loyalty of national religious soldiers both within the Israel Defense Forces and among the general public. Ideologically homogenous units of *hesder* yeshiva students are being reevaluated. Yet, any changes in the *hesder* system would make it difficult for many national religious youths to serve in the IDF, in which they

constitute a very high proportion of the junior officer corps today.

A SENSE OF BETRAYAL

For its part, the national religious community views the secular community as having betrayed it, and of having lost its attachment to the Land, which once bound secular and religious Zionists. The secular world, in the eyes of the national religious, has shown itself to be dead to all Jewish history and experience. In a *Ha'aretz* interview, Rabbi Yaakov Meidan, one of the leading figures in the national religious world, charged the secular elites, with whom the national religious world forged "an alliance based on love for this land [and] the desire for revival of the State," with having "plunged a knife in our back."

"For the secular elites, breaking religious Zionism is the goal," said Rabbi Meidan.

The uprooting, when it came, brought with it the end to a certain naivete about the support of "the nation" that religious Zionism had always claimed for itself, and the discovery that it was not just a matter of a few narrow secular elites thwarting the will of the people. Ari Shavit, a secular journalist who calls the Gaza settlement effort "pointless" but is filled with sympathy

and admiration for the settlers, captures their bewilderment well. The Gaza settlers, he writes, "built a model Zionism in the sand... a Zionism that is beyond time and place, which protects itself with reckless abandon and buries its dead with deep devotion." The settlers maintained "on the dunes of Gaza beach a form of lost Israeli soul," only to discover that "Israel itself is already foreign [to that soul]. Israel no longer wants it."

The withdrawal has occasioned a good deal of soul-searching within the national religious world. On the one hand, criticism is heard of exclusive focus since 1967 on settlement, and the cutting off from the mainstream of Israeli society. On the other hand, there are questions being raised about the intense identification with the state and army as ultimate religious values, especially as the army is now viewed as an "army of uprooting." Again Shavit: "The soil-bound Israelis of Gush Katif could not believe that the digital Israelis of Tel Aviv... would send against them the army in which they believed so much; would send into their homes the people in uniform whom they so loved...."

A NEW DIVIDING LINE

If, formerly, many in the national religious world saw the fundamental dividing line in Israeli society as between those who serve in the army and those who do not, today many see the dividing line as between those who are committed to Torah and mitzvos and those who are not. As Sarah Bedein, a resident of the Jerusalem suburb of Efrat, acknowledged, the bridge that the national religious world sought to build to the broader society appears to have run only one way. The national religious drew close to the secular culture – humming its tunes, following its TV shows and sports teams – but the latter drew no closer to an authentically Jewish culture.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Bedein admitted, the national religious never joined forces with the chareidi community on its great issues – *chillul Shabbos*, autopsies, protection of Jewish graves – preferring the "ways

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of peace” with the secular community. With the abandonment of those ways of peace over the Gaza withdrawal, wrote Mrs. Bedein, the question must now be faced: “Could it be that in our community Greater Israel takes precedence over *kavod HaTorah*?”

That such questions are now being asked suggests potential for a further drawing close of elements of the national religious world and the chareidi world, as a result of the trauma inflicted upon the former. Rabbi Meidan held out such a hope in his *Ha'aretz* interview when he termed the national religious world's decision to forge an alliance with secular elites at the expense of “our more natural alliance with the chareidi public” a historical mistake.

WHITHER ISRAEL?

Of course, it would be wrong to view the debate over the Gaza withdrawal as only one between those who identify themselves primarily as Jews and those who identify as Israelis. There is a parallel debate about the short and long-range security implications of the withdrawal that does not break down along secular and religious lines. The recently retired chief of staff, Moshe “Boogie” Yaalon, for instance, predicted that the withdrawal will only lead to a major increase in terrorist attacks. And Uzi Dayan, a former deputy chief of staff, criticized the decision to abandon the northern Gazan settlements and thereby put Ashkelon's oil refineries and port within easy range of Palestinian missiles. Neither can be suspected of deep religious sentiment.

Opponents of withdrawal on purely security grounds, like Daniel Pipes, can easily construct a nightmare scenario for the future. Every poll of the Palestinians shows that they overwhelmingly view the withdrawal as a victory for the strategy of terror – a message that Hamas is drilling home at every opportunity. Both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas are preparing mass demonstrations. Their chant is: Gaza today, tomorrow the West Bank, and on to Jerusalem.

So the Palestinians have been emboldened. At the same time, their operational capacities will increase greatly. Israel has agreed to the reopening of Gaza airport and the building of a seaport. In addition, it appears almost certain that responsibility for preventing arms smuggling from Egypt via the Philadelphi Corridor, which was porous enough even under Israeli control, will be handed over to Egypt. In short, the types of advanced armaments that the Palestinians once had to smuggle in on the Karine A will now enter freely. And

given Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice's insistence on “connectivity” between Gaza and the West Bank, those arms will sooner or later wend their way to the latter as well. In the process, Israel's densely populated coastal region will come more and more into range of Palestinian missiles.

Here's the prediction of *New Republic* publisher Martin Peretz: “The morning after the Israeli pullout from Gaza, the terrorism against Israel will intensify. . . . Palestinian well-wishers in the world will soon embark on the financing and

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construction of a modern port and the reconstruction of a modern airport. That's where the trouble really starts. It is the beginning of a real weapons industry, weapons that will not be kept in storage."

And Peretz is a supporter of withdrawal.

TO EACH HIS OWN NIGHTMARE

The nightmare of opponents of withdrawal is both plausible and frightening. But proponents of withdrawal have their own nightmare scenario, no less plausible and no less frightening. That nightmare is of Israel finding itself in the same position as South Africa under apartheid – a pariah state faced with a European Union economic boycott. Hillel Halkin states the case for this viewpoint concisely. What, he asks, should Israel do with the two million Arabs presently under its control: (1) expel them and face universal condemnation; (2) retain control, while granting them no political rights, and come to be viewed in the eyes of the vast majority of the world as an apartheid state; or (3) grant them political rights and sign the death warrant on Israel as a majority Jewish state?

The only alternative to each of these untenable scenarios, argues Halkin, is to

separate ourselves from them entirely on the best possible terms. Halkin and other security-minded supporters of the withdrawal place their faith in the belief that Prime Minister Sharon has worked out a deal with President Bush, and that the United States, at least as long as Bush is president, will countenance a very forceful Israeli response to Palestinian terror after withdrawal. As Sharon explained to *Yediot Acharonot* on the eve of withdrawal: "I've reached a deal with the Americans. I prefer a deal with the Americans to a deal with the Arabs."

The bottom line is that Israel continues to face major dangers whichever course it pursues. Peretz puts it succinctly. After predicting that Israel will soon be back in Gaza, he continues, "[Israelis] will be doomed to live dangerously. They can withdraw from Gush Katif and later from Ofra or Beit El, but they cannot withdraw from the world in which they live.... There will be no end to Israel's vigilant existence. With or without diplomatic progress, the country will live by its wits and by its nerves."

Not surprisingly, Peretz does not conclude by urging readers of *The New Republic* to turn to *Hashem* in prayer. But, as we contemplate the dangers surrounding the nearly five million Jewish citizens of Israel on all sides, we must recognize that just like our ancestors at the *Yam*, we have nowhere to turn other than towards our Father in Heaven.

And we should contemplate as well what we can do both as individuals and collectively to make ourselves more worthy of the Land. At the beginning of the Oslo process, one of the great *ba'alei hashkafa* of *Eretz Yisroel* said, "The problem is not that we are giving away the Land, but rather that *Hashem* is taking it."

That is even clearer today. Often times, Divine Providence manifests itself most clearly in the way that *Hashem* directs the hearts of leaders: "Like streams of water is the heart of a king in the hand of *Hashem*, wherever He wished, so He directs it" (*Mishlei* 21,1).

If today we witness the father of the Gaza settlement movement, a man who less than two years ago declared the Gaza settlement of Netzarim to be an eternal part of Israel, now leading the retreat from that same Netzarim, we can assume that we are being judged and found wanting.

The words of Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch haunt us. He writes: "From time to time in the course of the centuries, G-d allowed His people to touch the Land again. He put them to the test to see whether the miracle of their existence through centuries of exile had at last taught them to utterly despise the gods of the earth and had eradicated their stiff-necked refusal to acknowledge the Divine word."

One suspects that we are facing the same test today. □

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Abandoning Gaza: Losing a Part of Ourselves

A PERSPECTIVE ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GAZA
IN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY AND THE DIVINE IMPLICATIONS
OF THE DISENGAGEMENT

The Gaza Disengagement Plan – the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the Gaza Strip and the forced transfer of all Jewish communities there – begun this past August, has aroused deep emotions among Jews world-wide. There are opinions across the political spectrum ranging from seeing the withdrawal as a reward to terror which is only whetting an already too strong Palestinian appetite for violence and intimidation, to focusing on 9000 Jews living among more than one-and-a-half million Arabs and viewing their security as too taxing for

the Israeli army to maintain.

Whether one views the disengagement as a horrible, cowardly, mistaken retreat,... or as a painful but necessary concession to the facts on the ground,... or as the inevitable payoff for over-investing in Israel's military might, all Jews, especially Torah Jews, must acknowledge that leaving Gaza means cutting off a piece of *Eretz Yisroel* and giving it away.

We are not going to discuss here the halachic issue of giving up land for peace. Nor will we deliberate the Sharon disengagement plan itself from a Torah or even pragmatic perspective. But one thing should be clear. Relinquishing parts of *Eretz Yisroel* to non-Jewish control is never cause for celebration. As the Gaza disengagement plan takes place as scheduled, it is an event to mourn and a time to reflect upon *Klal Yisroel's* spiritual failings that led to the loss of Gaza.

Let us explain.

DIVINE SMILE

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (*Michtav MeiEliyahu* Vol. 3, p. 352) wrote the following in the late 1940s, after the State of Israel was established:

"The fact that we are presently in the Holy Land – it is difficult to classify these times as the beginning of the redemption (*as'chalta de'geula*); nevertheless, great kindnesses, taking us from one extreme to the other, have occurred. [We have gone] from the extreme of the suffering and destruction of six million of our brethren – *Hashem* should replace our losses – to the other extreme, the settlement of our nation in her country, the Holy Land. From all this, we must learn and internalize great faith into our hearts. Woe to anyone

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who comes to the great judgment day and remains blind to something as obvious as this.”

The reality of millions of Jews returning to *Eretz Yisroel* and the establishment of the State of Israel is a clear watershed event in Jewish history. The *Ribbono shel Olam* orchestrated a tremendous *chessed* for *Klal Yisroel* in creating the Jewish settlement of Israel after the Holocaust, says Rabbi Dessler, and we must not ignore His special *Hashgacha* in doing so¹. As the Brisker Rav² once told Rabbi Avraham

Wolf of Bnei Brak, the massive return of Jews to our land as the result of the establishment of the state of Israel was a Divine smile.

This Divine smile continued and was amplified with Israel’s victories in the 1967 war, when the *Ribbono shel Olam* granted us access to the *Kosel Hamaaravi*, *Me’aras Hamachpeila*, and *Kever Rachel*, as well as the conquest of additional land, including Gaza, which virtually doubled Israel’s size. As Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Klugman³ poignantly describes:

“The Six Day War ended on a Friday morning. The return of the *Kosel* and the *mekom Hamikdash* to Jewish hands for the first time since the destruction of the Temple sparked indescribable feelings of euphoria, and even the most sober person imagined that he could hear the footsteps of *Moshiach*. The Israeli army cleared the area in front of the *Kosel* and announced that on Shavuos night, four days after the conclusion of the war, the general public would be allowed to come and *daven* there. The rapture of any Jew lucky to be in Jerusalem for that *Yom Tov* defies description.

“In the Mirrer Yeshiva, shelled by Jordanian artillery less than a week before, the entire yeshiva and its neighbors spent Shavuos night learning in anticipation of the pre-dawn walk to the *Kosel*. In the middle of the learning, Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz זצ”ל (who was later to *daven* at the *Kosel* at least once a week), delivered a *shmuess*, in which he described the miracles and defined the tumultuous events of the previous week.”

¹Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky writes in *Emes LeYaakov* (*Shemos* 12,2, note 17): “We must understand that the State of Israel in our day – after the great destruction (in Europe), the despair of the survivors, and given the distressed and destroyed status of Russian Jewry – was established by G-d in order to strengthen Judaism and to maintain the link between all Jews in exile with the Jewish people.” See also Yonoson Rosenblum’s biography of Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz, pgs.331-332. When Rabbi Shraga Feivel heard of the U.N.’s decision to establish a Jewish state, he stood up and recited the *Hatov Vehameitiv* blessing. In 1948, after the Arabs attacked the newly-declared Jewish state and soldiers were falling on the battlefield, Reb Shraga Feivel had second thoughts about having recited the blessing. He turned to Rabbi Aharon Kotler, who agreed with him that the favorable U.N. resolution was indeed worthy of the blessing.

² See “A Divine Frown,” by Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Klugman, *The Jewish Observer*, Dec. ’98. For a similar quote from the Brisker Rav, see Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe’s *Bein Sheishes LeAsor*, p. 145.

³ “Whither Jerusalem,” *Jewish Observer*, Sep. ’00

⁴ Rabbi Klugman is credited for using this term as an offshoot of the Brisker Rav’s statement.

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DIVINE FROWN

Since the onset of the Oslo accords in 1993 and continuing through the Palestinian terror intifada of 2000 until today, the Divine smile described by the Brisker Rav has seemingly become a Divine frown⁴. As the first *Rashi* in *Bereishis* tells us, the Land of Israel's inhabitants are decided solely by *Hashem*. He can take it away from other nations of the world and give it to us, and, *Rachmana litzlan*, the opposite can occur as well.

If, presently, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* has deemed it fitting to remove parts of *Eretz Yisroel* from us through the Gaza disengagement plan, essentially unraveling some of the miracles of 1967, it can only be due to a spiritual shortfall within the Jewish People. We no longer merit the possession of a specific portion of *Eretz Yisroel*, and this is why Jews are being forced from Gaza. What might this spiritual deficit be?

Let us explore Gaza's spiritual essence as revealed in Torah sources, and see if we can possibly suggest a related spiritual area in which we may be lacking.

GAZA AS PART OF ERETZ YISROEL

The Torah is unequivocal regarding Gaza's position as within the boundaries of *Eretz Yisroel*. Beginning in *Parashas Noach*, Gaza is defined as part of the Land of Canaan (*Bereishis* 10,19). Later, Avraham is told that the Land of Canaan that *Hashem* will give him includes Gaza (see *Bereishis* 15,18-21). Still later, in *Parashas Maasei* (*Bamidbar* 34,1-12), when *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* delineates the boundaries of Israel to *Moshe Rabbeinu*, He clearly includes Gaza. This is further confirmed in *Tanach*.⁵

⁵ *Sefer Yehoshua* (15,47) lists Gaza and its vicinity as belonging to the tribe of Yehuda, and *Shoftim* (1,18) states that Yehuda conquered Gaza and inherited it. *Shlomo Hamelech* ruled over land which incorporated Gaza (*Melachim* I, 5,4), and much later, we are told that King Chizkiyahu (*Melachim* II 18,8) ruled over Gaza, as well.

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The *Tzitz Eliezer* (Vol. 7, 48:12) discusses whether Gaza is included in the boundaries of *Eretz Yisroel* and expresses surprise that anyone would have any doubts. He cites a Gemara (*Shabbos* 145b) where it is taken for granted that Gaza is part of *Eretz Yisroel*.⁶

The reader is also referred to Reish Lakish's comment in *Chullin* 60b, to the effect that not only is Gaza part of *Eretz Yisroel*, but *Hashem* orchestrated events so that *Klal Yisroel* could inherit it. Apparently, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* deems Gaza as a vital piece of *Eretz Yisroel*.

CONQUERING ERETZ YISROEL REQUIRES MASTERY OF TORAH

Now that we have established Gaza as part of *Eretz Yisroel*, let us begin to explore the specific spiritual concepts pertaining to Gaza.

"Kaleiv said, 'I will give Achsa, my daughter, for a wife to whoever attacks and conquers Kiryas Sefer.' Asniel ben Kenaz, brother of Kaleiv, captured it..." (*Yehoshua* 15,16-17).

Prior to this event, the *Navi* describes Kaleiv's might and mastery over all his foes. He conquers city after city, all inhabited by the *anakim* (giants). Why would Kaleiv suddenly have trouble conquering Kiryas Sefer? If he could decimate giants, what possibly could stand in his way?

The *Arvei Nachal*⁷ (*Parashas Shelach* 26b) explains that successfully conquering the Land of Israel does not depend on brute strength or military prowess. Rather, when *Hashem* created the world, the Torah served as His blueprint. As the *Zohar* says, "*Histakeil beOraisa uvara alma*." This means that every part of this earth was created through an aspect of Torah. To take complete and permanent possession over any land, one must first study, relate to, and master the portion of Torah that is specifically tied to that portion of land.

Although this concept is true generally about the entire world, *Eretz*

Yisroel is connected to the Torah with a much more powerful bond. The Torah in its highest form is meant to be observed only in Israel, making every inch of *Eretz Yisroel* securely tied to a specific section of Torah. One must master the appropriate section of Torah in order to conquer its corresponding part of *Eretz Yisroel*.

Kaleiv was able to master the parts of Torah related to the cities of the giants, but was unable to ascertain the Torah of Kiryas Sefer. This was because Kiryas Sefer's attachment to Torah involved the three hundred halachos that were forgotten in the days of mourning following *Moshe Rabbeinu's* passing (see *Rashi* in *Yehoshua* 15,15). Asniel was the only one able to reinstate these laws with his Torah genius and *pilpul*. Thus, only he could conquer Kiryas Sefer.

Every place and every city in *Eretz Yisroel* has its own unique sanctity and profound connection within the Torah⁸. This is why the twelve *Shevatim* lived in twelve distinct sections of *Eretz Yisroel*. Each tribe has its own particular area of Torah in which it excels, and therefore is meant to possess the portion of *Eretz Yisroel* that relates to that section of Torah⁹.

⁶ Rav Chiya bar Abba said to Rav Assi, "Why are the birds in *Bavel* fatter (than the ones in Israel)?" Rav Assi replied, "Come to the desert in Gaza, and I'll show you how fat they are!"

Rashi explains that the Gemara is clearly affirming Gaza's status as part of *Eretz Yisroel*. Therefore, says the *Tzitz Eliezer*, the halachos for *teruma*, *maaser*, *Shemitta* and all other agricultural mitzvos relate to Gaza. The atonement one gets for burial in Israel applies to Gaza, as well as the mitzvah of *yishuv Eretz Yisroel*, similar to any other part of Israel.

See also *Mizrachi's* commentary (*Bereishis* 26,12) on *Rashi*, relating to *Yitzchak Avinu*. After the *Ribbono shel Olam* tells *Yitzchak* while he is in Gerar, located at or near Gaza, that he is never to leave the Holy Land (*Bereishis* 26,2-3), *Yitzchak* decides to remain in Gerar. Apparently, Gerar and Gaza are parts of *Eretz Yisroel*. Although *Rashi* on 26,12 does say that Gerar is not as esteemed as other parts of *Eretz Yisroel*, it is *Eretz Yisroel* (*Mizrachi*). There are *poskim* who disagree concerning the obligation to fulfill the agricultural mitzvos in Gaza nowadays, but their opinion is based on the technical point of whether, when *Ezra Hasofer* returned to *Eretz Yisroel* to build the Second

GAZA'S DISTINCTIVE TORAH CONNECTION

Gaza is called "Aza" in *Lashon Hakodesh*. The word *Aza* comes from the root "oz," referring to boldness and strength in overcoming obstacles to spiritual growth. The Mishna says one should utilize *azus* and "be strong (*az*) as a leopard" in combating the *yeitzer hara* (*Avos* 5:23). The Gemara (*Beitza* 25b) comments that the Torah was given to *Klal Yisroel* because we are *azim*, steadfast and tough when facing spiritual adversity. As the *Ralbag* (*Mishlei* 31,25) says, *az* indicates an ability to tame one's physical desires and employ them for spirituality.

The *Maharal* (*Baba Basra* 91a) explains that the trait of *az* is a vital component in establishing the kingdom of *Yisroel*. This is why Boaz is the fore-runner of *David Hamelech*, as in "*bo-az* - within him is the attribute of *az*." A king of *Yisroel* is obligated to use the *midda* of *az* as a spiritual balance for the wealth, beauty, honor and royalty - all material components - that he possesses. The *melech* is to be the prototype for appropriate use of physicality and the *yeitzer hara*. Rabbi Moshe Eisemann writes¹⁰ (based on many

Bayis, he reconsecrated Gaza. Everyone agrees, though, that Gaza is part of the *Eretz Yisroel* described in *Tanach*.

⁷ Cited in Rabbi Reuven Drucker's commentary to *Yehoshua* (ArtScroll). See also Rabbi Abba Tzvi Naiman's *Landscapes of the Spirit* (Targum/Feldheim), page 12, where the *Arizal*, *Maharal*, and *Chessed LeAvraham* are mentioned as stating this concept. Rabbi Naiman's remarkable book aims at determining the unique spiritual nature of various cities in *Eretz Yisroel*.

⁸ See *Sefas Emes*, *Korach*, 5647, *Rav Tzaddok Hakohein's Resizei Laila*, Os 39; *Sefer Chein Makom*, pgs. 19-20; and *Maharal on Gittin* 7a.

⁹ See *Rav Tzaddok Hakohein, Likutei Maamarim*, pgs. 117-118.

¹⁰ *A Pearl in the Sand*, Essays on Shavuot and Rus, page 71.

¹¹ *Oz* can sometimes indicate an inappropriate brazenness when a person goes against normal spiritual boundaries, acting sinfully with *chutzpa* and a lack of shame. The very next *Mishna* after "be strong (*az*) like a leopard" in *Avos* (5:24) states, "a brazen person (*azus pannim*) goes to *Geihinom!*" In addition, *Bnei Yisroel* is defined as an "*am keshei oref*, a stubborn, stiff-necked nation" (*Shemos* 32,9).

sources) that *az* refers to the "ability to generate an imposed peace, to take disparate elements and meld them into a harmonious whole." In our case, *az* is the ability to meld the material and spiritual aspects of life into one whole of *avodas Hashem*¹¹.

Thus, the Land of Aza would appear to be a place that offers tremendous potential to overcome the *yeitzer hara* and utilize it for the service of *Hashem*. We are meant to serve *Hashem*, as *Chazal* say (*Berachos* 54a), "*bishnei yitzarecha* – with both your good and evil inclinations." We are bidden to utilize our lusts and passions for physical pleasure to advance ourselves within the realm of Torah. We do not subscribe to a monastic or ascetic philosophy. We marry, eat, and experience the world in order to uplift and sanctify the earth¹².

But Aza would also be an area that presents severe, strong, and stubborn spiritual challenges to *Klal Yisroel*, including the consistent inability to permanently conquer and dwell in this land of the *Pelishtim* throughout history. This was and is due to the fact that we became spiritually deficient in overemphasizing the *gashmiyus* aspect in our lives¹³.

Like most things in life, the trait of *azus* is intrinsically neither good nor bad. It all depends on how and when it is applied. But if used in the proper balance, *azus* can lead to greatness.

¹² Gaza is located in the southwest corner of *Eretz Yisroel*. In Kabbalistic thought, the southern direction, *darom*, refers to the *midda* of *chesed* (kindness – see *Kedushas Levi*, *Parashas Lech Lecha* 12:9 and *Pri Tzaddik Bamidbar* 2 and *Nasso* 2) and *ma'arav*, the western direction, refers to the attribute of *gevura* (strength). Gaza is the place where we must find the proper equilibrium between *chesed* and *gevura*, and synthesize the *yeitzer hara* with the *yeitzer hatov*, *gashmiyus* with *ruchniyus*. The *Noam Elimelech*, *Parshas Devarim* (1:37) describes Gaza as a place to be *mantik din*, to sweeten and balance judgment with kindness. In addition, we also know that the *Shechina* dwells in the west (*Mishna Berurah* 3:10) and that wisdom is found in the south (*Baba Basra* 25a). Gaza, then, is an area where one can find the qualities of sublime intellect to endow all of one's physical actions with a heavenly and spiritual intent, *lesheim Shamayim*. See also *Pachad Yitzchak* (*Pesach, Muamar* 54), where Rabbi Hutner explains that the south represents *chesed*, the north relates to *gevura*, and the west is *tifferes*, the melding of *chesed* and *gevura*.

GAZA AND US

We are neither prophets nor sons of prophets. We cannot claim to know which of our shortcomings is responsible for the loss of Gaza. But this painful loss can, nonetheless, remind us of our needs for improvement in respect of those aspects of *avodas Hashem* that we have seen to be associated uniquely with Gaza. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 231) devotes an entire *siman* to instructing us on how to make every single physical act

a service for *Hashem*. The *siman* is entitled, "*Shekol Kavanosav Yiheyu Lesheim Shamayim* – All One's Intentions Should Be for Heaven." An excerpt follows:

"One's worldly pleasures should not be experienced with physical enjoyment as the goal; rather, the intent should be to serve *Hashem*... even eating, drinking, walking, sitting, standing, conjugal relations, talking, and all physical needs should be done for the sake of Heaven."

The *Shulchan Aruch* continues to explain that our intentions when

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engaging in the physical realm should be to maintain our health and to enjoy Hashem's world in order to enable us to serve Him. Life lived in this way allows a person to be in constant service of Hashem. In this vein, the Mishna Berurah there cites the Chayei Adam who says that it is a good practice for a person to state aloud before he eats that he is doing so in order to be healthy and strong to serve Hashem.

Consequently, we should perhaps endeavor to have more Heavenly thoughts when we partake of the physical pleasures of this world. We can try to fill our days with the Shulchan Aruch's directives (Siman 231) and even occasionally recite¹⁴ the statement of kavana lesheim Shamayim mentioned by the Chayei Adam, before we eat, drink, or sleep. At the very least, we can try to improve our kavana when we recite berachos, which are expressions of gratitude to the Ribbono shel Olam for giving us numerous pleasures.

SPECIAL CHARGE FOR OUR GENERATION

The Chozeh of Lublin commented on the passuk in "Eishes Chayil" (Mishlei 31,15), "Vatakam be'od laila vatitein terref leveisa vechok lenaarseha - She rises while

it is still night, and gives food to her household, and a portion to her maidens." In the era before Moshiach, the Ribbono shel Olam is going to give Klal Yisroel a tremendous amount of material wealth. While we are still in the night of exile, "be'od laila," yet within striking distance of morning and redemption, we will have an abundance of wealth, luxuries and food - terref - as never before in our history. The challenge, said the Chozeh, will be how we utilize this gashmiyus, and whether we will relate to it lesheim Shamayim.

While poverty is no stranger to our community, by and large, the galus we Jews - especially in the Gola - are experiencing now conforms with the Chozeh's prediction. The questions we must ask ourselves relate to how well we are confronting the difficult spiritual demands of our era. Are we showing our appreciation to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for the earthly bounty we have been granted, or are we indulging for indulgence's sake? Are we employing the many time-saving devices we possess to utilize our time to the spiritual maximum, or are we using it to find new gashmiyus-based pleasures? Are we giving enough tzeddaka, based on our financial means, or are we using our monetary gains for another expensive family vacation?

We must always remember this

sobering statement of the Sefer Hachinuch¹⁵:

"Whoever runs after earthly desires without any good intent... only to magnify intense pleasures for himself, is in violation of 'You should not stray after your eyes' (Lo sasuru acharei eineichem)."

As we depart from Gaza, we are cutting off part of who we are; it hurts tremendously to have a limb amputated. Perhaps this pain can inspire us towards regaining our complete spiritual identity. Surely, this will strengthen Klal Yisroel's stronghold on all of Eretz Yisroel. ☐

¹³ Much concerning Shimshon and his relationship to Aza relates to our topic. Chazal (Sota 9b) say that Shimshon's problems began in Gaza and that is why he received his punishment there. Ultimately, Shimshon's rise and fall involved the positive development of the yeitzer hara and its overextension. This is why Shimshon comes from Sheivet Dan, who dwells in the north (tzafon). One of the names of the yeitzer hara is "tzafun," meaning hidden (see Sukka 52b), associated with tzafon. Shimshon's goal was to employ the yeitzer hara for positive, spiritual use, thereby transforming its power into yeitzer hatov energy. He went south in Gaza to access this yeitzer hatov; if the north connects to the yeitzer hara, the south is linked with the yeitzer hatov. See Rav Tzaddok in Yisroel Kedoshim, pgs. 31-32. See also Michtav MeiEliyahu, Vol. 2, p. 269 and the sefer Shivtei Yisroel, pgs. 309-313, by Rabbi Fishel Mael of Baltimore.

¹⁴ Rabbi Yisroel Reisman mentioned in a lecture that there was a difference of opinion between Rabbi Avigdor Miller and Rabbi Avraham Pam concerning whether one should say before eating that he is eating lesheim Shamayim. Rabbi Pam held that we must be honest with ourselves, and we cannot say that we are eating with Heavenly intent when it most likely isn't true. Rabbi Miller contended that it is still worthwhile to recite that we are eating for Heaven's sake because, even if it is not presently true, it keeps us conscious of such a goal, and one day we just might attain it. Rabbi Reisman suggested a compromise in which one would say before eating, "I know that I should be eating lesheim Shamayim."

¹⁵ This is the Chofetz Chaim's summary of the Chinuch. See the second Biur Halacha in Shulchan Aruch.

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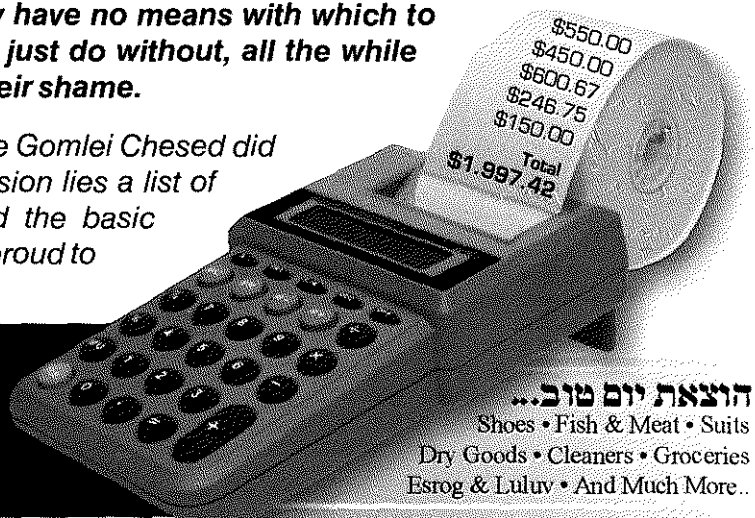
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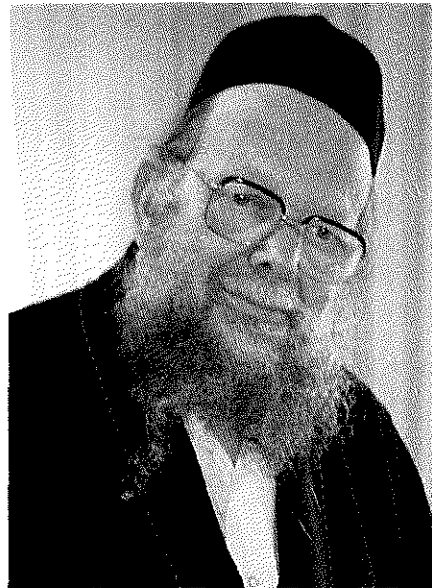


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An era of *Mussar* dating back to pre-War Europe came to an end with the passing of the *Mashgiach* Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe ז"ר in *Yerushalayim* this past 17 Nissan (April 26). In the pages that follow, we are presenting several articles that recount his impact on our generation from the perspectives of a *talmid*, a dedicated student of his classic work, *Alei Shur*, and a member of his family.

RABBI YEHUDA MENDELSON



The Inner Dimension

“Do not eulogize me in any fashion or in any place! Know that words of eulogy will cause me to have a harsher judgment in the True World!” (from his ethical will)

The above words limit us in our attempt to describe something of the essence of *Moreinu Hamashgiach*, Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe ז"ר. Indeed, a true student of the *Mashgiach* ז"ר would intuitively agree that there is little point in talking *about* him. Rather, he would ask himself: “What have I learned *from* him?” Therefore, it would be preferable to reflect on his unique life and his influence on our generation through his own words – all of which emanat-

RABBI MENDELSON SERVES AS THE MENAHEL OF THE C.M. LEHMANN BEIS HAMUSSAR IN YERUSHALAYIM, AS WELL AS MENAHEL RUCHANI OF YEHIVAS MISHKENOS YEDIDYA (YESHIVAS GIVAT SHAUL), BOTH FOUNDED BY RABBI S. WOLBE.

ed from his personal *avodas Hashem*.

Once, when speaking to a group of former *talmidim*, he asked them: “What, in essence, did you learn in yeshiva?” After hearing their thoughts, he sealed the debate: “What we learned is that *ruchniyus* (spirituality) is a reality – indeed, the essential reality!”

The mathematicians tell us that even though our physical world consists of only three dimensions, it is possible to construct multi-dimensional worlds with different laws of nature which are beyond our intuitive grasp. Similarly, through the *Mashgiach*, we came to recognize and actualize an unknown dimension: our own *penimiyus* – the inner existence of man, which naturally senses and lives in the inner spiritual world of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

“Man discovers within himself new depths and heights of which he was unaware and which now become his place of spiritual resi-

dence. He now sees the depths of Torah, of our wondrous world, and wishes to live a deep and elevated life. He has become a different man, revealing a new inner dimension, and his Torah and *penimiyus* merge within this dimension.” (*Alei Shur*, preface)

בדרך שאדם רוצה לילך מוליכין אותו “One is helped from Above to move forward on the path he has chosen.” It should be noted that the *Mashgiach* ז"ר merited many acts of Divine Providence in all of the stages of his life, and while we cannot give details, it is clear that his sincere dedication and desire to uncover the inner world of Torah and *penimiyus* were assisted by the Almighty.

Let us briefly trace his life’s journey, highlighting the tests and travails that he encountered in his tireless search for the “inner dimension” that became the focus of his life and inspiration to so many others.

IN THE BEGINNING

From early childhood, an inner longing for spirituality began to develop. He was wont to walk the streets of his birthplace, Berlin, and wonder: "Who created all of this?" Like many German Jews in the early 20th century, his family was distant from *Yiddishkeit*, but he quickly found his path to the Almighty, and was yearning for a deeper connection to Torah and mitzvos by his bar mitzva.

He soon moved on to the Frankfurt Yeshiva, headed by Rabbi Yitzchak Breuer זצ"ל, whom he considered one of his important *rabbe'im* and often praised. Two years later, he moved on to the yeshiva in Montreux, Switzerland.

It should be noted that every step forward was accompanied with resistance and incomprehension from his home. But he persevered successfully. As he wrote to a youth many decades later:

"Know, dear..., that children will always win over their parents if their will and resolution are strong. But never, G-d forbid, battle parents with *chutzpa*, rather with pleasantness and respect. It has never happened that a parent who sees that his son has carefully and thoughtfully chosen his future path will refuse to acquiesce to his choice."

TURNING POINT

A *shmuess* by a Novaradoker passing through Montreux brought the *Mashgiach* to the Mir Yeshiva. A visiting Mirrer *bachur*, Yaakov Dovid Cohen ז"ל, saw that Shlomo Wolbe was a "*shomei'a*," had a "listening ear," and that he was deeply affected by the *shmuess*. Recognizing that "Wolbe" was material for the Mir, he urged him to study there and learn under the Mirrer *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz זצ"ל, the towering *mussar* figure. "Imagine," said Yaakov Dovid, "the greatest physical pleasures – for example, having an ice cream or cold drink on a hot summer day, or walking through a beautiful, quiet landscape. None of these

compares to the pure physical pleasure of Reb Yerucham's *shmuessen!*"

And so the "Berliner" headed for the backwater called Mir.

His coming to Mir was the pivotal point in his life. The Mir Yeshiva had 400 students, each great in Torah. The *Mashgiach* said that 100 of them were *already* great *roshei yeshiva!* This is his description of this period in his preface to *Alei Shur*.

"The author of this book – while still a youth – was carried by a great whirlwind into the presence of that great among giants, *Admor*, the light of our eyes, reviver of the dead with his lessons, *Rabbeinu Yerucham HaLevi Levovitz* זצ"ל, at the holy Mirrer Yeshiva. The author was small when he came, and small he remained, never attaining the status of *Admor's* students, true *geonim*. But even he was *transformed*, and personally experienced the life-giving dew of the Torah and the life of a true 'man.' From then on, he has continually strived to rejuvenate the uplifting emotions of awe, joy, and inner holy enthusiasm that he experienced in *Admor's* presence, and with his great students."

He never left his *Rav's* presence, delving further into his Torah, and transmitting it to a new generation through public study of his works, private classes of unpublished works, and his classic study of Reb Yerucham's life and thought, *Ha'adam Bikar*, which the title page tells us was written "by one not fit to be called his disciple."

Anyone familiar with Reb Yerucham's thought who carefully delves into *Alei Shur* will see that it is mainly based on the *rebbe's derech*, tailored to a new generation of students. A great scholar related to me that in his youth, he did not truly grasp the lectures of the Ponevezh *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Dovid Povarsky זצ"ל, one of Reb Yerucham's greatest *talmidim*, and he was better able to understand only after a period of hearing and digesting the *Mashgiach's shmuessen*.

Thus, he became the bridge for articulating the deep internal spirituality of

a previous era to *bnei Torah* that only one or two generations later were surrounded by materialism and hedonism.

THE SWEDISH CRUCIBLE

The gathering storm of World War II swept him to neutral Sweden, then dominated by an antagonistic Reform establishment and boasting only a handful of *shomrei mitzvos*. There were no yeshiva scholars in Sweden at that time, and it was a far cry from the atmosphere of Mir. The *Mashgiach* was 24 years old and alone.

Upon arrival, even before finding lodgings, he rented a room and put up a sign which declared: "*Beis Hamussar* – Institute for Jewish Studies." This became his *beis midrash*. *Mussar* was the internal compass – to keep the spiritual "north" in all of life's various challenges – not to lose direction while developing new capabilities. He often publicly declared: "The environment in Sweden destroyed even *ehrliche rabbanim*. If I had not learned *mussar* there every day, I would not be standing here today."

It is amazing that these eight years of forced solitude became a great spiritual asset, deepening his *penimiyus* and powers of thought. He once related that he committed to writing a certain *shmuess* of Reb Yerucham when he felt he understood it, six years after hearing it.

Divine Providence placed him in the position to save lives through neutral Sweden, where he worked tirelessly throughout the war as a conduit to funnel funds from the American Vaad ha-Hatzala to refugees in Europe, Russia and China. At the War's end, thousands of sick and downtrodden camp survivors reached Sweden. The *Mashgiach* spent days and nights aiding and encouraging them, and for many, he was the first religious Jew they had met in six years. These efforts culminated in the establishment by Rabbi Wolbe, together with Rabbi Wolf Jacobson and his Rebbetzin, of the famous Lidinga Girls School.

One year, he spent Rosh Hashana, with 400 deathly ill patients at a tuberculosis sanatorium. This, he said, was his

greatest Rosh Hashana. This is testimony of how, even when faced with extremely difficult circumstances, a strong living *penimiyus* brings a person even closer to the *Ribbono shel Olam*.

The years in Sweden formed the basis for developing the *Mashgiach's midda* of *נשא בעל עם חברו*, bearing another's burden, and for his acute sense of the various needs of *Klal Yisroel*, and the responsibility to fulfill them. This would become a major theme in his teaching and is the basis of the fourth section of *Alei Shur*.

ERETZ YISROEL

Upon arriving in *Eretz Yisroel* in 1947, he returned to his beloved studies at the Lomza Yeshiva, which, in those years, was home to the greatest European scholars. After a short time, he married his *rebbetzin* *רח"י*, the daughter of Rabbi Avraham Grodzinsky *זצ"ל*, the last *Mashgiach* of the Slabodka Yeshiva.

In the year 1949, upon the advice of the *Chazon Ish*, with whom he was very close, he opened Yeshivas Be'er Yaakov.

Together with the *Gaon* Rabbi Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, they headed the *yeshiva* for over thirty years. The first years were extremely difficult, and the *yeshiva* and its families suffered from dire poverty. The fruits of their labor, however, were great, and the *yeshiva* transformed hundreds of *bachurim* into great *talmidei chachamim* and *yerei Shamayim* dedicated to the needs of *Klal Yisroel*.

It is hard to describe the special atmosphere of tranquility, peace of mind, and total immersion in spiritual striving that prevailed at Yeshivas Be'er Yaakov. *Bachurim* came from out of town (no small feat in those days) to hear the *shmuessen*, many coming for the whole month of Elul to seek the "inner dimension," which was especially palpable in the *yeshiva*.

During these years, while the *Mashgiach* became a famous educator and mentor, he remained a "student," always seeking to serve *talmidei chachamim*. Even while remaining an active disciple of Reb Yerucham, he became close and sought the advice of the *Chazon Ish*, the *Brisker Rav*, Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian, the *Steipler*, and *Rav Shach*, and actively studied under Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein, Rabbi E.E. Dessler, the *Rebbe* of *Ozorov*, Rabbi Yoel Klufit, and Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner *זצ"ל*. Until his last years, the *Mashgiach* continued to learn from and seek counsel from great

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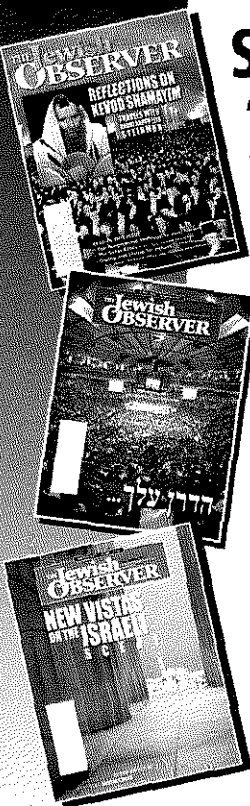
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talmidei chachamim.

Indeed, he used to say that those who study *mussar* remain "young," not resting on their laurels, but continually recognizing the new challenges, new opportunities, and new responsibilities of their changing lives.

ALEI SHUR

The work with his students in the early years gave birth to the classic *Alei Shur*, which was thirteen years in the writing. The book is a "guide for those wishing to enter the world of Torah and elevate themselves," by endeavoring to give a portrait of "the man of Torah.... Join me, dear friend.... Let us study the periods of his life and his *avoda* which are described in this *sefer*" (preface).

Though published anonymously in 1966, the author quickly became well known. The clarity and depth of exposition of Torah principles, dissection of *middos*, and paths of *avoda* have made *Alei Shur* the guide book for serious yeshiva students and *yungeleit* seeking to discover the inner dimension of Torah and mitzvos. Though never sold commercially, tens of thousands of copies have been bought by those thirsty for guidance.¹

CHINUCH

The *Mashgiach* was first and foremost a *mechaneich* (pedagogue). He believed in the power of *chinuch*. *Chinuch* is not just for children, but a way of life for one who strives for perfection. The *Alter* of Kelm understood the famous dictum: תנוך לער על פי דרכו as follows – Educate the youth according to his way, then, even when mature, he will continue to educate himself." Thus, *chinuch* is a process which the *Mashgiach* described as "planting and building" the *mentsch*. (See – *Planting and Building*, Feldheim, Ch. 1, and *Alei Shur* Vol. II, p. 338.)

A young *mashgiach* once asked him what he should teach his students. The

Mashgiach answered: "You can only influence your students through what influenced you when you were young!" Similarly, he believed that one could influence young people only if he remembered his own youthful difficulties!

Throughout his life, he was a major catalyst in many areas of Torah education. Together with his colleague, the Slonimer Rebbe זצ"ל, he was an active

THE WORLD OF TESHUVA

The *Mashgiach* was one of the "fathers" of the Israeli *teshuva* movement. He sensed the change in atmosphere in the wake of the Six Day War that opened new possibilities of reaching estranged hearts. He traveled to army bases, kibbutzim, and secular academic institutions to deliver thought-provoking lectures

HE SAW THE NEED FOR SPECIAL YESHIVOS FOR BAALEI TESHUVA WHEN THERE WAS BUT A TRICKLE OF RETURNEES. WHEN QUERIED ABOUT THIS, HE SAID: "YOU SEE ONLY A FEW, BUT I SEE THOUSANDS. PERHAPS TODAY THEY ARE STILL IN INDIA, BUT SOON YOU WILL ALSO SEE THEM!"

member of Chinuch Atzmai's *Vaad Ruchani* (Spiritual Advisory Board), guiding it in its early stages. He organized regular conferences for yeshiva *mashgichim* to refresh their commitment and discuss critical current issues and trials that yeshiva students face. According to the *Mashgiach*, the true *yarei Shamayim* cannot bury his head in the sand and hope for the best! Rather, he must find the תורה תבלין, the proper "Torah antidote" that is appropriate for his time and place.

Principals, teachers, *mashgichim*, counselors – all came to receive a clear Torah view on today's questions and issues. *Moreinu* Rabbi Elyashiv שליט"א directed inquiries concerning *chinuch* to "Harav Wolbe." Individuals with doubts about major decisions or crushing personal problems knew his address. For those too far away, he wrote thousands of carefully crafted letters, many in response to *bachurim* who needed personal guidance or *chizuk*.

on *emuna*, which had a wide influence.²

He was an advisor to the pioneers in this field and saw the need for special yeshivos for *baalei teshuva* when there was but a trickle of returnees. When queried about this, he said: "You see only a few, but I see thousands. Perhaps today they are still in India, but soon you will also see them!" In addition, he dedicated many hours to the thorny issues of *baalei teshuva's* integration into the mainstream of *frum* society, as well as other unique issues facing returnees (many of which are discussed in the work of a

¹ The *Mashgiach's* other published works were meant to address perceived needs for guidance on today's important and difficult issues. Such was the *Hadracha for Chassanim*, which broke new ground, *Or Lashav* for *baalei teshuva*, and *Planting and Building* for parents. These are not handbooks; rather, they clarify the important issues that face us and provide road signs for our own personal growth.

² These were subsequently published in *Olam Hayedidus*.

talmid, לדעת בארץ דרך).

The *Mashgiach* spoke many times, especially in the *Beis Hamussar*, about the obligation of every Jew to dedicate time to *kiruv*. He was the "living spirit" of Lev L'Achim's program to send out *avreichim* one night a week for this purpose, and he regularly attended their conferences, even at a very advanced age, in order to spread this message.

THE MUSSAR IMPERATIVE

Retiring from Be'er Yaakov in 1982, he moved to Givat Shaul in *Yerushalayim*. He was already saying regular *shmuessen* in the Mir Yeshiva, and soon after his arrival, he gave weekly *shmuessen* in Yeshivas Kol Torah. He continued these talks for over twenty years.

But his main objective was to

open a *Beis Hamussar* dedicated to spreading mussar education and awareness to a wide audience. "*Vaadim*," *shiurim* on *Chumash* and *mussar* and *hashkafa* classics, and *mussar* study highlighted and actualized unfortunately neglected areas of *avodas Hashem* such as *tefilla*, *middos*, *yiras Shamayim*, and *בין אדם לחברו* (interpersonal relations). The *Mashgiach* used to say: "You have come to *Beis Hamussar* to hear things that otherwise would not be discussed."


Hundreds felt important changes in their lives through *mussar* study at the *Beis Hamussar*. *Mussar*, indeed, is about *change*: changing long-held perspectives and entrenched priorities in an ongoing fashion. The ability to change is the hallmark of a *baal mussar* – he is free of the chains of habitual performance.

The *Mashgiach* often commented that he failed to understand how *tefilla* could become rote. A person is always changing, as does his relationship with the *Ribbono shel Olam*. Hence, no two *tefillas* are alike. He once told a student that he avoided *Mincha Ketana* because of its proximity to *Maariv*. What would be new in the second *tefilla* right after the first?

At the age of 80, he still felt new obligations, and decided to open a yeshiva – Yeshivas Givat Shaul (now renamed *Mishkenos Yedidya* in his memory: "Yedidya" = Shlomo, see *Menachos* 53a) to renew his connection with a new, young generation, and to educate them towards an elevated Torah life. For over ten years, he worked tirelessly with *bachurim* to find for themselves, through Torah, *tefilla* and *mussar*, their inner dimension.


What defines a great man? A great man brings out the greatness of those in his proximity. This was true of the *Mashgiach* זצ"ל. His *petira* brings to an end an era of *mussar*, but has also sparked a renewed interest in *mussar* study throughout *Eretz Yisroel*. Just as a wave lifts up the water in concentric rings, so his influence continues to spread through *Klal Yisroel*.

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רבים מאבונים לשע הבטוח בשם חסד יסובגו
 “Many are the agonies of the wicked, but as for one who trusts in *Hashem*, kindness surrounds him” (*Tehillim* 32, 10).

At a question and answer session for *mechanchim* (Torah educators), the *Mashgiach* of Be'er Yaakov, Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe ז"ל, was asked: “What does one tell a child who asks, ‘Why do young adults and children die from illness or accidents?’” To my recollection, the *Mashgiach* paused for a moment and said: “And what does one tell an adult?”

The *Mashgiach* paused again, and then said: “The question is based on the mistaken perception that the purpose of life is to experience worldly pleasures.” The *Mashgiach* paused yet again, and then concluded: “The *Mashgiach* of Mir, Reb Yerucham Levovitz ז"ל, commented as follows on Iyov's words of **השם נתן והשם לקח**—“*Hashem* gave and *Hashem* took away.” Before one can ask, “Why did *Hashem* take away?” he must first ask regarding the first part of the *passuk*, “Why did *Hashem* give?” For there is never any taking away without a giving that precedes it.”

How priceless and timeless was his response! Priceless, in the richness of content. In a few short moments, he reached into the world of both the adult and the child, teaching us how to assess life, the purpose of life, and demonstrating the prevalence of goodness and the secondary position of suffering. He taught us not only gratitude, but gratitude in the face of pain. Not only that *Hashem* is “there,” but how to live with a penetratingly conscious sense of His kindness to us.

And timeless, as decades later, I find deep solace and strength in recalling the *Mashgiach's* saying those words. The *Mashgiach's* presence and active giving in our generation were nothing less than a monumental gift from *Hashem* that will live on in our hearts and lives long after the *Mashgiach* has been physically removed from us. We, as receivers of his books, his oratory, his letters, his personal guidance, his companionship in all situations, are truly grateful.

מכל מלמדי השכלתי

“From all my teachers I grew wise” (*Tehillim* 119,99).

On a visit to the United States, the *Mashgiach* asked the Be'er Yaakov alumni gathered: “Of all the lessons learned in Be'er Yaakov, which would you say is the most basic and important?”

He went around the room and listened carefully to each person's response, but none of the answers satisfied him. Finally, he revealed to those present what he was searching for: the cultivating of the quality of “*hislamdus*” (self-teaching).^{*}

When the story was told over to me by one of those present, I felt devastated. Having never learned at Be'er Yaakov, my *kesher* (bond) with the *Mashgiach* was primarily through his *sefer Alei Shur*. The chapter on “*hislamdus*” had been difficult and abstract to me, and I did not understand it. I felt like I was

^{*} Related to the word “*hislamdus*” (self-teaching), as explained on this page.

missing something very important. I wanted so much to learn how to be a “*mislameid*.” Little did I know that in the very process of “yearning to learn,” I was already a “*mislameid*,” and that through the yearning would come the learning.

האוחזי יד ימין

“Your right hand has grasped me.”

What separates *Alei Shur* from other *sefarim*? Most *sefarim*, as compilations of Torah *chiddushim*, are not written to the reader, but rather for the reader to process alone. *Alei Shur* is a hand outstretched: “Come with me, my dear reader, as I take you to an exciting place of growth, of realization, of destiny. And throughout our journey, I am with you, talking to you!” When, as a youngster of eighteen, I sensed the *Mashgiach's* hand outstretched between the lines on the pages, I took hold of that hand. Since that time, I have never let go. And, by the grace of *Hashem*, neither has he.

לולא תודוך שעשועי או אבדותי בעמי

“Had Your Torah not been my preoccupation, then I would have perished in my afflictions” (*Tehillim* 119, 92).

But what a surprise awaited me: the very first chapter, which deals with Torah study!

“Torah precedes *mussar*! Torah is life! The study of Torah is not pursuit of pleasure, but rather the critical oxygen of the spirit, without which there is no life! The study of Torah cannot be built on enjoyment

alone, but on the crisis of survival itself, regardless of whether it is easy or difficult!”

This was not a coddling hand-holding. This was a true father, preparing his child lovingly, but firmly, for the reality of life itself: There can be no expect-

tation of spiritual pleasure without the prerequisite of התורה בתורה – a Torah directive: I *must* learn because it is my life!

Contrast this lesson with those who use the *Mashgiach* מ"ד as a “modern” rabbinic source that prohibits a parent or teacher from striking a child. As crucial

as not striking is in our generation, it still remains on the outer periphery. A child swamped in present-day parental love, never struck, always cared for, may still find himself woefully unprepared for the reality of life. For he doesn't know that he must reach beyond immediate comfort and pleasure; indeed, he doesn't know *how* to stretch out his hand. The *Mashgiach* מ"ד, as a *true* father figure, carries us far beyond merely not striking: “The realm of *true* pleasure is reached only through the passport of ‘I must study Torah!’ The pleasure *follows*, but it cannot be an end in itself! The goal is life itself!”

Such was the hand outstretched in the very first chapter of *Alei Shur*!

החזק במוסר אל תתן נצודה כי היא חייק
 “Hold fast to discipline, do not let go. Guard it, for it is your life” (*Mishlei* 4,13).

Perhaps no other topic is laid out so clearly in *Alei Shur* as is the study of *mussar*. Studying *mussar* incorrectly is potentially outright destructive. Walking away from a *mussar* session feeling depressed means I'm doing it wrong. Beating up on myself for my faults and my sins is not learning *mussar* at all. I may need to spend years becoming aware of my positive strengths before I even *have* the tools to begin to correct my shortcomings. There exists no hope quite like the hope of discovering self-strength, and no joy quite like the joy of utilizing that strength to improve myself.

Even as I learn to know and accept myself as I am, I must be in a constantly changing mode, modifying, adjusting, refining. Sameness is worse than mediocrity; it is the ultimate dropping-out-of-life itself. And the most difficult pill to swallow: basic *mentschlichkeit* precedes *mussar*. If I struggle with outbursts of temper, if my impulses repeatedly lead me to say or do hurtful things, if I react easily without thinking, I cannot call myself a “*baal mussar*.” I must first become a *mentsch*!

Now, I was not only not a *talmid*, I was not even a *baal mussar*. What was I? A struggling human being who need-

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ed to acknowledge reliance on *Hashem* and on a *mashgiach* to find the next step, to learn how to live just today, and just a little better than yesterday. To learn how. A *mislameid*!

... כי אלה

"Although I walk [in the valley...]" (*Tehillim* 23,4).

So many other lifelines in *Alei Shur*. On *davening*, on being a friend, on faith, on kindness, on fear, on empathy – each chapter a veritable wellspring, a source of life. But now with the *petira* (passing) of the *Mashgiach* ז"ל, I needed to pass through all those chapters, and go all the way to the chapter on death itself. For the *Mashgiach* prepared us for every situation, teaching us how to approach it, and how to utilize our personal destiny within the challenge. And in the finality of his writings on death, his gift of serenity was truly revealed!

Hundreds of times during his life did I read the letter a father writes to his children to comfort them that he is no longer there. All of us had a sense who the father writing the letter really was. Indeed, all of us had a sense that our very relationship with the *Mashgiach* was being defined to us in sweeping finality: we were his children!

But few of us were prepared for the exercise he assigns the bereaved: to replace the departed with someone else, thus finding comfort and solace. How can one replace his irreplaceable wisdom, love, sincerity and shining countenance? Yet, he challenges us in the letter, hinting to us that if we truly received what he has given us over the years, we will find the means to fill in the void today.

And then something inside of me begins to understand and to be grateful: I am the source of my own comfort! I have been transformed. I have been humbled. I have become a person endowed with strength, with the capacity to improve and to change. I have become a person who can reach out and extend my hand to others, to love others as he loved me. I begin to be comforted!

An Encounter with Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe ז"ל

DR. MEIR WIKLER

Approximately twenty years ago, during a trip to *Eretz Yisroel*, I visited the Lakewood East Yeshiva in *Yerushalayim*, hoping to meet Rabbi Wolbe ז"ל. I was directed to the front of the *beis midrash*, where I found him hunched over a *sefer*.

"May I ask the *Mashgiach* a question in *hashkafa*?" I asked gingerly, not knowing what to expect.

Rabbi Wolbe looked up and smiled broadly, which put me at ease immediately. "I don't know if I can answer it for you," he replied with a twinkle in his eye, "but you may feel free to ask." Then he rose and escorted me out into the hallway to afford me more privacy.

"I am a psychotherapist," I began, "and I fully understand and believe that all *refuos* come from *Hashem*. Sometimes, however, if I make an especially insightful interpretation or effective intervention during a counseling session, I find it difficult to suppress a feeling of pride that wells up inside of me. Intellectually, I know that I deserve no credit for my work. At such moments, however, I am unable

to maintain the proper feelings of *anivus* (humility)."

Rabbi Wolbe waited patiently until I had finished speaking. He nodded slowly with his head bent and a serious expression on his face, as if he was weighing every word he was about to say.

"I'm very sorry," he said softly. "I'm afraid I really cannot help you with that... You see, I find that I have the same problem, myself."

Rabbi Wolbe then went on to share with me that he had studied psychology with Piaget in France. At times, when counseling a *bachur* in yeshiva, he would use some psychological approach, technique or insight, which usually had the desired result. At those times, he disclosed to me, he encountered the same personal challenge I had presented to him.

Rabbi Wolbe said he could not help me. As a result of that short exchange, however, his *anivus* and *ahavas Yisroel* inspire me to this day.

DR. MEIR WIKLER, PSYCHOTHERAPIST AND FAMILY COUNSELOR, LIVES IN BROOKLYN, NY. HE IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES.

לבוש אחי ורעי

"For the sake of my brothers and my comrades..." (*Tehillim* 122,8).

As I attended the gathering of *talmidim* in New York at the *Teloshim* (marking thirty years of his passing), the feelings momentarily set in. I felt like an intruder, a stranger, a *ger* in *Be'er*. I did not belong. Somehow, though, I knew that this time I would discover that I truly *do* belong. And somehow, through the sharing of the *talmidim* who spoke, that turning point came for me. One of the speakers, a *talmid* of almost 40 years, stood up and addressed us all: "*Tyerer brieder* – Dear brothers." It was then that I realized that though I was not a *talmid*, not even a *baal*

mussar, barely a *mislameid*, that all of us in that room had been together blessed with a person who truly cherished and loved us as a father, leaving us for always the gifts he had bestowed upon us. In that moment of brotherhood, I felt I belonged. And in the spirit of brotherhood, *Alei Shur* is still there, timelessly ready to reach for a new brother, if only he possesses a hand outstretched and a heart "yearning to learn how to."

So come with me, my dear reader...²

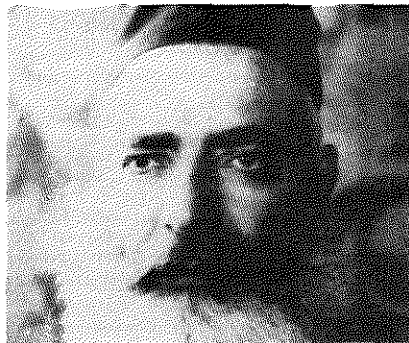
And thus shall a light shine upon your paths forever. With love, your father...³

¹ See *Alei Shur* 2, pg. 184 "To be a *Mentsch*"

² *Alei Shur* 1, pg. 8

³ *Alei Shur* 1, pg. 305, rough translation

ELIEZER WOLBE



Rabbi Yerucham Lebovitz, שליט"א,
the prime force in the spiritual
development of Rabbi Wolbe, שליט"א.

My Grandfather, The Mashgiach שליט"א

AN ERA COME TO A CLOSE

With the *petira* of my revered grandfather, the *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe שליט"א, an era, referred to by many as that of pre-war Europe, came to a close. The *Mashgiach* personified the monumental stature of the previous generation: a generation he spoke so much about, a world he never ceased to recall, and *gedolim* whose image he would constantly try to envision. He told of the Shabbos he spent in Kamenitz, and the kiss he received from Reb Boruch Ber at his departure. He recalled the *beracha* he had said upon seeing Reb Chaim Ozer, and the cup of tea with which this *gadol* honored him.

Most outstanding of all was the renewed life he acquired in the Mir Yeshiva in Poland, ignited by Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, the famed *Mashgiach* of Mir, whose every word he cherished. He repeated many times an episode that he experienced upon arriving at the Mir Yeshiva.

After being introduced to his roommates, one of them said, "How old do you think I am?"

My grandfather looked at him and said, "You must be 29 or 30 years old."

The bachur responded, "I may look 30 years old, but in reality, I am three years and two months old."

"Three years and two months old?!" asked my grandfather.

ELIEZER WOLBE LIVES IN YERUSHALAYIM, WHERE HE LEARNS IN THE KOLLEL OF THE MIRROR YESHIVA.

"Yes," he answered, "three years and two months ago I first met Reb Yerucham, and from that moment, my life began anew."

Reb Yerucham infused new life into his *talmidim*, and used his incredible genius to illuminate the hidden depths of life and its challenges.

My grandfather would constantly repeat how it's essential to have a *rebbe* at all times. In addition to those mentioned elsewhere in this issue, he was, in his later years, particularly close to his uncle, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, who constantly assisted and directed him. Until his last day, the *Mashgiach* made sure to have a *rebbe*.

A CHANGE IN KLAL YISROEL

Referring to his years in Europe, the *Mashgiach* would often remark that although in those days there weren't as many yeshiva *bachurim* as today, there were many more *gedolim*. In every *shtetl*, there was a *gadol*, a *Yid* who knew *Shas* and *poskim*, and was a true *oveid Hashem*.

Rabbi Chatzkel Levenstein once asked my grandfather, "How many Jews do you think were killed in the Holocaust?"

My grandfather, puzzled by the question, answered, "Everyone says six million."

Reb Chatzkel responded, "No! The entire Klal Yisroel was destroyed. Is this the Klal Yisroel we knew?"

With the passing of the *Mashgiach*, we lost one more link to the era of

Klal Yisroel of old.

FILLING THE VOID

Simultaneously, however, a new era began. His passing started an era of searching, an era of building, an era of filling the void... a void so immense. While the *Mashgiach* encapsulated the greatness of the previous generation, he still understood the challenges of our generation to the most minute detail.

Recognizing the tremendous change in the world after the War, the *Mashgiach* cleverly combined the wisdom of old into lessons applicable to a new generation. He felt that the constantly developing technology was partly responsible for our generation's shortcomings, since technology creates much *katnus* (small-mindedness) within us. To illustrate this, he would describe a scene of a person walking. Suddenly, he sees a beautiful sunset atop spectacular mountains, a sight truly worth remembering. Instead of gazing into the wonders of *Hashem's* creation, marveling at His infinite wisdom, and absorbing His greatness (as the *Rambam* in *Yesodei HaTorah* 5,2 advises is the way to attain *ahavas Hashem*), he pulls out a camera, snaps a picture and moves on. This example of *katnus* is a direct product of today's modern world.

The world at large tends to become more and more superficial, and unfortunately, this seeps into the Torah community, as well. People find that what's important to them is what people say about them. They base most of their deci-

sions on what people will think. A person focusing on what others will say will never realize that he's here in this world as a messenger to fulfill *his* purpose in the creation.

DEFINING ONE'S MISSION

To combat such *katnus*, the *Mashgiach* ingrained in his *talmidim* that they should be *anashim penimiim*, internal people, as opposed to *anashim chitzoniim*, superficial people. He continuously tried to elevate his *talmidim* to their utmost potential, while himself demonstrating what the true *ben aliya* (a person striving for growth) looks like. In essence, that is the purpose of his famed masterpiece – *Alei Shur* – to illustrate how a *ben Torah* behaves in all areas and times of life. He taught that every person must look into himself to find his unique *kochos* (strengths), with which he can help contribute to elevate *Klal Yisroel*.

Baruch Hashem, he was able to guide disciples who today fill roles across the spectrum of Orthodox Jewry in all parts of the world, among them *roshei yeshiva*, *mashgichim*, *rabbanim*, and many *ehrlche baalei battim* (laymen of integrity). He more than once praised the honesty of a specific *talmid's* business dealings, saying, "He expresses more *emuna* in his business than I derive from *Chovas Halevavos*."

THE MISSION HE INSPIRES

Since my grandfather's *petira*, many have felt the urge to understand, follow, and adopt his ways. To create within ourselves an inner world of meaning, however, is not a simple task.

This was what pushed my grandfather to start his *Beis Hamussar*. A *beis hamussar* is a place designated to facilitate introspection. A place where a person can escape unyielding distractions, and contemplate what his purpose in the world is, what his shortcomings are that he must overcome, and what unique traits *Hashem* has blessed him with – the

tools to develop his perfection. Many would come to hear a discourse (as the *Mashgiach* delivered weekly for many years), or simply to learn from the various *sifrei mussar* in a quiet place.

The *Beis Hamussar* held a very special place in the *Mashgiach's* heart, which can be seen from what he wrote in his *tzava'a* (ethical will). While asking that no eulogies be said, he still had one request – that the funeral should leave from the front of *Beis Hamussar*, and that it should be publicly announced that the

Beis Hamussar would be continued (albeit without its founder and father).

I feel that there is no greater way to elevate my grandfather's *neshama* than by attempting to spread what was most precious to him: elevating *Klal Yisroel*. That would be up to the readers of these lines – to join in creating in one's own shul, *kehilla*, or workplace a *mussar* opportunity.*

* For assistance in such an endeavor, one can contact 800-550-3070, or in Jerusalem at 02-537-1005 or baishamussar@gmail.com

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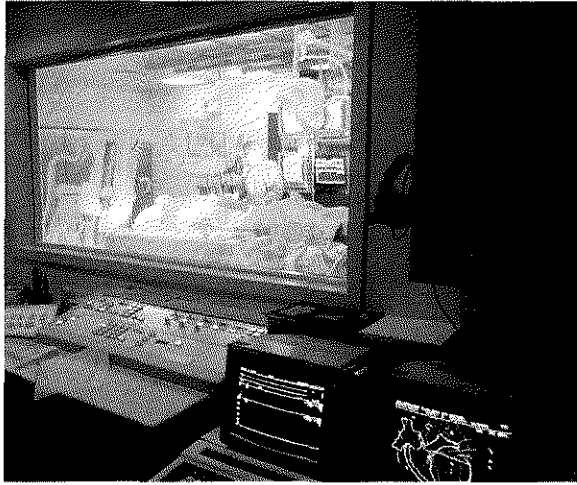
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BARBARA OLEVITCH



Grandparents at Risk

There is a widening gap between Torah-observant Jews and their less observant loved ones in the kinds of choices that they make about medical care.

Torah-observant Jews can write Halachic Living Wills, available from Agudath Israel of America, to assure that their medical choices are made according to halacha, and if they are fortunate enough to live in a place that has a Jewish hospice under Orthodox auspices, they can rest assured that every detail of their care will be carried out in consultation with knowledgeable rabbis.

But Jews who do not fully identify with the Orthodox community do not see the need for these special arrangements.

For *baalei teshuva*, this poses great difficulties, since our loved ones may be following mainstream America in their health care choices. I found out the hard way just how treacherous the situation is.

BARBARA A. OLEVITCH, PH.D. IS A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST SPECIALIZING IN THE TREATMENT OF THE SERIOUSLY MENTALLY ILL. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF *USING COGNITIVE APPROACHES WITH THE SERIOUSLY MENTALLY ILL* (PRAEGER, 1995) AND *PROTECTING PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS AND OTHERS FROM THE ASSISTED-SUICIDE MOVEMENT* (PRAEGER, 2002). THE ABOVE ARTICLE IS WRITTEN LE'ILLUI NISHMAS SARA BAS REUVEN ם״ד.

A SENIOR PATIENT'S IMPETUOSITY

Two years ago, when I left the bedside of my 89-year-old mother in a Florida nursing home for just a few days to go home and spend Shavuot with my husband and son, she signed herself into a hospice. She lasted nine days after that.

She had had pneumonia and was in rehabilitation, but she had not yet been weaned from her respirator. I knew she could request to have it taken off, but I had been told that such requests would be turned over to her pulmonologist, and I knew that he would work with her to reassure her that although she was progressing very slowly, she was moving in a favorable direction.

But I was unaware that someone might have been talking to her about signing herself into a hospice. I did not know that hospices had expanded well beyond the population of cancer patients who used to constitute the majority of their patients. Little did I know that any doctor's opinion that a person might die in six months as a result of his medical condition was a legitimate reason for a hospice referral.

THIS TIME IT WAS DIFFERENT

In a nursing home where it once took an entire week to get a physician's order for a stool softener, I certainly never expect-

ed anything at all to happen quickly. But this time it was different. They bypassed her pulmonologist and managed to schedule a hospice interview, a medical evaluation, and a psychiatric evaluation for my discouraged and confused mother all within a day and a half after I left.

There were other times that I had been able to extricate my mother from situations where medical personnel had given up on her, but from the hospice, it wasn't possible. Right-to-die activists have succeeded in making the decision to refuse all life-sustaining treatment seem not only culturally acceptable, but even mature and responsible. A relative like myself who wishes to save the life of a loved one is regarded as selfishly imposing her own values upon the patient.

At the hospice, they refused to consider that the circumstances of her signing in had changed. She had thought that she was stuck with the ventilator, but she actually was not. After a few days, it became clear that she was breathing without it. They refused my request to try to wake her up and tell her that she had survived getting off of the ventilator and ask her, with this new information, if she wanted food and fluids and her Albuterol and any of her other treatments.

Although I would have tried to protect her life even if we had been at a point where the reasons were purely religious, we were very far from such a situation, as far as I was concerned. All of my objections, however, were perceived as grounded in my own religious beliefs,

and therefore worthless. Such is the power of the death culture.

THE SHULCHAN ARUCH'S CAUTIONARY GUIDELINES

From this dark situation, we can see a complete confirmation of Torah. In the *Shulchan Aruch*, it explains that, when talking to a patient who faces immediate death, even the critically important suggestion to say "*Vidui* (confessional prayer)" must be ever so tactful. We are even told how to reassure him. We can say that many say "*Vidui*," but don't die, and many die without saying "*Vidui*." This emphasis on keeping hope alive even at the last moment has been totally violated by our culture, with disastrous results. The blunt insistence of the right-to-die movement on creating categories of terminal illness, such as a six-month prognosis so that people can make their "decisions" – in spite of the clinical reality that these categories in fact predict mortality very poorly – has broken the hearts of the sick and of their families.

How beautiful that in Judaism, we still appreciate that the psychology of man is delicate, and we hold ourselves accountable if we speak to a patient without regard to the effect of our words.

The clumsy handling of the sick by the right-to-die movement has had paralyzing psychological effects. Sick people and their families are encouraged to constantly ask themselves the wrong questions, questions that make them miserable. Expecting to eventually reach an intolerable state, they feel it is their job to continually reexamine whether they have reached it yet. Nothing could be less desirable from the standpoint of stress management or pain management.

THE "THREAT" OF LONGEVITY

The right-to-die advocates are so intimidating in their claims and receive so much reinforcing publicity that even Torah-observant Jews may occasionally feel that being able to skip over the end of life by hastening death,

although it is forbidden to us, is a level-headed, desirable, modern convenience. This is an illusion. The right-to-die advocates have a seemingly level-headed way of speaking, but in actuality, they have fallen prey to a mass phobia regarding life-sustaining medical treatments, and an irrational fear that if we try to sustain those with long-term illnesses, we will be faced with complete economic breakdown.

A Torah perspective makes us skeptical of this unquestioned vision of economic collapse, the horrible prospect that *Hashem* would design things in such a way that we would have to choose between saving the ill or sustaining ourselves.

How fortunate we are to have our Jewish perspective! Being forbidden to hasten death is a great blessing. It frees us from the terrible psychological burden of constantly assessing whether it is time to give up. American families are making frightening medical decisions that they are not prepared to make. They are being advised by health care workers who are trained in a right-to-die mentality, and the families do not know whom to trust. In contrast, we have expert *rabbanim* whom we can consult, who are familiar with critical illness and know if more can be done for our relatives, and when it is appropriate to do it.

THE REWARDS OF PROMOTING LIFE

We are told that when Pharaoh commanded that Jewish male infants be killed, Yocheved and Miriam and the other midwives disregarded his command to kill the infants, and also that they let the infants live. The *Or Hachaim* explains that this means that they took the extra step of bringing food and water to make absolutely sure that the infants lived, because if a baby happened to die, it might be thought that they had followed Pharaoh's command and killed the infant. We are told that because the midwives feared *Hashem*, He gave them great families of their own. Yocheved gave birth to *Moshe Rabbeinu*.

We are living in a time when it is important for us to resist the passive euthanasia going on around us, and even, like Yocheved and Miriam, to undertake special efforts on behalf of the sick. To save our elderly in these dangerous times, we must watch them very carefully. By consulting our *rabbanim* and making sure that we abide by halacha, by taking good care of our sick as long as we can, and by keeping them as happy as we can, may we have the merit of setting an example for others.

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What are middle-class parents to do when they are blessed with four – or seven – or ten children, and the annual tuitions tend to be in excess of \$5,000 per student – and, in some schools, more than \$10,000 for each?

Two Orthodox laymen in Lawrence, Long Island – an upper-middle-class suburb in the Five Towns – explored several creative possibilities of reducing their tuition load, and their ideas proved newsworthy in the Jewish media. One of the men commented, "When it comes down to it, instead of \$40,000 a year, [my bill] could be \$9,000."^{*}

Their initial plan simply called for a small number of Orthodox students to enroll in public schools, and then rent space after hours where they would receive religious instruction from privately hired teachers.

When the public expressed interest in these ideas, they proposed a bolder plan – to have students study Jewish topics for half of the day at their private schools, and then be bussed to the public schools for the remainder of the day's instruction in a special track. Another suggestion would have public school teachers brought into the Jewish schools to provide secular instruction during the second half of the day.

While the proposals were conceived as a progressive design for money-saving use of available resources, it struck some people as a regressive, precipitous plunge into the quagmire of Jewish education along the lines of the afternoon Talmud Torah schools in the early-and mid-20th century. But a desperate need for creative action does exist.

RABBI ARYEH ZEV GINZBERG

Collective Tears

THE PULSEBEAT OF JEWRY

It is not often that a local news item captures the attention of the Jewish media throughout the country. A story in the community newspaper in the Five Towns area recently stirred even people who have never responded in writing before to take pen in hand and tell the world at large how deeply they feel about this matter.

RABBI GINZBERG, FOUNDRING RAV OF OHR MOSHE TORAH INSTITUTE IN HILLCREST, NY, IS CURRENTLY RAV OF THE CHOFETZ CHAIM TORAH CENTER OF CEDARHURST (LONG ISLAND), NEW YORK. HE IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES.

The issue, of course, is an explosive one. Several parents, overwhelmed by the rising cost of yeshiva tuition, have suggested a possible alternative of providing their children with public school education while supplementing their religious instruction in some patched-on format. The reactions range from complete shock to one of resigned agreement. In truth, the worst reaction of all would be one of indifference.

At the first *Knessia Gedolah* (International Congress of Agudath Israel), held in Vienna in 1923, the opening session, attended by *Gedolei Hador* of that era, met to determine

^{*} quoted in the *Forward*, July 29, '05.

what the primary focus of the *Knessia* should be, in view of the myriad problems facing the community at large.

After several suggestions were made, the saintly *Chofetz Chaim* ארי"ל arose to speak. He began with a parable: A person was in a serious accident and was severely wounded in many places. He was brought to the hospital, and a team of doctors was trying to decide what to treat first. A senior doctor interrupted, "The first thing we have to do is check his pulse. If it's beating, we can proceed. But if there is no pulse, there's really no point in deliberating at all."

The *Chofetz Chaim* continued,

“The *chinuch* of our children is the very pulse of *Klal Yisroel*. We have to check that first. If it’s stable and strong, then we can worry about everything else. But if that’s no good, then there’s really nothing else to talk about.”

Consequently, the majority of

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the resolutions that emerged from that conclave dealt with *chinuch*.

A correspondent once asked Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach זצ"ל, “Why are yeshivos called ‘yeshivos?’” The person himself offered, “Maybe because Torah is generally learned when one is *yosheiv* – in a sitting position. Hence – yeshivos.”

Reb Shlomo Zalman rejected that explanation, and instead suggested, “It’s called ‘yeshiva’ because it is ‘*Ikar yishuvo shel olam* – the primary force in developing the world.’ All else is subservient to it” (heard from his son, Rabbi Shmuel Auerbach א"ש).

And so if we have a problem, a crisis – and we *do* have one – that concerns the heartbeat of *Klal Yisroel*, and “*yishuvo shel olam*,” then, everyone must surely stop and reflect on what can be done to resolve the problem.

A TIME FOR NEITHER SHRUGGING SHOULDERS NOR JOY

In discussing this development with some colleagues, I was indeed disturbed to hear some of their reactions. One said, “It’s only a few individuals, a small minority. Let them go.” In contrast to this shoulder-shrugging, defeatist attitude was the response

of Rabbi Ahron Leib Shteinman א"ש, to a particular crisis last year at a Lev L’Achim-sponsored school in Israel.

Seven girls from non-religious homes had registered in a religious school for the coming year, and then, all pulled out, just days before school was to begin. After frantic calls and visits from dedicated field workers, six of the seven girls agreed to rejoin the religious school for the fall semester. A Lev L’Achim activist joyfully reported this success to Rabbi Shteinman. To the visitor’s surprise, Rabbi Shteinman broke down in tears. “How can you celebrate the success of six girls’ return when the seventh has been lost to us?” he cried bitterly.

Even if this group represents a small minority of our community, noting the loss of *Yiddishe kinder* from the holy walls of our yeshivos – even just one – is reason for all of us to shed a collective tear.

MAKING ENDS MEET?

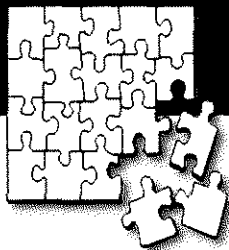
First, the problem. The rising cost of tuition is indeed one of the most distressing problems facing our communities today. The pressure on families to meet tuition costs is truly overwhelming. Like most *rabbanim* serving younger communities, my evenings are often dedicated to meeting with couples with serious *shalom bayis* issues; often (though not exclusively), it has to do with dealing with the pressure of making ends meet. Equally disturbing is the increasing number of young couples who come to discuss options of family planning, and highlight the fact that they just can’t perceive bringing another child into the world, to be faced with yet another tuition on top of what they already pay.

Not just *rabbanim*, but community leaders of all ages and stripes should take this issue extremely seriously. The tuition burden on our parents is overwhelming, and getting worse, while at the same time, the financial situation of our yeshivos is tenuous, at best.

Parents are demanding fiscal responsibility, and improvement may well be

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needed in this area. As every successful company knows full well, the crucial ingredient for financial stability is having an experienced, creative C.F.O. (Chief Financial Officer), whose role is to carefully scrutinize the budget. Often, yeshivos rely on their boards of directors to oversee this area, but not every butcher, baker and candlestick maker is qualified to do so. Recently, a wonderful yeshiva in our community that had suffered from a high deficit for years turned its books over to an experienced money manager, and in a relatively short period of time, the yeshiva became debt-free. This surely is a step in the right direction.

HASHEM'S AGENTS

But there is something even more significant that our communities need to focus on. Yeshivos are our lifeline, and the *rebbe'im* at the helm are not only our *sheluchim* (agents) to be *mechanech* our children, they also are "*sheluchei deRachmana*" – Divine messengers: they represent Torah itself, and must be accorded all the dignity and *kavod* due to Torah. Our *sifrei Torah* are adorned with silver crowns and are stored in an *aron hakodesh* of marble or Jerusalem stone. Should the "*nosei ol haTorah*" – those who carry the burden of teaching Torah – be treated with anything less?

Yet, we do have our priorities backwards. The *Chofetz Chaim* used to lament even in his time the misguided priorities of people donating huge sums to yeshivos to erect buildings with their names emblazoned on them (which is a wonderful thing), while completely ignoring the needs of the *talmidei chachamim* who make up the heart and soul of the yeshiva (which is tragic).

Rabbi Dovid Soloveitchik שליט"א (quoted in *Sefer Uvdos Le'beis Brisk*) says, "People are willing to donate thousands upon thousands toward a yeshiva building, but they give only small amounts towards the monthly support

of those who learn Torah – to put food on their tables. In truth, it should be the other way around. It's obvious that the *yeitzer hara* is working here, as well, and causes us to focus on the frills rather than on the main objective."

This is an idea that is worth pursuing. If the pillars of our community would concentrate on caring for the *rebbe'im* through establishing some form of communal fund to cover salaries, it would help to alleviate the yeshivos' financial burdens, which translate into escalating tuition costs.

AN ABSURD TRADE-OFF

Having said that, and with full recognition of the problems that do exist, the very idea of replacing the atmosphere absorbed when receiving a yeshiva education with that of a public school borders on the absurd, and betrays a complete lack of understanding and appreciation of what a yeshiva truly is.

A yeshiva is not just a setting for gaining information in Torah subjects. It defines who we are as Torah Jews. No teachers,

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no matter how qualified... no computer program, no matter how sophisticated... can replace the *kedusha* and the purity that is transmitted from *rebbe* or *mora* to the student.

A *gadol* (leading Torah sage) once commented on the *Mishna* in *Bava Metzia* that teaches that returning a lost object to a *rebbe* takes priority over returning a lost object to one's own father, because a parent brings a child to *Olam Haze* (This World), while a *rebbe* brings the child to *Olam Habba* (The World to Come).

He insightfully commented that it doesn't say a *rebbe* brings him to *Olam Habba*, it says a *rebbe* brings him to "chayei *Olam Habba* – the life of The World to Come." That is, he makes *this* world and *this* life more meaningful, more spiritual, with a closer connection to *Shamayim* and the transcendental world of the spirit.

Is it possible to have a child, any child from any home, sitting in a public school setting, feeling that connection to

Shamayim? The influences, subtle or overt, the foul language, the topics of conversation of today's youth, the becoming aware of every lifestyle foreign to a Torah way of life – could that be a possibility for even the most spiritually detached amongst us? The entire community must rise up in collective protest against this proposal, while shedding collective tears over the realization that it has come to this.

FROM LEARNING TO EXPERIENCING TORAH

Those at the helm of our wonderful yeshivos have an important task ahead of them. The community at large must use its collective talents and energies to resolve the skyrocketing tuition costs; the yeshivos must re-educate the community and teach them that they are not just teaching Torah to our children; they are providing them with living examples of what

Hashem's Torah is all about.

When Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky זצ"ל served as rav in Toronto, one of his communal responsibilities was to help select the new *rebbe'im* for the local yeshiva ketana. Once, Reb Yaakov and the school principal observed a model lesson from a new, prospective *rebbe*. The principal was duly impressed and said so after the lesson; Reb Yaakov, however, disagreed. During his very dynamic presentation, the candidate had his elbows resting on top of the *Gemara*. This type of lesson is unacceptable for our children's chinuch.

A *rebbe* is not only meant to serve as a medium for teaching Torah, but must be a means for allowing our children, from the earliest age, to experience Torah, as well. How ludicrous to think even for a moment that experiencing Torah can be done any place other than in a yeshiva! We all must work together to embrace these parents, open up our hearts to them and – most important – let them see our collective tears. □

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FIRST AND FOREMOST A MOTHER

There is an ache in our hearts and a void in our lives. Our beloved teacher, mentor and friend, Rebbetzin Zahava Braunstein, is gone.

Her life was a song of Tiferes - a symphony of beauty, balance and harmony. The contrasting notes and nuances of her multi-faceted personality merged into a joyous melody of Kavod Shamayim. Mind and heart. Family and Klal. Royal dignity and refreshing informality. Soaring idealism and down-to-earth realism. Non-judgmental love and uncompromising chinuch.

She expressed the full range of human emotions in a natural, seemingly spontaneous manner. At the same time, she embodied the value of discretion, modesty and privacy. She exuded a passion and intensity of purpose, and yet she brimmed with laughter. Her eyes expressed the deep-

MRS. REISMAN, OF BROOKLYN, NY, TEACHES AT THE BAIS YAAKOV ACADEMY AND AT BEIT YAAKOV ATERET TORAH. SHE SERVES AS A LEARNING DIRECTOR OF CAMP B'NO'S AGUDAS YISROEL IN LIBERTY, NY.

est empathy, yet never lost their mischievous twinkle. She was involved in a multitude of projects, each with its pressures and deadlines, which did not detract from the joy and menuchas hanefesh that made it so delightful to be in her presence. She taught us to strive for greatness. She taught us how to be human. There was not a false note in the exquisite balance that she maintained. She was a towering figure of greatness. She was the ultimate normal person.

Rebbetzin Zahava Braunstein was given a precious gift. The power of speech. We were uplifted by her words of encouragement as she enabled us to appreciate our potential as Bnos Yisroel. Who else understood us so well and validated our struggles? How often did we wonder as she depicted scenarios that were all too painfully familiar. "How did she know?" "Was she in my house?" We laughed and we cried as she illuminated our minds and touched our neshamos

The power of her speech was not mere eloquence. It was an expression of da'as. She had the wisdom of knowing what to say and how to say it. To a person in crisis or to a diverse audience of thousands, she would find precisely the right words

to reach the heart. Invariably, after listening to her healing words, one felt closer to Hashem.

Her personality had a magnetic power. People were drawn to her. They trusted her. She had the ability to infuse the minutest interaction with warmth and love. Her capacity for friendship seemed boundless. She shared deeply in the joys and sorrows of a multitude of people. The thoughtful gesture, the timely phone call, the uplifting compliment flowed so naturally. She made it seem almost effortless.

At that heartbreaking yet inspiring lev-aya, as the breathtaking panorama of her life was held up before us, we were awed beyond words. How could one person accomplish so much? How could one heart have room for so many others? How could a person of such public leadership retain, as she did, the depth and modesty of the bas melech penima (inner royalty)? How could a person of larger-than-life stature always remain the "lady next door," that friend and neighbor in whose presence one felt totally at ease? And the most important question of all: How was she able to extend herself on behalf of multitudes without compromising her loving involvement

and total devotion to her husband and family?

"The crown that she wore most proudly," testified her son, Rabbi Mendel Braunstein, "was the crown that said 'mother.'" She was first and foremost an *eim beYisroel*. It was obvious from her entire demeanor and attitude that she derived enormous satisfaction and fulfillment from being a Jewish wife and mother. The fact that a woman of unusual self-confidence, intelligence and charisma radiated such deep contentment and happiness in this role had an enormous impact on so many women who were searching for greater clarity in their lives.

SPREADING HER WINGS

Rebbetzin Braunstein, born in 1944, was named Golda Perel Zwiebel. (One of her teachers Hebraicized her name – Golda became "Zahava," and so it remained.) Her parents, Galician Jews who married in Poland in 1939, reached the United States shortly thereafter, settling in the Bronx, N.Y. Mrs. Menucha Zwiebel, nee Hager, was a descendant of the illustrious Kossover dynasty. A *talmid chacham* and *masmid*, Mr. Yaakov Zwiebel was a quiet, unassuming *ish emes*, who supported his family by selling dry goods in his

shop on the Lower East Side. He was deeply involved in rescue efforts during the war years.

As a ten-year-old, Zahava volunteered to tell a story at a campfire at Camp Emunah; she had the entire camp mesmerized, and from that time on, became the official storyteller. At Yeshiva University High School for Girls, her talent and leadership abilities did not go unrecognized. "Whenever I went to try out for a club," recalled former schoolmate, Mrs. Zlata Press, "be it drama, newspaper or debating, Gladys Zwiebel was involved. Yet, she stood out in more than talent. She was exemplary in the kindness and warmth that she extended to her classmates and younger schoolmates." She was part of a group of friends who commanded enormous respect from their peers because of their sincerity and high religious standards. "And then, she and her small group of friends did a radical thing. They chose to attend Bais Yaakov Seminary. We didn't know what to make of this. It was totally out of our frame of reference."

At Bais Yaakov, she was profoundly affected by Rebbetzin Kaplan ז"ל, who recognized the outstanding qualities of heart and mind that she possessed. It was due to the passionate teachings of Rabbi Godlevsky ז"ל that she began to rethink her career plans of becoming a journalist. She remained forever grate-

ful for his influence. From Rebbetzin Bender ז"ל she would absorb the foundations of *kedushas habayis* (sanctity of the Jewish home) that she would ultimately transmit to so many others. Rebbetzin Bruria David ז"ל became her mentor and guide. For the rest of her life, she maintained and cherished that relationship.

She married Rabbi Shlomo Braunstein, today the *menahel* of Mesivta Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin, and they became part of an outstanding *chabura* of aspiring and idealistic *kollel* couples. The towering leadership of the *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner ז"ל, was a powerful influence in determining the direction of their lives and the caliber of their Torah and *avoda*. Her deep rootedness in this world endowed her teaching with an authoritative Torah *hashkafa*.

Within her first year of teaching at Bais Yaakov Academy, her charisma, caring and *chein* made her someone her students wanted to emulate. "The revolution that she created at B.Y.A.," declared Rabbi Shlomo Teichman, "was as great as the subsequent revolution that she would create at Ateret." Because they admired her, many young women were inspired to follow her example. They, too, would marry *b'nei Torah*.

"I remember her sparkling enthusiasm," recalled one student from that era. "I remember how her face would light up as she would say, 'Girls, I would like to share this beautiful *Kli Yakkar* with you!'"

"I remember how warm and gentle she was," recalled another. "She cared about us like a loving mother."

She continued to spend her summers at Camp Gila, which was affiliated with the *Kehilla* of Bobov. The daughters of Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam ז"ל, who was then the Bobover Rebbe, recalled the powerful impression that she made: "All through the winter, the name 'Zahava' echoed in our home. We remembered her songs and her unforgettable lessons."

Rebbetzin Sarah Meisels described the staff meetings held at Camp Gila. "Rebbetzin Braunstein would be running the meeting while holding a baby on her

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lap. And while she spoke to us, she would be hugging and kissing the baby. What a beautiful example she set for us!"

At this time, she began to teach *kalla* classes, conveying the halachos of *kedushas habayis* to young women who were about to establish their own homes in a manner that gave us joy and self-confidence. In the words of Rebbetzin Ruthy Assaf, "I always wanted my daughters to go to her *kalla* classes. She conveyed the halachos in a way that was lucid and precise. But even more so, she gave the message of the beauty, the warmth and the merit of building a *mikdash me'at* (miniature sanctuary)." She never accepted remuneration for teaching these classes, using this opportunity to raise money for *hachnasas kalla* and other causes that were dear to her heart.

FOCUS ON FAMILY

These were hectic, exhilarating years. She was tending her growing family, while teaching, serving as program director, and continuing to give *kalla* classes. People were beginning to turn to her for guidance and counsel. She was being called upon to speak publicly. Sometimes she accepted, often she declined, not wanting to take away from the love and care that she lavished upon her children. It was challenging to balance all of her responsibilities, yet she did it with grace and humor and an overflowing *simchas hachayim*.

Her home reverberated with warmth, love and laughter. "If you want the *Shechina* to dwell in your home," she would say, "get a little tape recorder and put on some music. It sounds like such a little thing, but it is so important!"

"When we were kids," one of her daughters reminisced, "there was a song for everything. There was a song for going to sleep and a song for getting up and a song for putting on the right shoe first."

In a *shiur* entitled "Happiness in the Home," Rebbetzin Braunstein once shared, "Sometimes when my children were young, I would do a little dance in the kitchen and my daughters would roll their eyes and say 'Oh, Mommy!' But now

that they are raising families of their own, I hope that they understand."

Her warm smile and special welcome were extended to all who crossed her threshold. Many people became members of the household for extended periods of time. "She literally saved my life," sobbed one woman during the *shiva*. "I was going through an emotional crisis, and she took me into her home for several months, caring for me as a daughter, until I was able to stand on my own feet. The *shalom bayis* and the *ahavas Torah* made a powerful impression on me. But it was seeing the normalcy, the realness, her ability to laugh at her own foibles and to put life's little mishaps into perspective, that helped me more than anything else."

THE SYRIAN OPENING

Then came Rabbi Yosef Harari-Rafal, with his dream of a Torah renaissance for Syrian Jewry. He was teaching young men in that community, inspiring them with the beauty of Torah and uncompromising fidelity to halacha. They were thirsty and eager, and responding to his call. Yet, their wives were being left behind. Who could teach them? Who could inspire them? Who but Rebbetzin Zahava Braunstein!

"Twenty-five years ago," writes Mrs. Bonnie Mansour, a member of that original class, "we were blessed to welcome a teacher who would, with her soft words and loving heart, show us what it really meant to be a fulfilled Jewish woman. When she first came to teach us, I think that she was surprised by our appearance. She truly didn't know where to begin. So she began from the beginning. She taught us about the *parasha*. She brought in a washing cup and taught us about *netilat yadayim*.

"She gave us such pride in our heritage that we very gradually and very naturally made changes in our lifestyles to reflect that pride. Because of those changes, the community at large started to get used to women holding higher standards in *kashrut* and *Shabbat*, dressing more modestly and even encouraging their husbands to learn Torah. These things became not only acceptable, but admired.

"What was her secret?" asked Mrs. Mansour. "How did she literally change the lives of so many of our women and thousands of others? Was it her brilliance? Her talent? Her charm? Her charisma? They all certainly helped. But the real answer was that she loved us – and we knew it. She would never let an encounter go by without her warm, radiant smile speaking volumes about the joy she felt to be in our presence. She loved

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each one of us in a special way for our unique qualities. Each of us felt that we were her favorite – and I am sure that it was somehow true.

“Other teachers tiptoed around issues. They were afraid that we might become turned off and not come back. Not Mrs. Braunstein. She was uncompromising, but so loving and gentle that we were able to accept everything that she taught.”

SUMMERS IN CAMP

To supplement the family income, she continued to spend her summers at Camp Gila, and later at Camp Shira. At Camp Shira, she had the opportunity, along with the Rosenberg family, to mold the spirit of the camp, creating an atmosphere of wholesome summer fun, infused with a spirit of *kedusha*. Her Friday night talks were the highlight of the summer. “When she stood before us on Friday nights,” said one former camper, “I used to think that she was the *Shabbos* Queen.”

As much as she loved camp, it was not

“SHE HAD SUCH JOY AND FULFILLMENT IN THE BAYIS THAT SHE CREATED,” SAID RABBI BRAUNSTEIN, “AND SHE HAD SUCH A LOVING HEART, THAT SHE WANTED TO STRETCH THAT BAYIS TO INCLUDE MORE AND MORE PEOPLE.

easy to go back, summer after summer. “After all,” said Rabbi Braunstein, “at a certain age, one gets tired of color war. But she did it, along with all of her other jobs, so that her husband and children could continue learning with *menuchas hanefesh* (tranquility). And she did it *besimcha!*”

Even as a *menahelet* (principal), she never lost that effervescence and viva-

cious sense of humor. Her students knew that as much as she held them to a high standard of conduct, she had not forgotten what it was like to be young, and that she understood their struggles.

THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER

In a recent talk that she gave within the Syrian community, she said, “Laughter is a wonderful thing. Yitzchak, one of the *Avos*, was named after laughter.” She continued reflectively, “As time goes on, perhaps I am getting more buffeted by the winds and the storms of time.... You know, there is a phrase in the prayers of the *Yamim Nora'im* that says that our lives are like a fleeting dream, like a passing shadow. We know that life is very temporary.... And so, I would like to ask, what is the definition of happiness?”

“*Simchat hachayim* means simply the joy of life. The joy of knowing that *Hashem* gave us life, and that there is a purpose and a meaning to our lives. That knowledge gives us tremendous joy and an inner serenity. And if it doesn't

match up with ‘Let the good times roll,’ it does match up with a person who can maintain a joyful attitude no matter what may occur to him in life. That is the definition of what we are talking about.

“How can a person have that serenity – the serenity that enabled *David Hamelech* to say

“Though I walk in the valley of the

shadow of death, I fear no evil? It is because You, *Hashem*, are holding my hand. That is joy, to know that *Hashem* is holding our hand.”

Did her listeners comprehend the poignancy of these words, uttered during the last part of her life, as she herself was battling the final stages of a dreaded illness? For fifteen years, she had lived in the shadow of this illness. Despite many rounds of surgery, treatment and procedures, she kept her illness from the public eye.

CREATIVE AND PRODUCTIVE YEARS

In many ways, the last fifteen years were her most creative and productive years. It was during this time period that she became the founding principal of Bet Yaakov Ateret Torah High School. Many of her students were daughters of her original Syrian *talmidot*, and she derived much *nachas* from molding them into *neshei chayil* who proudly married *b'nei Torah* and set up homes of *kedusha*. She would wake up early in the morning to bake cakes for her beloved *talmidot*. “Baking is my therapy,” she would say.

It was during these fifteen years that she married off most of her children. She adored each son-in-law and daughter-in-law, and cherished each set of *mechutanim*. “When we built our homes,” said her son, Rabbi Mendel Braunstein, “her level of care grew. She gave us so much direction, so much *Toras Imecha*.”

She adored each grandchild, and derived much joy from her relationship with each one of them. She advised her friends to overlook the tumult and disarray that naturally accompany these visits. “Learn to love it!” she exhorted. Her grandchildren were welcomed into her kitchen with a warm smile, a huge hug, and a tuna sandwich, even on a hectic *Erev Shabbos* or *Yom Tov*.

Her communal activities reached a new level. Her speaking engagements led her farther afield as she increased the scope of her involvements. She realized

that she was considered a spokeswoman for the *klal*. "I still cringe when I see my name on those posters, but what can I do?" she shrugged. Time was short and there was so much to be done.

Her lectures on *tzenius* were requested in even more cities. Her positive approach enabled women of diverse communities to develop an appreciation of this sensitive topic. Together with her husband, she traveled to Dallas a number of times, developing a special relationship with the members of this inspiring community of *baalei teshuva*. They began to attend *Shabbatonim* of A.T.I.M.E., giving *chizuk* to couples who struggled with the painful *nisayon* of infertility. Her *shiurim* on *kedushas habayis*, sponsored by *Irgun Shiurei Torah*, had an impact on thousands of women. Tapes of her lectures continue to be treasured by women across the world.

Someone posed the question yet again: "How could she have been involved in such a multitude of activities and also have had the time to raise her family with such love and dedication?" Mrs. Suri Pinter, a close friend and family member, remarked, "You should have phrased the question differently. 'How could she have been such a wonderful mother and also have found time to do all of these other things?'"

In truth, the devotion that she invested in her home and family was the source of her success in all of her other endeavors.

NOT THROUGH VERBAL REBUKE ALONE

Rabbi E.E. Dessler writes in *Michtav MeiEliyahu* that in our time, it is impossible to influence people through verbal rebuke alone. People are not capable of seeing beyond the false ideologies that have become entrenched as a result of their self-serving interests. There is only one way for people to see beyond their ideological blinders. If one is priv-

ileged to witness a relationship of true selfless giving – between husband and wife or between *rebbe* and *talmid* – the truth will penetrate one's heart. Observing the delicate interactions of a devoted, loving family that is united in the service of *Hashem* is the most powerful *mussar* of all. That is what can open one's heart to the truth of Torah. "The only means of influence," writes Rabbi Dessler, "is through *sheleimus hachessed* – the power of pure giving."¹

"She had such joy and fulfillment in the *bayis* that she created," said Rabbi Braunstein, "and she had such a loving heart, that she wanted to stretch that *bayis* to include more and more people." All of us whose lives were changed through her personal example and through her teaching were enveloped by the power of selfless giving that she embodied.

Many women reported feeling inadequate when they heard of Rebbetzin Braunstein's many accomplishments. Those of us who knew her well never felt this way. She made each one of us feel special. She had a tremendous appreciation for that which the average woman of average capabilities could accomplish within her own home through nurturing her family and developing her inner relationship with *Hashem*.

It was this quality of *penimius* that enabled her to remain unaffected by the public adulation and the accolades. Rabbi Aharon Schechter, *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin, marveled at her capacity to maintain such an awesome level of *tzenius* throughout her myriad public activities. "That was a *midda* of aristocracy," he declared in his *hesped*, "and the *shoresh* (source) of that *midda* was her great depth." The *Rosh Yeshiva* described her capacity for being a *ba'alas yissurim* (one who endures suffering): "One who has *yissurim* has one foot in this world and one foot in the next. And through it all, she maintained such a smile, such a freshness, such a *derhoibenkeit* (loftiness). That was truly *malchus!*"

THE KOHEIN AND THE HOUSEWIFE

On many occasions, Mrs. Braustein compared the work of the *akerres habayis* to that of the *kohein* in the *Beis Hamikdash*. The position of the *kohein* was exalted. It was envied. It was the pinnacle of Divine service. And yet, the *kohanim* swept, slaughtered, washed and cooked. They dealt with the entrails of animals, with the physical stuff of life. The *Eishes Chayil*, too, sweeps and cooks

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¹ *Michtav MeiEliyahu* I, pp. 128,138.

and deals with the physical stuff of life. If she is wise, she recognizes that she, like the *kohein*, is performing Divine service of the highest order – that of creating a *Beis Hamikdash*.

She made us feel that even if we were struggling to get the dishes done or the laundry folded, we could still accomplish great things. Our daily activities were precious in her eyes, and she helped us realize their significance. She gave us the confidence that we could aspire to greatness, even if we got frazzled sometimes or lost our tempers. “The Torah wasn’t given to *malachim*,” she would say. “It was given to human beings.” To one young woman who confessed to feeling overwhelmed, she advised, “Even if you have to eat tuna fish, get some cleaning help. It is that important!” Maintaining joy and serenity in one’s home was the first priority.

In one of her classic *shiurim*, she depicted the following scenario as presented by the *Maggid* of Kelm:

In *Shamayim* they had announced, “All those interred in

the *beis olam* of Kelm could come back to life for one hour!” He depicted the scene vividly. One would rush to the *beis hamidrash* and seize a Gemara. He would sit down and learn with fierce concentration. Another would run for his beloved *Tehillim*, and recite the words with great fervor. A third person would run to the hospital, looking for a precious opportunity to do *chessed*. Their activities reached a crescendo of fevered intensity as the clock ticked loudly, marking the passage of this precious hour. With great drama, he depicted the mounting tension as the time slipped away.... And then the *Maggid* roared, “And what if we have more than one hour!” And then he intoned with haunting pathos, “And who knows if we have even one hour....”

Rebbetzin Braunstein brought this scene to life for us, as only she could do. And then, as we sat on the edge of our seats, scarcely breathing, she would smile

and say, “Ladies! If I had one hour left to live, I’ll tell you exactly what I would do. I would put up a delicious hot vegetable soup. Perhaps I would bake a cake as well. And I would sit and play with my children and grandchildren.”

Several weeks before her petira, a former student had come in from Eretz Yisroel. She had heard that Rebbetzin Braunstein was very ill. She called and asked if she could come to visit. With trepidation, she stepped over the familiar threshold of that beloved home. She could not believe her eyes. The Braunstein family was sitting at the table. Rabbi Braunstein was enjoying a delicious hot vegetable soup, while Rebbetzin Braunstein, pale and thin, but wearing her trademark glowing smile, was sitting at his side, along with their son. She was totally involved in the game of Scrabble that was spread out across the table. She was completely absorbed in her interaction with her son, forming words and calculating the points as if it were the most important thing in the world. Because it was. ☞

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ON THE AGENDA

Fundamental Foolishness

Are American and Israeli yeshivos incubators of dormant Jewish terrorists, Hebrew-chanting counterparts of Islamist madrassas?

Well, Queens College sociology professor Samuel C. Heilman, who has made a career of observing the chareidi world through a glass darkly, seems to think so. At least that is the unspoken but unmistakable message of a paper he penned this past spring for *Jewish Political Studies Review*.

DOING VIOLENCE TO REALITY

For the bulk of his essay, which focuses on what he calls the “quiescent fundamentalism” of the yeshiva world, Professor Heilman avoids asserting an explicit parallel between violent Islamic extremists and those he chooses to view as Jewish ones.

But simply utilizing the word “fundamentalist” to describe the contemporary yeshiva world – at a time when the epithet is so readily associated with bloodthirsty Islamists bent on the conquest of western civilization – is something of a violent act in itself.

And by referring to the yeshiva world as a “stage” and a “phase” of something more sinister – the “active” form of “fundamentalism” that seeks to “liquidate those forces that oppose the truth” – the professor makes all too clear that he actually believes chareidim pose a societal threat.

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Indeed, at the end of his offering, he abandons all pretense at subtlety, and explicitly warns those who dare embrace a chareidi worldview to consider “what has happened to the rich culture of Islam as it has devolved into Islamist fundamentalism.”

DOWN WITH TRUTH!

The professor's evidence of chareidi malignancy? Our “fundamentalist view that there is a single truth.”

Most faiths, of course, hold that their approach is the true one; that is, of course, the essential meaning of a “faith.” And such a conviction most certainly underlies Judaism, which eschews religious relativism (even as it may look kindly upon some other faiths as positive developments for their non-Jewish adherents). But does that way lie murder and mayhem?

If acceptance of the Torah as the Creator's unparalleled revelation to mankind represents some aberrant, cancerous “fundamentalism,” then Jewish luminaries from Rabbi Akiva to Maimonides to the Vilna Gaon to the *Chofetz Chaim* to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein – and Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, no less – not to mention every religious Jew throughout the ages and every Orthodox Jew today, must be consigned no less to the “fundamentalist” camp.

And come to think of it, if every conviction that truth lies along a particular path is what makes a jihadist, then we have as much to fear from ardent secularists who consider science sacrosanct

as we do from Al Qaeda operatives.

What nonsense parades these days as scholarship.

ALL CONVICTIONS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

What creates dangerous mindsets, of course, is not conviction – even total conviction – but rather particular convictions. If one believes that the Koran is divine, and that it commands its followers to wage holy war against all who believe otherwise – that is a dangerous conviction, indeed one to whose danger the civilized world has begun to awaken.

But if one believes that the Torah is divine, and that it enjoins Jews to study and observe its laws, that it guides them to better their interhuman relationships, that it requires them to forgo some of what the larger world might deem acceptable, that it asks Jews to remain

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apart from the nations even as it demands they be a light unto them, then, no, that conviction threatens no one.

Professor Heilman, of course, cites the example of radical religious nationalists in Israel. That there are such people and that some of them have engaged in violence is, of course, true. But they are, and only arguably, a tiny subset of the

nationalist-religious movement (and, in fact, disowned by that larger group, which may, like the radicals, believe in the theological import of the State of Israel but does not advocate violence). But *chareidim*? Those who have never regarded Israel as the *as'chalta de'ge'ula*, who reject contemporary Jewish nationalism, who are known for their single-minded dedication to Torah?

WHEN LONGING LEADS TO LIBEL

What could possibly predispose Professor Heilman to regard a sublime world filled with Jewish purpose and values – not to mention one that hallows the Torah ideals of equanimity and restraint – as a parallel to one filled with hatred and violence? The answer, it seems, is his befuddlement at the fact that the *chareidi* world has not quietly passed on, as his scholarly predecessors regularly predicted it would, but instead, has grown and developed, and continues to do so.

The professor pines for a time when Jewish observance in American Orthodox homes was compromised by social insecurity and the very newness of the experience, and when the larger cultural milieu had not devolved to its present prurient state, and thus presented less of a problem to religiously committed Jews.

He bemoans what he labels “the professionalization of day school education” and Jewish day schools’ employment of *chareidim* as religious teachers. And he laments the popularity among American Jewish youth of post-high school study in Israeli yeshivot and seminaries – from which young people return, he asserts, at best, to “create cultural enclaves where they can fashion a kind of quasi-yeshiva, or where they identify with and support the activities of the messianists who seek to hasten the redemption.”

The professor is certainly welcome, if he chooses, to lament the high state of contemporary Jewish observance. He is free to denounce Jewish day schools – even if they are widely, and rightly, regarded as the most effective insurer of Jewish continuity on the American landscape. And no one can prevent him from characterizing as some sinister “identity transformation” what might more accurately be termed spiritual growth.

What he should not, though, permit himself to do – either as a Jew or an ostensibly objective academic – is demonize a part of the Jewish world simply because he is frustrated by its success. □

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A Free Translation of an Historic Kol Korei — Public Announcement

During the past several decades, people have become enthusiastic followers of the news, and avid readers of journalists who infuse their news reports with their world-view on both personal and general issues. That is why not only every nationality, but also every group within every country has established its own "press," written and run by journalists who advocate its beliefs and promote its values through articles and photographs.

Throughout the centuries, Klal Yisrael proudly held itself separate from the nations, with the Torah as its banner and guide. Torah empowered Yidden to discern the difference between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, between what is beneficial and what is harmful to the individual and to our nation. The Torah Jew knew these things beyond a shadow of a doubt, so that no matter what alien and threatening storm winds shook the outside world, the Torah Jew was secure in his knowledge, and the foundations of his faith could not be shaken.

Unfortunately, lately, Torah Jews are being toppled from their previous, elevated level, and are slowly but surely being enticed to read and listen to the voices of outside journalists who, through high-sounding clarion calls, have ensnared the hearts of some Jews.

This is not the time or the place to write about the characteristics (or shortcomings) of individual journalists who adhere to the various sects that comprise our present society, especially since each one of them is a world unto himself. But one thing they all have in common: none of them belongs to the Orthodox camp, those who fear Hashem and tremble at His word, His Torah and His commandments.

Therefore, our nation's largest group, kain yirbu, those who fear Hashem and live their lives in the spirit of our written Torah, as well as by our ancient mesora, remain bereft of the one tool accepted among all civilized nations: a newspaper, through which they can express their world-view, their daas Torah, regarding major events both in their own country and in the world. And, due to this lack of a newspaper, Torah Jewry's voice is denied to the greater Jewish populace, who have little knowledge of their nation's origin, its centuries-old way of life, and the Torah that is its principal guiding light.

To right this wrong, and to fill this void, we need to establish a daily newspaper, both in our ancient holy tongue, lashon hakodesh, and in the vernacular [Yiddish]. However, since we will not succeed if we undertake too much, at the moment we will have to be satisfied with a newspaper in lashon hakodesh.

Therefore, since currently a weekly newspaper, called Hamodia, edited by the well-known Rav and Gaon Eliyahu Akiva Rabinowitz, shlita, Rav of the holy Kehilla of Poltova, has been founded, and since its inception it has been proven that this newspaper, with Hashem's help, has succeeded in fulfilling its holy mission, we, the undersigned, designate it a holy obligation to encourage every G-d-fearing person of feeling to support this newspaper. It is a mitzva to take this newspaper, Hamodia, into your home at its designated price, and to do all in your power to distribute the paper as widely as possible, because our mission of establishing a viable Orthodox daily newspaper will only become a possibility if the weekly gains a very large distribution, readership, and group of devoted supporters. In this way, the pure chareidi camp will no longer be dependent on the poison-infused reading material that is currently threatening the very foundations of our nation, Rachmana litzlan, and we will be able to unite to guard our holy religion and to encourage the spirit of G-d-fearing Jews, so that peace and blessings will be showered on Klal Yisrael.

Signed between the 33rd day of the Omer and Rosh Chodesh Tamuz, 1911.

(by the following Admorim and Rabbanim, zt"l)

Harav Eliyahu Halevi Feinstein (Pruzin)
Harav Eliezer Rabinowitz (Minsk)
Harav Dovid Friedman (Pinsk-Karlin)
Harav Chaim Halevi Soloveitchik (Brisk)
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Harav Mordechai Menachem Mendel ben Harav Simcha Bunim of Vorka (Otvokz)
Harav Pinchos Menachem (Piltz)
Harav Tzvi Hirsh ben Harav Dovid (Kotzk)
Harav Shmuel ben Harav Avraham (Sochatchov)
Harav Shmuel Tzvi ben Harav Yechiel (Alexander)

These names are listed in [Hebrew] alphabetical order, as they signed.

I receive the newspaper, Hamodia, edited by the Rav and Gaon Eliyahu Akiva Rabinowitz, shlita, Rav in the holy kehilla of Poltova. It is my strong hope that the editor will work with wisdom and insight without veering from the true path, the path of Torah and fear of Hashem, and that the newspaper will draw to itself the hearts of its readers as he informs them of the news and what they need to know. And I am sure that our Jewish brothers, sheyichyu, will recognize his efforts and work, and will support him.

Sunday, the 15th of Sivan, 1911

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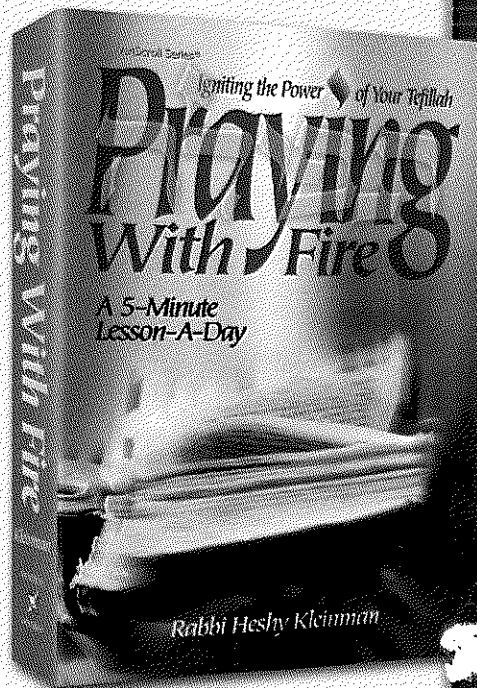
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