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THE Jewish OBSERVER

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WIPING OUT AMALEK

WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Rebbetzin Nekritz ז"ל
HER VOLUNTARY
TRIP TO SIBERIA

A FISHY TALE:
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TALMUDIC "SHIBUTA"

REMEMBERING
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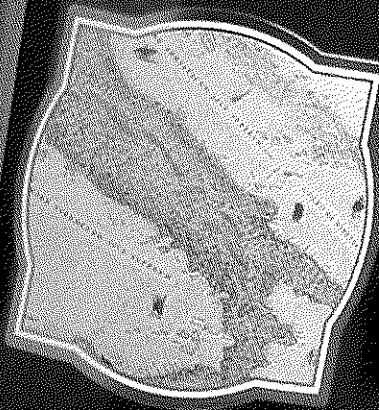
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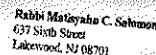
and don't forget to call us when you have good news (after your mother, of course...)!

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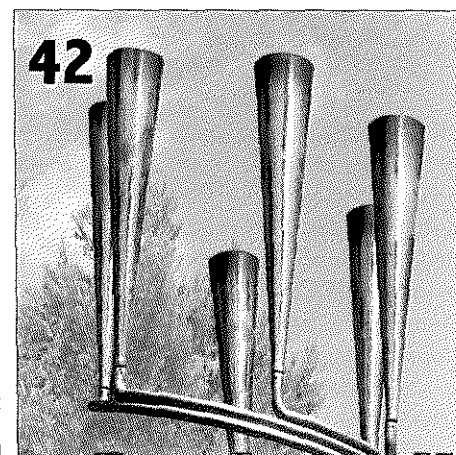
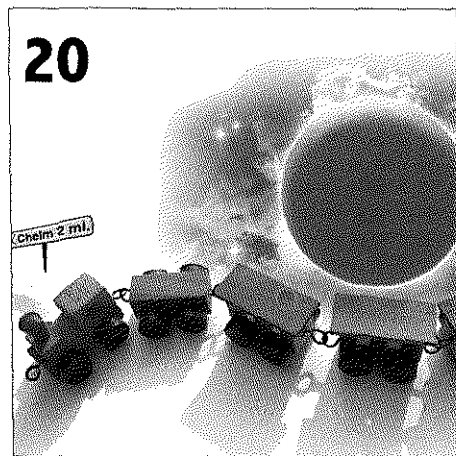
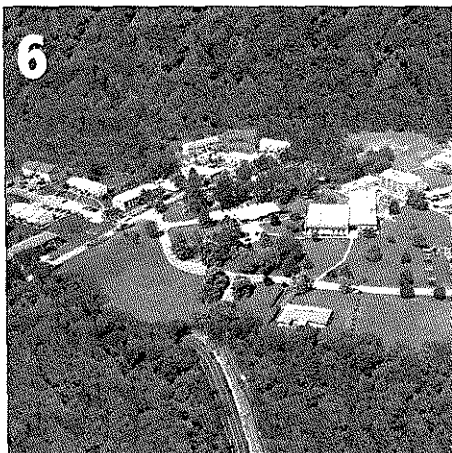
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ABOUT THE COVER

THE COVER PHOTOGRAPH OF RABBI NAFTOLI NEUBERGER זצ"ל (LEFT), LATE MENAHEL OF YESHIVAS NER YISROEL, TOGETHER WITH THE ROSH HAYESHIVA, RABBI YAAKOV RUDERMAN זצ"ל, IS DISPLAYED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE PURIM THEME. FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MORDECHAI HATZADDIK, HE WAS NOT ONLY A SHTADLAN (COMMUNITY ACTIVIST) PAR EXCELLENCE, HE WAS A KEY FIGURE IN THE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL RESCUE OF THOUSANDS OF JEWISH YOUTH OF IRAN, THE COUNTRY WHERE THE ANCIENT KINGDOM OF PERSIA HAD FLOURISHED UNDER KING ACHASHVEIROSH, SOME 2400 YEARS AGO.

"For the salvation is delayed too long for us, and there is no end to the days of evil..."

(MA' OZ TZUR).

Rabbi Shimon Schwab זצ"ל once told a father who had lost a young child shortly before Tisha B'Av, "Cry your heart out on Tisha B'Av for your son, for all Yiddishe tzaros have their ultimate source in *Galus*."

Rabbi Naftoli Halevi Neuberger זצ"ל was one whose very life circumstances were shaped and whose life mission was forged in the crucible of *galus*. As a young refugee from Europe, he was separated from his family, escaping as an immigrant to America at a time

when American Yiddishkeit was sorely wanting. His very birthday (17 Tammuz) bespoke *galus*. Yet, Rabbi Neuberger regarded the problems of *Klal Yisroel* in exile that had spiritually crushed so many others as challenges that he was personally called upon to remedy. He addressed the needs of *Klal Yisroel*, locally in Baltimore, nationally, and globally, but also of the individual, serving as a *ba'al chessed*, *ba'al eitza*, and *ba'al tzeddaka*

to countless people who turned to him for help and advice. By so doing, Rabbi Neuberger joined the select ranks of those in our history who have risen above their brethren to shepherd their generation through the travails of exile, helping to bring them one step closer to the end of a "salvation delayed too long." In the process, he became an acknowledged giant among men.

RABBI REUVEN DRUCKER

Remembering Rabbi Naftoli Neuberger זצ"ל

After the evening seuda on Shevi'i shel Pesach, we were visiting with Rabbi and Mrs. Neuberger. A treasured scene, it afforded a special window into the rarified lives of two great people who worked as a team. Mrs. Neuberger, a brilliant and wise woman in her own right, took great pleasure in her husband's devotion to the *klal*. She would tell us that a number of the highest corporate executives whom Rabbi Neuberger solicited on behalf of the yeshiva had recognized his brilliance, acumen and judgment, and offered him top

positions in their companies. (Obviously, Rabbi Neuberger had no interest in such endeavors.) Upon hearing of these offers, the Rosh Hayeshiva, Rabbi Ruderman, was skeptical whether Rabbi Neuberger would have been as successful in the corporate world, notwithstanding his world-class abilities, noting that his success came from a special *siyata diShmaya* (special help from Heaven), to which he may not have been *zocheh* were it not for his total, selfless dedication to laboring solely on behalf of *Klal Yisroel*.

Although Mar Shmuel was the *gadol hador* – the greatest Torah personality in his generation – he would stand in honor of Rav Yechezkel

because Rav Yechezkel was a *ba'al ma'asim*, an individual noted for his extraordinary deeds (*Kiddushin* 33b). The *Ran* wonders how Mar Shmuel knew that someone of his exalted status was permitted, and indeed required, to waive his personal dignity and demonstrate such reverence for a *ba'al ma'asim*. The *Ran* explains that he knew it from the verse "You should honor the presence of a sage" (*Vayikra* 19:32). Indeed, we show honor for a Torah scholar because his sagacity leads him to perform the deeds that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* desires. Therefore, included in the very mandate to honor a Torah scholar is

RABBI DRUCKER, A TALMID OF NER YISROEL, WAS A MEMBER OF ITS KOLLEL FOR TWELVE YEARS. HE SERVES AS RAV OF AGUDATH ISRAEL OF EDISON - HIGHLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY.

the requirement to pay homage to the deeds that flow from his wisdom. Evidently, deeds performed by a Torah personality deserve acknowledgment and recognition, even by the *gadol hador*.

Although our tradition does not precisely define the parameters of a *ba'al ma'asim*, Rabbi Naftoli Halevi Neuberger זצ"ל surely met all the criteria – in his personal life, in his dealings with others, and in his efforts and accomplishments on behalf of the Jewish people. An endless stream of people came to his door and called him by phone, each receiving his warmth, dignity, caring, and wise counsel. He served as a one-man physician referral service, an arbitrator of disputes, a career counselor, an advisor to *roshei yeshiva* around the world, a business consultant, an address for *agunos*, a supportive friend to anyone who needed to pour out his or her grief, and much more. The sheer volume of individuals he assisted, tightly sandwiched between the primary foci of his life (see sidebar) for almost seven decades, unquestionably entitle him to the appellation, “*ba'al ma'asim*.”

Anyone attempting to have a brief word with Rabbi Neuberger during the day in his office would have his conversation interrupted many times by phone calls coming from around the world – often about obviously weighty issues. With the utmost dignity, Rabbi Neuberger fielded each call with a combination of caring and incisiveness, and returned to his visitor's conversation without missing a beat. In the '70s, he would use the backs of IBM punch cards to record information pertinent to each phone call. On his desktop there was typically a stack between a half an inch to an inch of such “open files.” Each caller became another personal concern, and he would often call them back in a day or two to follow up and offer to be of further help.

The article that follows is an attempt, albeit feeble, to rise in honor of the Rabbi Neuberger we loved and who justifiably earned our respect as the quintessential *ba'al ma'asim*, for his acts flowed from the Torah that was embedded in his large heart.

DA'AS TORAH

In a discussion with one of his *talmidim* (Rabbi Shmuel Bloom, currently executive vice president of Agudath Israel of America), the *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Ner Yisroel, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman זצ"ל (whom we will hereafter refer to by his *sefer Avodas Levi*), explained that *da'as Torah* – advice and decisions formed through the prism of Torah wisdom and outlook – is not limited to great *roshei yeshiva*, and he gave Rabbi Neuberger as a prime example. One can only acquire *da'as Torah* by achieving a level of selflessness that allows for full objectivity and impartial application of Torah principles. This selflessness is most often obtained (although not automatically) by many years of full immersion in Torah study. The *Avodas Levi*, however, was of the opinion that it can be developed in an extraordinary *ba'al chessed*, an individual who is solely focused on the needs of others, when coupled with the requisite level of Torah scholarship and exposure to great *talmidei chachamim*.

PERVASIVE HUMILITY

Rabbi Neuberger's humble nature made self-disclosure a chore for him. As much as he understood the necessity for a Torah institution to choose an honoree for its annual fundraising dinner, and as much as he would extend himself to help other yeshivos, he could never allow himself to be honored. What others identified as his accomplishments, Rabbi Neuberger saw as *siyata diShmaya*. In his later years, he would always say that he was so thankful to the *Ribbono shel Olam* for allowing him to be one of His agents. In fact, no one ever heard him refer to his prodigious acumen or talents.

While the infrastructure was being prepared for the *Avodas Levi's* house on Yeshiva Lane (on the campus of Yeshivas Ner Yisroel), it was suggested to Rabbi Neuberger that they lay the pipes and drains for a second house at the same time so that Rabbi Neuberger and his family

could also live in a house. His immediate reaction was, “All the *rebbe'im* live in apartments, and I should live in a house? How could I have more than those who teach Torah?” He felt that *kevod haTorah* dictated that the *Rosh Hayeshiva* live in a presentable dwelling, but a plain yeshiva apartment was perfectly acceptable for his family. During the *shiva*, one could see the small, worn, and dented breakfront that contained a few well-used *bechers* behind Rabbi and Mrs. Neuberger's dining room table in their Yeshiva Lane apartment. It bore testimony to their total disinterest in material pursuits.

Rabbi Yaakov Kulefsky זצ"ל (see JO, Jan. '01) used to quote a Chassidic interpretation regarding the statement of *Chazal*, “Whoever repeats a remark in the name of the one who said it, brings redemption to the world.” When the ultimate Redemption comes, it will come because *Hashem* has so willed it, and He clearly does not want any mortal to take personal credit for it. So, whom should He choose to catalyze such an event, if not someone who regularly avoids taking personal credit for things, even mere words that he heard from others. Perhaps it was Rabbi Neuberger's self-effacing nature that gave him the tremendous *siyata diShmaya* to bring about major Torah accomplishments.

THE EARLY YEARS

Many aspects of Rabbi Neuberger's personal history are still not known by members of his own family. He was born in 1918 in the small Bavarian town of Hassfurt, some thirty miles northeast of Wurzburg, where his family ultimately moved for *chinuch* reasons. At approximately 18, Naftoli was encouraged by Rabbi Samson Rafael Weiss to study in the Mirrer Yeshiva in Poland, a radical departure from the path of his peers in Germany. He followed the *rav's* suggestion and immersed himself in the Polish citadel of Torah, where he was taught and mentored by some outstanding Lithuanian *gedolim*. It has been suggested that Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda Finkel זצ"ל became Rabbi Neuberger's role

model for devotion and responsibility to the *klal*.

The students from Germany who attended the Mirrer Yeshiva were provided special guidance by a young *talmid chacham*, Rabbi Dovid Kronglas זצ"ל. Reb Dovid would later be brought to Ner Yisroel as *mashgiach* and *maggid shiur* by the *Avodas Levi*, upon the recommendation of Rabbi Neuberger.¹ Indeed, Reb Dovid's rare combination of *mussar*,² *lomdus*, and *p'sak halacha* made a profound imprint on the yeshiva, as Rabbi Neuberger had predicted.

FATEFUL MEETING

Six months before *Kristallnacht*, the twenty-year-old Mirrer Yeshiva *bachur* received immigration papers from an American relative, arrived in New York, and headed to Baltimore to visit family. The second day after Reb Naftoli's arrival on these shores, he spoke with the *Avodas Levi* to explore attending his yeshiva, Ner Yisroel, which had been founded only five years earlier in the Tiferes Yisroel Shul. What might have been a perfunctory meeting extended many hours into the evening. Although the substance of what transpired is unknown, one thing is certain. The young European refugee was extremely impressed with the *Avodas Levi*, and the *Avodas Levi* must have been equally impressed with the German youth. Reb Naftoli enrolled in Ner Yisroel, and within three months was granted the privilege of having the key to the yeshiva's office, a

source of curiosity to fellow *bachurim*. It soon became revealed, however, that Reb Naftoli was using his spare time to help arrange immigration papers and affidavits for others still caught in the jaws of Nazi Europe, a practice he continued for many years thereafter. His career in *askanus* had been launched and began its meteoric rise.

Two years later, in 1940, he began assuming the administrative responsibilities of the yeshiva. His first major project was to build a permanent home for the yeshiva, at 4411 Garrison Boulevard. Newly introduced to the English language, identifiable by a German accent which was not stylish in the U.S. during WWII, and handicapped by the shortage of building materials because of the war effort,³ Rabbi Neuberger nonetheless raised the money for the new yeshiva building and orchestrated the *Chanukas Habayis* in 1943, in just two years!

YISSACHAR-ZEVULUN PARTNERSHIP

While the Garrison Boulevard building was in the process of being erected, Rebbetzin Ruderman ז"ה suggested to her husband that Reb Naftoli would be a fine match for her youngest sister, Yehudis (Judith), daughter of Rabbi Sheftel and Devora (nee Frank) Kramer. Rebbetzin Devora was the youngest daughter of Rabbi Shraga Feivel Frank, who numbered among his other sons-in-law Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, Rabbi Moshe Mordechai

Epstein, and Rabbi Baruch Horowitz.⁴ Thus, the bond between *rebbe* and *talmid* developed a secondary strength through their relationship as brothers-in-law, albeit that the *Rosh Hayeshiva* was some twenty years Rabbi Neuberger's senior.

For more than 45 years, Rabbi Neuberger carried the entire burden of fund-raising for the *Avodas Levi*, allowing him to develop hundreds of *talmidim* in the yeshiva and continue his pursuit of Torah study at the highest levels.⁵ While other yeshivos began burgeoning throughout this period, virtually no other *rosh hayeshiva* was provided for with a Zevulun executive director of such magnitude. For just those years, followed by close to 20 years of support to his successors, Rabbi Shmuel Yaakov Weinberg זצ"ל, Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky זצ"ל, and זצ"ל Rabbi Aharon Feldman שליט"א, Rabbi Neuberger certainly earned the title of *ba'al ma'asim*.

THE BEREN CAMPUS

As the demographics of the Garrison Boulevard neighborhood began to change and become inhospitable to the yeshiva community, Rabbi Neuberger identified and purchased a fifty-acre parcel of land in Pikesville, quite distant from the Jewish community of 1964. Over the years, he annexed another forty acres of land to preserve the pristine atmosphere of the campus and built a serene Torah village, composed of many clusters of apartment buildings and town houses, domiciling close to 100 families. The crown jewel of the campus is the *Beis Hamidrash* Building, which has been enlarged over the years to accommodate the large influx of students. The dormitories, dining rooms, and classroom buildings support the Torah study of over 860 students and *kollel*

⁴ See Rabbi Chaim Shapiro's "Torah Pioneers" – JO, June '74

⁵ The *Avodas Levi* was known as an *illuy* (genius) in Europe and spoke extensively in learning with many *gedolim* as a young man. The *D'var Avraham* (the Kovna Rav) (I:21) refers to him in a footnote as one of the great personalities in the *kollel*, and author of *Avodas Levi*, before he cites the *Avodas Levi*'s penetrating question.

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yungeleit. The well-maintained buildings and grounds project the *kevod haTorah* and *kevod Shamayim*, so emblematic of Rabbi Neuberger.

HIS WORK ETHIC

Rabbi Neuberger's watchword was "*achrayus*" – responsibility to the *klal*. Whenever he would speak, whenever he would advise, he would always slip in the term – a term he personally lived by. Occasionally, he would complain that there were not enough hours in the day. Often, Rabbi Neuberger would paraphrase the Gemara that there will be plenty of time to sleep after 120 years.

One *Motza'ei Yom Kippur*, during the upheaval in Iran, Rabbi Neuberger left *Ma'ariv* and headed straight for his office. At eleven p.m. that evening, he was spotted on the phone, still wearing his *kittel*, because he had been so immersed in phone calls to save Iranian Jews that he had not found time to remove it. Indeed, that image of Rabbi Neuberger cloaked in his *kittel* as he toiled at his desk to meet the urgent needs of *Klal Yisroel* could serve as the defining portrait of his lifetime of *avodas hakodesh*.

On a local level, Rabbi Neuberger's sense of *yashrus* (justice) dictated that the *rebbe'im* in the yeshiva always be paid on time. He would never consider "borrowing" from the *rebbe'im* if the yeshiva's funds were lacking. Once, when the yeshiva was forced to borrow many hundreds of thousands of dollars from a bank at prime interest to meet a shortfall, Rabbi Neuberger's face looked pained for some time as he repeatedly mentioned that *memmon hekdeish* (the yeshiva's holy money) needed to be wasted for debt service.

Integrity and honesty were not words he would often use, but they were ideals that permeated his essence. Indeed, the fact that he and Rabbi Moshe Sherer זצ"ל shared these values, along with an overwhelming sense of mission for addressing *klal* needs, brought them into a partnership of sorts over the years. While their friendship began in their days

as *bachurim* in Ner Yisroel, their close association blossomed in the early 1970s. Their concern for any possible damage that could besmirch *kevod haTorah* motivated them and several *roshei yeshivos* to found a yeshiva-accrediting organization known by its acronym AARTS. By participating, *Litvish* and Chassidic yeshivos would be eligible for government funding and would be protected from any allegations of abuse or corruption. Many political figures had told Rabbi Neuberger that Rabbi Sherer never asked anything

for himself. This gave him credence and entrée to the highest political leaders. In Rabbi Neuberger's own words (in his *hespeid* for Rabbi Sherer): "Because Rabbi Sherer knew certain people, like Dr. Samuel Halperin, he was able to get access to the people at the highest levels of secular education in America. Because of AARTS, between \$10 and \$15 million dollars goes to yeshiva students. Without the initial work of Rabbi Sherer, literally hundreds of millions of dollars would not have gone to the yeshivos." At the

During the past three and a half years, families that made weddings conforming to the Guidelines, saved many thousands of dollars in unnecessary expenses.

The Guidelines reduce stress and anxiety, and enable *baalei simcha* to enjoy the spirit of the wedding, rather than being focused on the excess trimmings

Simcha Guidelines

THE VORT

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

THE WEDDING

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

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

- No Viennese table and no bar.

THE MUSIC

- A band may consist of a maximum of 5 musicians (one of the musicians may act as a vocalist) or four musicians and one additional vocalist.
- A one-man band is recommended.

FLOWERS & CHUPA DECOR

- The total cost of these items for the entire wedding should not exceed \$1,800.

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same time, Rabbi Neuberger was highly effective in reaching out to the yeshivos and organizing them for their participation in AARTS.

Rabbi Neuberger seemed to have a keen sensitivity for both incipient trouble areas and opportunities for growth and expansion. As a matter of routine, when such occasions arose, he would telephone Rabbi Sherer, who invariably knew key people in the specific field. Thus, in that same tribute, Rabbi Neuberger recalled that when the Iran crisis arose, in 1980, a thicket of diplomatic difficulties and political pitfalls stood in the way of getting Jewish youths out of Iran.

Rabbi Sherer was close to Congressman Stephen Solarz, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on European affairs, who was able to prevail on the Turkish government to accept Iranian refugees into the country.

Similarly, when the Senate passed a bill to eliminate the draft exemption for clergy students, and the bill was coming to the House, Rabbi Neuberger turned to Rabbi Sherer. In his words: "In those years, our influence would not have been enough. *Frum* Jews did not have the power and influence we have today. It was important to enlist the non-Jewish clergy, as well. Through his friends in the archdiocese, Rabbi Sherer was able to convince the Catholic Conference to become the headquarters of the lobbying effort to exempt divinity students. We decided that the yeshivos had to take a back role and the Catholics and the Methodists and the Baptists should take the forefront." The strategy worked.

Regular contact between the two was routine, almost daily, and continued to bear fruit throughout the years.

Rabbi Neuberger's work ethic included the principle of *gadol hashalom* – working in peace with fellow Jews – and he was admired by the Baltimore Jewish community for it. Through his efforts, a diverse community has functioned in harmony throughout the years, despite many issues that could have divided

it. Anticipating potential problems, he pre-empted them by working behind the scenes. Not everybody always agreed with him, but remarkably, he had no detractors in almost seventy years of efforts on behalf of *klal*, most likely due to the sincerity he evinced, enlivened by the twinkle in his eye when he shared a word of humor.

THE PHILADELPHIA FIRE

Rabbi Neuberger felt an intense sense of responsibility for all yeshivos, not just Ner Yisroel. In late November 1988, the Philadelphia Yeshiva dormitory sustained a five-alarm fire, and the *roshei yeshiva* called an emergency meeting of a small, select group of *askanim*. Although Rabbi Neuberger's presence was *not* requested, he attended nevertheless.

It became clear that the Philadelphia Yeshiva needed a government contact who could cut through all the bureaucratic red tape which might impede the construction of a replacement dormitory needed by the following Ellul, only 8 months later. That afternoon, Rabbi Neuberger, accompanied by his devoted assistant Jerry Kadden, gained entrée to the mayor of Philadelphia, Wilson Goode, to marshal his cooperation. At that meeting, Rabbi Neuberger displayed his political finesse, framing the matter so that a politician would respond positively. Upon securing the mayor's support, Rabbi Neuberger then detailed the exact steps necessary for building approval and occupancy, and asked the mayor to call each specific department head in his presence and explain the urgency of the matter. They were thus informed directly by the mayor that this project was his top priority, and that any problems should be referred to him.

The next day, Rabbi Neuberger went to a construction firm that specializes in fast-track construction to prepare plans for the new dormitory. Although the firm, Whiting-Turner, deals exclusively with large construction projects on the order of stadiums and hospitals, the owner, Willard Hackerman, a long-time

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friend of Rabbi Neuberger's, accepted the project as a courtesy. The new dormitory was completed on schedule and at full occupancy that Ellul.

THE FATHER

Although he lost his own father just four weeks after his Bar Mitzva, Rabbi Neuberger intuitively understood how to be a father when he grew to maturity. And a beloved father he was, not only to his own sons, but to the *talmidim* of the yeshiva, the *kollel yungeleit* and their families, as well. His *levaya* this past *Chol Hamoed Sukkos* was attended by thousands who felt the double grief of losing a father and a precious asset of the *klal*.... Where they would turn for the fatherly advice he would unstintingly offer?

The role of a father exceeds what would be expected from the most caring outsider. For example, Rabbi Neuberger made over ten trips to New York to mentor a young *rosh yeshiva* who felt daunted by the task of fundraising. Rabbi Neuberger spent full evenings making solicitations with him for his new yeshiva.... In another case, he took the initiative to contact the wealthy uncle of a *kollel yungerman* who was experiencing financial hardship, and arranged for the uncle to send the *yungerman* a monthly stipend.... Rabbi Neuberger arranged with a food distributor to drop off a case of frozen food weekly to needy families.... Once, a member of the *kollel*, who was in the midst of difficult negotiations about the terms of his first position, called from New York for advice. Rabbi Neuberger took the next plane to New York to join in the contract negotiations. The many hours of effort were unsuccessful, and Rabbi Neuberger spent the return flight consoling the young rabbi.... When called with the news that an alumnus had risen in his job or taken a better position, he would communicate a joy that only a father could register.... Those who sent Rabbi Neuberger an invitation to their son's Bar Mitzva or a *chassuna* would receive

a warm *mazal tov* letter together with a small gift. When possible, he would "find time" to attend, no matter how distant the *simcha*.

And in times of sadness or grief,



Rabbi Neuberger was there for his *talmid*. A *yungerman* who had lost his father was visited by Rabbi Neuberger

on the seventh morning of *shiva*. Rabbi Neuberger stayed on until the *shiva* room cleared, and helped him that morning with the legalities and paperwork necessary for his mother's financial welfare.... In another instance, after being apprised by a *talmid* that his best friend had just been the victim of a terrorist attack in *Eretz Yisroel*, Rabbi Neuberger sat and cried with him for ten minutes. Upon discovering that the *talmid's* parents wanted the burial to take place in the U.S. rather than *Eretz Yisroel*, Rabbi Neuberger arranged to meet them. He negotiated a compromise: a funeral service would take place in the yeshiva in Baltimore, but the burial would be in *Eretz Yisroel*. As a meaningful consolation to the parents, Rabbi Neuberger arranged for the state police to escort their car along the Beltway after the service.

PATRON OF IRANIAN JEWRY

Founded 2500 years ago by émigrés from *Eretz Yisroel*, before the destruction of the First *Beis Hamikdash*, the Jewish community in Iran had maintained its *emuna* throughout the centuries. Thirty years ago, however, Rabbi Neuberger personally assessed the spiritual well-being of the Persian community before the deposition of the Shah, and concluded that Torah life in Iran would disintegrate if there were not sufficient Persian *b'nei Torah* capable of positions in *chinuch* and *rabbanus*. Initially, he planned to bring promising students to the yeshiva, develop them, and send them back to Iran to fortify their community. With the Islamic Revolution in '79, however, the Iranian Jews were placed in physical peril, as well. As a result, Rabbi Neuberger shifted gears to help Iranian Jewry escape to the U.S. and *Eretz Yisroel*.

He lavished personal care on the 800 Iranians who passed through the yeshiva over the past 23 years. When informed that a new group had arrived in the middle of the night, Rabbi Neuberger took out his personal checkbook and

The Ultimate Shtadlan

"Yoseif came to them [the butler and the baker in prison] in the morning, and he looked at them and they were depressed. And he asked Pharaoh's stewards who were with him in prison... 'Why do you appear downcast today?'" (Bereishis 40, 6-7)

The *Sforno* (ibid. 37:2) comments that the incidents that took place in Yaakov Avinu's life after he returned to Eretz Yisroel portended what would occur to the Jewish people during the era of the Second Temple, its destruction, the diaspora, and the events that will take place at the time of our ultimate redemption. Yoseif's question to his non-Jewish prison-mates became the turning point that led to Yoseif's meteoric rise to power and the subsequent deliverance of his family from the famine. Does the following account recapitulate a *ge'ula* foreshadowed by Yoseif's question?

In the mid-1970s, it became clear to Rabbi Naftoli Neuberger that the climate in Iran had become inimical to Jewish education. In these years prior to the deposition of the Shah, he recognized that the very continuity of Iranian Jewry was in jeopardy. As a result, he worked indefatigably not only to rescue individuals, but also to effectuate the salvation of what would turn out to be an entire *eida* (community) in *Klal Yisroel*. Although many events which took place behind the scenes in Washington and Teheran to orchestrate the liberation of the Iranian community still remain obscure, there is a personal incident recounted by Rabbi Yosef Tendler, *menahel* of the *Mechina* in Yeshiva Ner Yisroel, which sheds some light on the process, as well as on Rabbi Neuberger himself.

Rabbi Neuberger had assigned Rabbi Tendler the responsibility to apply for visas for the young Iranian men and women who wanted to leave their country. Halted in his tracks by governmental bureaucracy and resistance to aiding immigration, Rabbi Tendler reported back to Rabbi Neuberger that he had been totally unsuccessful. Instantly, Rabbi Neuberger dialed a government contact in Washington and explained the problem. His contact stated that he lacked the power to assist him personally, but gave Rabbi Neuberger the name and number of a colleague, a high-ranking bureaucrat who was in a position to expedite the visas. Rabbis Neuberger and Tendler quickly arranged an appointment to petition him in person, but to their chagrin, this pivotal official was totally indifferent and could not be induced to involve himself in the plight of Iranian Jewry. The case seemed hopeless. Then, there was an unexpected knock on the door of his office, and the official that Rabbi Neuberger had originally phoned for help was ceremoniously ushered into the room. He immediately hugged Rabbi Neuberger and expressed his warm and genuine appreciation for the rabbi. Witnessing this, the second bureaucrat did a total about-face. From that moment until approximately four years later, the second government contact opened the floodgates of Iranian emigration, allowing thousands of Jewish youths to come to these shores.

Curious about what had transpired, Rabbi Tendler inquired as to why the first contact, a non-Jew, was so motivated to help Rabbi Neuberger that he orchestrated such a dramatic scene in order to influence his colleague to fulfill Rabbi Neuberger's request. The explanation that he received was that some thirty years earlier, Rabbi Neuberger (at that time in his late 20s) had struck up a conversation with this non-Jew while attending a conference. In his typical caring manner, he became acquainted with the fellow and discovered that he was suffering from a severe medical condition. After ascertaining the details, Rabbi Neuberger did some research and referred him to an accomplished physician who ultimately cured him. Rabbi Neuberger's altruistic intervention made a lasting impression on his beneficiary, to the extent that when he ascended in the ranks of government in Washington, DC, he always put himself at Rabbi Neuberger's disposal to express his gratitude.

In the final analysis, a single, sincere expression of Rabbi Neuberger's characteristic concern for the welfare of his fellow man ("Why do you appear downcast today?") put into motion the *yeshua* for the entire Iranian Jewish community!

wrote a generous check so that they could go shopping without delay and get outfitted for yeshiva life.

The *Avodas Levi* was insistent that the Iranians maintain their *minhagim* and encouraged them to make a separate Shabbos *minyan* according to *Minhag Paras*. As a *Levi*, Rabbi Neuberger would attend this *minyan* after they concluded *kriyas HaTorah* to wash the hands of the Persian *Kohanim* who would *duchan* during *Mussaf* (as per Sefardic practice). Rabbi Neuberger would then stay for *Birkas Kohanim*, and give the Iranian *bachurim* words of *chizuk* after *davening*. No wonder that the members of this community would refer to him as "Abba." The former rabbi of the Shiraz community in Iran, Rabbi Yitzchak Baal Hanes, credits Rabbi Neuberger for preserving *Yiddishkeit* among Iranian Jews in all of America. His assistance to their institutions was continual and knew no bounds.

IN THE POLITICAL ARENA

During Chanuka last year, I sat together with Rabbi Neuberger at a 16-seat table in the old Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C., awaiting the arrival of President George W. Bush, who was still basking in the glow of his four-million-vote plurality. In recognition of the Orthodox Jewish community's support for his re-election bid, President Bush invited fifteen members of the Jewish community for a seventy-five-minute conference, followed by a Chanuka party and photo op for five hundred supporters. Well aware of the many elected officials who gravitated to Rabbi Neuberger and of the many government contacts that he had developed over the course of six decades, I asked Rabbi Neuberger how many presidents he had met during his career. I was astonished to learn that this meeting with President Bush would be the very first! I was taken aback that the person who would pursue and exhaust every governmental channel to rescue, save, or help another Jew could be meeting

My Years With Rabbi Naftoli Neuberger זצ"ל

From a tribute by Howard Tzvi Friedman

Rabbi Naftoli Neuberger זצ"ל was more than a mentor to me. He was a second father, a close friend and a role model all in one. Most of all, he showed me what it means to care for every Jew.

Rabbi Neuberger had no personal needs. He would buy a new piece of clothing only after one of his children told him he absolutely had to. I remember the ripped couch in the living room of his small apartment on Yeshiva Lane. He would never have changed it, but finally someone just gave him a new couch. While he guarded the yeshiva's money zealously, it was his grand vision that built Ner Yisroel into the major institution it is today.

I recall the first time we took a train trip together to Washington, DC. I always took the Metroliner, which then cost \$26.00, and asked Rabbi Neuberger if we would take the Metroliner. His instant response was, "I can get the MARC local train with a senior citizen discount for \$3.50." I tried to reason with him that the Metroliner took only 30 minutes, while the local train took a full hour. But he was adamant that he could not justify spending the Yeshiva's money on the more expensive train. That gave me the idea of offering to pay for his Metroliner ticket, which he accepted. Now he was able to save an hour on the round trip, and could use the extra time back in the Yeshiva at no cost to the Yeshiva. That was the best money I ever spent. Besides the obvious fact of making things easier for Rabbi Neuberger, it taught me a valuable lesson.



I was sitting in his office when he got a phone call and told me that he had to run. "Where are you going?" I asked.

He told me, "There is a famous composer who has just died, and I am going up the block to Levinson's funeral home to convince the family not to cremate him."

I had seen the article on the front page of the newspaper about this man's death and the plans to cremate him, and I said to Rabbi Neuberger, "I didn't realize you knew him."

He replied, "I didn't know him. But how can I allow them to cremate a Jew? I am going to try to convince them not to."

Just think about it. This was the leader of a major Torah *mosad*, 75 years old, one of the most respected rabbis in the world, and he was so bothered by a news item about an irreligious Jew that he took time out of his busy day to respond to it. Later that day, I asked him over the phone what had happened at the funeral home. He told me that he thought he had made some impact. The family was considering his request and had told him, "Rabbi, don't think that if we decide to go ahead and not cremate him that you will get a funeral out of it." Woe unto them that they did not recognize Rabbi Neuberger's *gadlus* and had so little appreciation for what motivates a great Jew.



A few years ago when Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland addressed a Yeshiva Ner Israel dinner. She began by telling us of a dilemma that had arisen a month earlier, when she was going through her invitations and noted that two of them were for events on the same evening. One was from President Clinton, for the White House holiday party, while the other was from Rabbi Neuberger, for the Ner Israel dinner. At first, she could not decide whether she should choose to have a photo op with President Clinton or to chat with Rabbi Neuberger. Then, she said, she came to the conclusion that presidents come and go, but Rabbi Neuberger will be here forever. So she came to Ner Israel. Today, Rabbi Neuberger is no longer with us, but the Yeshiva he built and the legacy he left will be here forever.



I was driving home from New York. After I finished a 30 minute phone conversation, my wife asked me to whom I had been talking. I said, "Rabbi Neuberger."

She said, "Oh! It sounded like you were talking to a friend." Perhaps I felt like his friend, but he was a giant and I will never be anywhere close to his level. But he had a special way that made me feel that he was truly a friend, not only to me but to my entire family.

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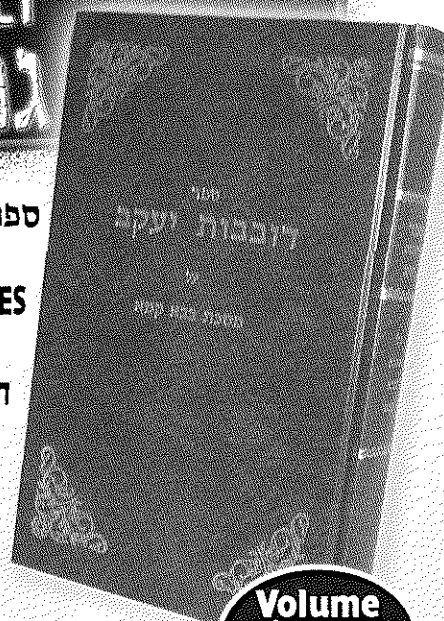
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an American president for the first time at age 86. But I felt foolish when I realized the simplicity of the explanation—Rabbi Neuberger obviously never needed a president's assistance in any of his myriad projects. He only made contact with those people who would serve the needs of his people. Had he ever needed the intercession of a president, I have no doubt that he would have secured it. His interest in politics was purely pragmatic and utilitarian, not for appearance, not to impress.

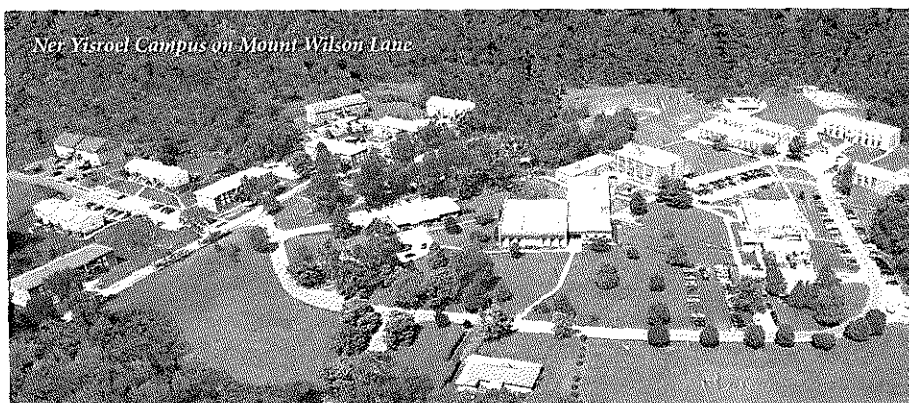
Rabbi Neuberger's stance can be gleaned from a statement he once made to a confidant who was asked to accompany him to a political event. When his companion inquired if there would be kosher food at the gathering, Rabbi Neuberger responded, "When you attend these affairs, you don't even drink a glass of water. If you anticipate you will be thirsty once you arrive, drink water before you get there." His attendance was purely selfless and focused on *tachlis*.

During the '70s, Congressman

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Clarence D. Long from Maryland (Ph.D. from Princeton and eleven-term Member of the House) served as Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and became one of the most influential lawmakers on Capitol Hill. Despite the relative insignificance of Maryland's Orthodox Jewish vote, Congressman Long was convinced that his biannual re-election to the House was in large part due to Rabbi Neuberger, and constantly sought his advice and blessing. As the *Hashgacha* unfolded, the congressman's loyalty played an essential role in the rescue of many Iranian Jews, as he permitted Rabbi Neuberger the use of his diplomatic pouch to transfer papers in and out of Iran at a time when the Iranian government would no longer allow communication with the United States.

Given his dispassion for politics, why, then, did Rabbi Neuberger attend the Chanuka meeting with the President? I believe the answer was revealed in his uncharacteristically halting and teary-eyed comment to the Commander-In-Chief. Rabbi Neuberger was the first to speak after the President opened up the session to the participants. He recalled the condition of the Jews in pre-War Germany – how all access to the government was denied them as they lived in deplorable conditions – land contrasted that dire situation with our current status in America, as typified by the fact that fifteen Jews did not plead for such a meeting, but were invited by the President for a discussion of issues facing American and world Jewry. He stirringly thanked

G-d for the opportunity to live under such salutary conditions.

Although Rabbi Neuberger did not make explicit reference to the fact that *Hashem* had granted him, the erstwhile immigrant, more than sixty years of *shtadlanus* to “work” the American system of government, I could not help but conjecture that the tears he shed represented his acknowledgment of the special *Hashgacha* he was granted to provide for his people's welfare through governmental intervention. Rabbi Neuberger, therefore, accepted this invitation to meet with the President out of profound appreciation. He had no reason, however, to attend the Chanuka party following the meeting or accept the opportunity to have his picture taken with the President, and therefore he returned to Baltimore to continue toiling for the yeshiva and the *tzibbur*.

AT THE LEAD

Two times a year, Rabbi Neuberger would lead the yeshiva in *davening*. One was for the final *kinna* (dirge) that is recited aloud on Tisha B'Av – “*Eli Tziyon*,” which bewails the decline of G-d's glory in the world since the Temple's destruction, and the pain and suffering of the Jews since. With this annual recitation, it was as if he publicly proclaimed his commitment to focus his energies on addressing these *tzaros* (troubles) and take personal responsibility for their resolution or amelioration. The remainder of his year was dedicated to this single purpose. The second time he ascended the *amud* was on the evening of Rosh Hashana. It was obvious to all that there was no one more qualified to arouse the mercy of Heaven on the Day of Judgment than the quintessential *ba'al ma'asim*.

Rabbi Naftoli Halevi Neuberger was a giant in our times in building and protecting Torah, and easing the plight of *Klal Yisroel* over the last six-and-one-half decades of *galus*. May his example inspire us to follow in his footsteps of *chessed*, *askanus*, and *achrayus* for the *klal*, in what we pray will prove to be the final phase of our *galus*. ✠

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RABBI HILLEL GOLDBERG

Rebbetzin Nekritz's Voluntary Trip to SIBERIA

NOT TO BE LEFT BEHIND

So it was that Jews were sent to Siberia in 1940. It was the times. It happened. Among the victims was Rabbi Yehuda Leib Nekritz. But to volunteer to go to Siberia? That seemed irrational. Truly “nuts,” in the vernacular. But Rabbi Nekritz’s wife Menucha Etel did just that. To boot, she had two small girls, four and one, respectively. She wanted to entrust them to the uncertain fates of the Siberian cold.

She would have it no other way. In fact, she fought for the right to go. She saved her life; those who regarded her as “nuts” lost their lives. Here’s what happened:

In the chaos and snap decisions at the onset of the Nazi Holocaust, certain rabbis and Torah students secured passage out of the Nazi inferno to Japan. But if they had married children, these children were not eligible. For example,

RABBI GOLDBERG IS EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF DENVER’S *INTERMOUNTAIN JEWISH NEWS*. HE HAS AUTHORED SEVERAL BOOKS ON THE MUSSAR MOVEMENT, INCLUDING *THE FIRE WITHIN: THE LIVING HERITAGE OF THE MUSSAR MOVEMENT*; *ILLUMINATING THE GENERATIONS* (BOTH ARTSCROLL); AND *ISRAEL SALANTER: TEXT, STRUCTURE, IDEA* (KTAV). HE IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES.

Menucha Etel’s parents, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Avraham Jofen, escaped and reached the U.S. as early as 1941, but their daughter was married; the route to Japan was closed to her and her husband.

Rabbi Nekritz was a Polish citizen who had fled from Bialystock, Poland, to a small town near Vilna, which fell under Russian rule just before the Germans attacked Russia. The Russians consigned Rabbi Nekritz to Siberia, along with many other Jewish men who had refused to accept Russian citizenship.

Their wives wept and hoped to be reunited with their husbands — the Russians said that the men would go first, the women later. But then the Nazis overran Poland and killed these wives and their children.

When Rabbi Nekritz’s wife heard of her husband’s destination, she put on one royal scene before the communist officer. She simply wouldn’t leave her husband. Her friends deemed her daft. She eventually convinced the communist officer, whose father was a pious Jew, to let her and her two little girls accompany their husband and father to Siberia. She survived, her friends perished.

“SHE SURVIVED” – SIMPLE PHRASE, MOUNTAINS OF COURAGE

That simple phrase, “she survived,” conceals mountains of courage and sacrifice.

She and her husband lived in a hut, 10 x 15, with their two girls – together with a peasant, his wife, their two children, and several animals. They slept on the floor. The temperature in the winter was fairly constant — about 40 degrees below zero. There was precious little food to be had altogether, let alone kosher food. Nevertheless, neither Rabbi Nekritz nor his wife ate non-kosher food all the years they were there. What they survived on — an occasional potato? scraps of bread? — is a mystery.

They sustained not only themselves. Roughly a *minyan* of yeshiva students, unmarried, had been shipped to Siberia with them. While Mrs. Nekritz was cooking scraps for them, he was teaching them Torah and *mussar*, bolstering their spirits. This was all after hours, of course. Slave labor was the men’s daily lot. Still, his nightly sessions of study with his students constantly made him

suspect in the eyes of the authorities.

They took him away at night for questioning countless times. Would he return? Menucha Etel Nekritz never knew. But she never asked him to play it safe and cease his Torah teaching. Quite the contrary. She encouraged him, despite the potential risk to her and her girls.

It was not just his informal yeshiva that endangered them. It was their dedication to Shabbos. They simply would not work on Shabbos, a commitment that entailed countless subterfuges and deals, which, however, were not always successful. So they were endangered on that score, too. Constant sessions with the Russian authorities, confrontational questions — was he a spy? — were Rabbi Nekritz's lot.

THE SMALLEST ITEM COULD MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Just as the communist officer had made an exception for Menucha Etel Nekritz by letting her go to Siberia, he also made an exception to the normal, extreme limits on baggage. Instead of seven kilos, she could take all she could carry.

The poverty in Siberia was so extreme that the smallest item — to be used for sale or barter — could make the difference between life and death. A piece of paper, for example. A needle. A bar of soap. These could spell life. Siberia had no commodities. On one occasion, Menucha Etel traded a precious, beautiful tablecloth that she had embroidered for six potatoes. Shortly afterward, the woman returned and wanted her potatoes back. (The tablecloth is now a family heirloom.)

The items that Menucha Etel brought to Siberia helped her survive at the beginning. In about 1942, packages began arriving from America. How did her parents find out where she was?

Rabbi Nekritz had sent telegrams to his father-in-law, Rabbi Jofen, in Brooklyn, or so he thought. The

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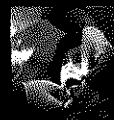
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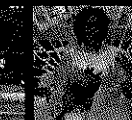
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operator never sent them. Months later, Rabbi Nekritz managed to send a postcard from a different Siberian town. Miraculously, it reached America seven months later. Imagine trying to make contact with family, not knowing whether you're successful, in the meantime living at 40 below, utterly removed from any normal routine. As soon as the postcard reached America, the Nekritzes received a telegram, which made them instant celebrities, because getting a message in Siberia in those days was equal to getting a

message from Mars. Then, packages started to arrive — half stolen on the way — but still, something. Enough to keep them alive.

(Parenthetically, Rabbi Nekritz continued sending food packages to friends and former students in Russia into the 1980s.)

In Siberia, Menucha Etel Nekritz had two memorable dreams. To relate one of them, it is necessary to fill in a bit about her background.

Born in 1914, she was the granddaughter of the *Alter* of Novarodok

and his wife Chaya. Her fabled grandfather, a Lithuanian *baal mussar/rosh yeshiva* died in 1919, while her grandmother lived until 1935.

He founded scores of yeshivos in Russia and Poland. His daughter, Rebbetzin Sarah Jofen, was deeply involved in all his endeavors. (See "And Sarah Was Listening..." by Shoshana Perr, JO, Summer '84.) But it was her daughter, Menucha Etel, who cared for her grandmother, the Bubba Chaya, in her old age. Laundry. Nursing. Feeding. Spoonful by spoonful. Whatever it took. The bond between the generations grew into the proverbial "threefold bond, unbreakable."

BUBBA CHAYA'S VISIT... IN A DREAM

Five years after the Bubba Chaya's death, her granddaughter found herself in Siberia, with her first child named after her grandmother. (Little Chaya is now the *rebbetzin* of Rabbi Naftali Kaplan, noted *mashgiach* in *Eretz Yisroel*.) Menucha Etel's first dream took place when her younger daughter, Shoshana, became quite ill.

The hospitals were simply rooms. There were no doctors, no medications. People stole from each other. There was nothing to do for a sick child. This was the dream: The Bubba Chaya appeared to her granddaughter and said: "Don't be afraid. The cat will be a *kappara* (an atonement, i.e., a substitute for Shoshana'le)."

This, of course, was not understandable, and little Shoshana still had a high temperature.

A *bachur* had obtained a whole potato — not the peels that were their usual ration — and brought it to Menucha Etel to cook for him. In his fear of being late to work, he attempted to remove the potato from the boiling pot, and accidentally poured the scalding water over a cat that got underfoot. The scalded cat was carried out screaming, and died. Shoshana's fever came down.

Menucha Etel Jofen Nekritz died last

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month at the age of 91 in Far Rockaway, New York. For the past 20 years, she was cared for by her daughter, Rebbetzin Shoshana Perr, the same Shoshana of the dream in Siberia, where her distraught mother saw her daughter rescued by Heavenly intervention, signaled by a post-mortem message from her grandmother.

Just as Menucha Etel cared personally for her grandmother, Shoshana Perr with her husband, Rabbi Yechiel Perr, the *rosh yeshiva* of the Yeshiva of Far Rockaway, sustained Menucha Etel in their home until the very end.

THE SURVIVORS REMEMBER

Only five people are still alive from that small group of students who studied Torah with Rabbi Nekritz in Siberia. Joel Orent once wrote about them that their cohesiveness astonished the local villagers and aroused their curiosity. They asked Rabbi Nekritz:

"What did you do before you came to Nizhne and Machavaya [the name of a Siberia collective]."

"I was a *rebbe* [a teacher and spiritual mentor], and I will always be a *rebbe*."

"Why were you exiled to Siberia?"

"So that you would see that there is a G-d in the world, and so that we, too, would see that there is a G-d in the world!"

He lived thus in Siberia and Kafkaz, and after the war in Lodz, in France, in Canada, and, finally, as a long time "*rebbe*" (as he would put it) in the central Beth Joseph Yeshiva in Brooklyn, first assisting his father-in-law, Rabbi Jofen, then in partnership with his late brother-in-law, Rabbi Yaakov Jofen.

He lived "*hishtav'us*," a Novarodok *mussar* term connoting a stable relationship with *Hashem* and with people, unaffected by one's circumstances. His *hishtav'us* and Menucha Etel's *Tehillim* helped them remain hopeful and alive.

And she lived with song.

Her children remember her beautiful

voice, and the songs of faith (*emuna*) and trust (*bitachon*) that she learned in her parents' and grandmother's home. Her children thought that they had learned all the songs their mother knew, only to discover that as recently as a few years ago, she was teaching still more songs to their own children, her grandchildren.

Rebbetzin Nekritz had what might be termed an inner sense of *hadar*, splendor. She kept this up as she nursed her grandmother in her youth, then in the wastes of Siberia and later in Brooklyn.

In the shed, her residence in Siberia, she had lived with animals — but retained her sense of inner beauty. And she demanded it, in a quiet and unspoken sort of way, from the yeshiva students she cooked for in Siberia, and later from her six children and her grandchildren.

It was a certain inner voice and sense of self. Who else would think of taking on a communist officer and demanding a trip to Siberia?

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YISRAEL RUTMAN

ABSURD TO THE POINT OF SELF-RIDICULE

"All ridicule is forbidden except the ridicule of idol worship" (*Megilla 25b*).

Pharaoh, as a self-proclaimed deity, is a favorite target of Chazal's mockery. When Moshe Rabbeinu is instructed by Hashem to make an appointment with Pharaoh, he is told, "Go unto Pharaoh in the morning, he goes out to the water [of the Nile], and

you shall stand there to meet him..." (*Shemos 7,15*). The *Midrash Rabba* (9:8) tells us that Pharaoh had set himself up as a god, and as such, it would not have been in keeping with his divine person to be subject to the same bodily functions as everybody else. So he would make an early morning visit to the Nile, away from the prying eyes of mere mortals, thereby maintaining the pretense of being above such things.

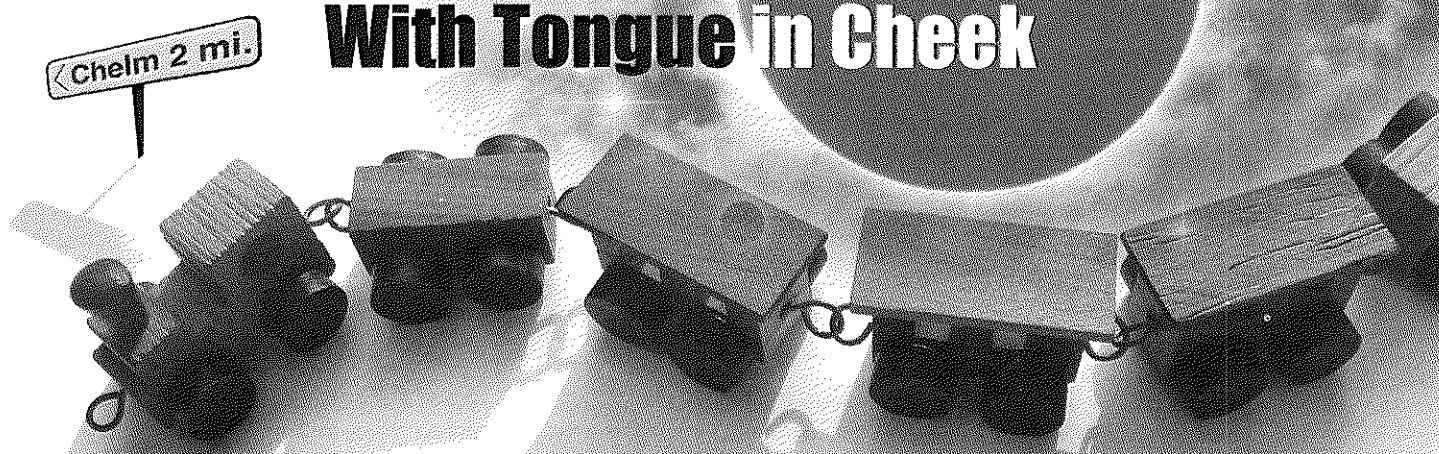
The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim 646*) relates that Moshe caught Pharaoh at just the vulnerable moment. "Let me go [to the men's room over here first], and we can talk afterwards." Said

Moshe to him: "Is there such a thing as a god that goes to the men's room?"

Thus, our enemies are not only defeated, but forever humiliated. Indeed, it's a mitzva to ridicule them. As it says in the Torah, "That you should relate in the ears of your children and your children's children how I mocked the Egyptians" (*Shemos 10,2*). The mitzva finds fulfillment in the gleeful chanting of Jewish children growing up in Eretz Yisroel today, "*Pharaoh bepajamas be'emtza halaila!*" ("Pharaoh in pajamas in the middle of the night!") For after all the imperious refusals to let the people go free, Pharaoh was

Wiping Out Amaleik...

With Tongue in Cheek



forced to get out of bed in the middle of the night to plead with Moshe to leave after the slaying of the first-born (*Be'er Yoseif*).

Sometimes, the idolatry is so absurd as to be self-satirizing – *Ba'al Pe'or*, for example, in which defecation in front of the idol was the preferred form of worship. In our times, too, the use of

the terms "teen idol" and "cultural icon" is no accident. Unfortunately, some of them are famous for more than the fifteen minutes of fame allotted to everyone in the future by a "culture hero" of a generation ago (whose career would make any parody superfluous).

COPING WITH EVIL

But the arsenal of *leitzaanus* (ridicule) can be directed at evil in whatever its manifestation. As Rabbi Dessler

writes in *Michtav MeiEliyahu* (Vol. 4, p. 283), "Sometimes we need the power of ridicule...in order that the spark of holiness should not drown in the sea of materialism and heresy. That is what Chazal mean when they say, 'All ridicule is forbidden except the ridicule of idol worship'" (*Megilla 25b*).

The gods of Western society – the material power and the glittering pleasures – are an overwhelming force that threaten to sweep everything before them. How can we withstand the ideological onslaught of the juggernaut of

YISRAEL RUTMAN, WHO TEACHES GEMARA IN YESHIVAS OHR ZICHRON YAAKOV (IN ZICHRON YAAKOV), IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES, MOST RECENTLY WITH "THE WINK OF THE IGUANA" (JAN.-FEB. '06).

the present exile?

Nothing is more effective, more withering, than ridicule. Nothing unseats the high and mighty of the earth more than to show that the emperor has no clothes. That his victories are empty; his pleasures unsatisfying and bitter; his ideas, which ever promise a better life, prove instead to be absurd and ruinous.

Rabbi Baruch Neventsall שליט"א of Yeshivas Knesses Yitzchak (Chadera) tells the following parable:

When the first railway was brought to the city of Chelm, the not-so-wise men could not believe that the train's ten carriages could be powered by some new, as-yet-unheard-of, mechanical means. They insisted that only powerful beasts of burden, such as horses, could move the carriages, and they must be hidden somewhere inside. Their search in, around, and under the train for hidden horsepower proved fruitless. Nevertheless, they were undaunted. After a long interval of confabulation, they announced that they had 90% of the solution! Behold! The last carriage was drawn by the ninth, the ninth by the eighth, the eighth by the seventh, and so on. It only remained to discover what made the first one go!

It is just so. Despite all the talk of a "big bang," scientists are at a loss when it comes to addressing the question of the origin of the material that went into (or came out of) the "big bang." Most evade the issue. Some choose G-d. The proposition that a superior race from a faraway star seeded our planet with life (credited to Nobel Prize winner Sir Francis Crick) is just too silly for one to keep a straight face.

In coping with a society that is drifting away from traditional morality at a frightening pace, it is helpful to have in mind what Rabbi Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל had to say about the gods of past societies. In a *responsum* regarding teaching about the idolatry of Greece and Rome in state-run schools, Reb Moshe ruled that a Jewish teacher may do so, on condition that he makes clear to the students at every opportunity the morally repellent and ludicrous nature of idol worship.

Reb Moshe also expressed his hope

that "some benefit may come from it; that they may understand that even nowadays there are various things that many people hold [to be true which are actually] foolish and empty...just as many generations, millions of people, erred in foolish and empty ideas, while only the Jewish people, though small in number, understood the truth as it was transmitted at Sinai..." (*Igros Moshe, Yoreh Dei'a* Vol. 2, *Siman* 53).

THE LEITZANUS OF AMALEIK

Every Purim is a turnabout; an annual celebration of the triumph of good over evil that exists in potential at every stage of history. The villains of the story are mercilessly lampooned every year. The haughty and beautiful Vashti is made ludicrous by the appearance of a tail. The cruel Haman becomes the hapless target of his own villainous plotting, and must give Mordechai the honor he coveted for himself – to be led in royal regalia on the king's own horse; and who hangs with his progeny from the very gallows he built for Mordechai. In the *Megilla*, G-d Himself wrote the script and was in ultimate control of the events, orchestrating the salvation of Israel at the expense of the overblown dignity – and the very lives – of their enemies.

In *Pachad Yitzchak* (*Chanuka, Inyan* 1) Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner זצ"ל explains that at the end of days, all the nations will come to honor Hashem and His people, Israel. Only the nation of Amaleik is slated for absolute destruction; only they will permanently forfeit their membership in the family of nations. Why is that they are fated for oblivion, when all the rest, who also denied the truth and also persecuted the Jewish people, are allowed to share in the glory of *Moshiach*?

Rabbi Hutner cites the *passuk*, "Reishis goyim Amaleik, ve'achariso adei oved."

Amaleik is the first of the nations to have challenged *Klal Yisroel*, and therein lies the seed of its demise. For when we emerged from the slavery of

Egypt, we represented the awe of an all-powerful G-d who intervenes directly and miraculously in the arena of history. The world was offered the stirring example of a people delivered from the moral squalor of the house of bondage to the dignity of freedom. Amaleik was compelled to attack, for his very nature is to tear down whatever noble ideals of spirituality, of human dignity, exist in the world. Amaleik is the *leitz*, the scoffer who denies with his laughter the light of the nations. And when the world does not laugh with him, when the seriousness of G-d's purpose for humanity survives his *leitzanus*, he resorts to violence.

The era of *Moshiach* signifies the rectification of the world, the restoration of human dignity in the light of Torah. Amaleik is *perforce* excluded because his nihilistic essence is opposed to *tikkun*. *Do not rebuke the scoffer*. All rebuke by definition calls for rectifying what has gone wrong. The scoffer, the *leitz*, is by definition impervious to rebuke. The

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tikkun ha'olam bemaichus Shakkai necessarily excludes Amaleik, the standard-bearer of *leitzanus*, of anti-*tikkun*.

AMALEIK YET THRIVES

But we are not there yet. Amaleik yet thrives. That the *Am Hashem* should be viewed as an impediment to the development of enlightened society is the greatest *leitzanus* imaginable. Yet, thus does Amaleik villify and taunt the faithful servants of *Hashem*. Our love of *Eretz Yisroel* and will to survive is called a roadblock to peace in the Mideast; our tenacious belief in the Creator is said to undermine the theory of evolution and the whole foundation of science and material progress; our refusal to compromise on religious principles puts their social agenda in jeopardy. What will become of the fruits of moral relativism---of the right to live like an animal and "die with dignity"?

It is no accident that the phrase in "*Aleinu*" – *tikkun olam* – should have gained such currency in recent years. In its contemporary usage, we encounter some of the most egregious distortions of the Jewish hope for the future of mankind. *Tikkun olam* has become the rubric for everything from careerism and ecumenicism to environmental protection, abortion on demand and same-sex marriage. This, too, is *leitzanus*.

But the show is almost over. As Reb Moshe concluded his *teshuva*: "...and the whole world laughed at us and despised us; and now all the nations know that the truth was with us...they will come to understand that it is the same today...."

In the end, *nahafoch hu* – the turn-about will be complete. Haman/Amaleik, the archetypal *leitz*, will take the ultimate pratfall. He will become the eternal laughingstock, dragged by the Divine hook off the stage of history, once and for all.¹

¹ In show business tradition, the unsuccessful comedian is unceremoniously removed from the stage by a hook of one kind or another.



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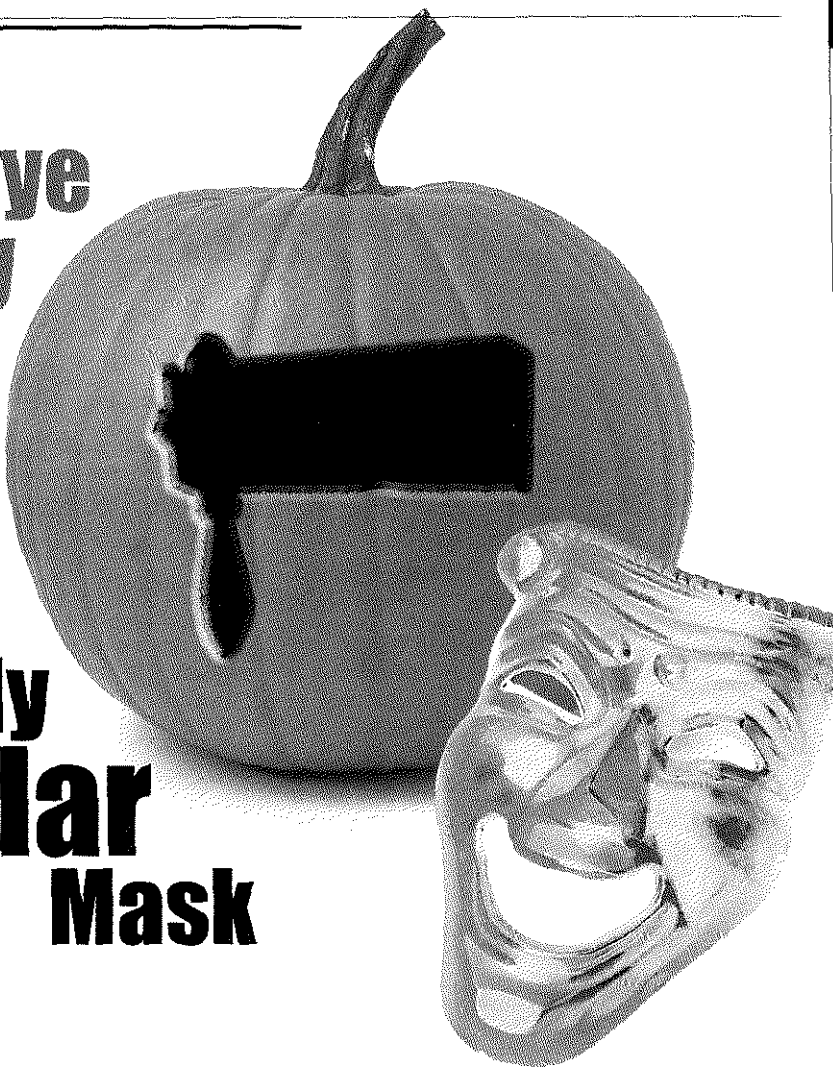
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MARSHA SMAGLEY

Goodbye to My October Mask, Hello to My Adar Mask



Sharing in the Joy of Return

As Purim approaches, I cannot help but reflect upon this past October 31 – Halloween. It was a treasured holiday in our secular Jewish community.

All the parents in our neighborhood share their children's love of Halloween. Until recently, I counted myself one of them. Children wear costumes to their school Halloween parties, and cannot wait to go "trick-or-treating" after school to collect buckets of candy. There are more "trick-or-treaters" on our street than on any other street in the neighborhood.

We are the only Torah-observant family in our community. I have been

MARSHA SMAGLEY RESIDES IN HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS WITH HER HUSBAND AND TWO CHILDREN. SHE HAS DEVOTED THE LAST SEVEN YEARS TO STUDYING TORAH, BECOMING OBSERVANT, GUIDING HER FAMILY IN TORAH LIFE, AND RECENTLY, WRITING ARTICLES THAT CONVEY HER HEARTFELT JOURNEY TO TORAH.

married for almost twenty years, and have a fourteen-year-old son and an eight-year-old daughter.

I was not raised with Torah; instead, I was raised "culturally" Jewish. My parents instilled good values and a Jewish identity, but there was little observance in my childhood home. I began studying Torah almost seven years ago, when a friend asked me to accompany her to a Torah class. I agreed, but entirely without intention of making any changes in my life. *Hashem* had other plans.

From the first words of Torah that I heard, I felt a passion to learn more and a thirst to draw closer to G-d. It was prophesied (in *Amos 8:11*), "Behold the days are coming ... when I [*Elokim*] will send a hunger into the land, not a hunger for bread nor a thirst for water, but to hear the words of [the L-rd]." Although I had never studied Torah before, these words resonated deeply within my soul. Eventually, I realized

that it was not enough merely to be inspired by *Hashem's* words; I needed to observe His commandments.

There was so much to learn. Gradually, I became observant and helped to guide my family toward Torah. This was accomplished with patience, perseverance, and tremendous help from Heaven.

Three years ago, my husband and I took our children out of public school and enrolled them in an Orthodox day school. My son was entering sixth grade at the time; my daughter was entering first grade. Our home and our lives now are permeated with Torah, which feels like having gone from darkness to light.

This past Halloween, as I observed the children coming to our door for candy, I perceived with true clarity the profound life changes that my family and I have made. I realized that I could view the world through one of two

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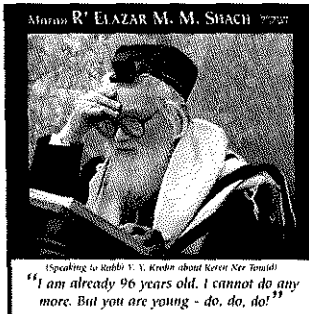
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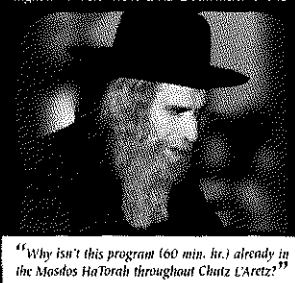
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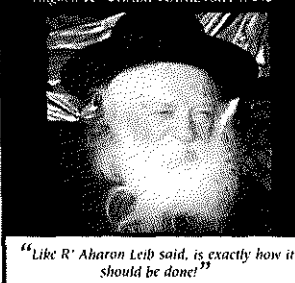
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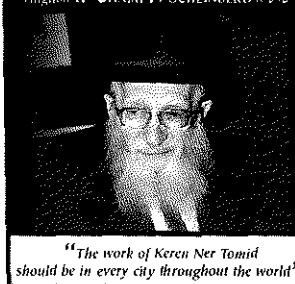
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alternate "masks," a Halloween mask or a Purim mask.

One dons a Halloween mask and costume to *hide*, or *disguise*, his or her true identity. The mask displays a projected, outer self, while one's *penimiyus*, or inner essence, is concealed. Most of my life, I saw the world through my Halloween mask, and perceived my calling as a Jew through the eyes of the secular world. I saw what a secular Jew would see: nature seemed to run on "auto pilot," and the external, physical world determined "reality." Everything, including Torah, looked finite through this mask, and it seemed entirely normal for Jewish children to participate in western culture's celebration of Halloween.

As a result of my Torah study, I began to see the world through Purim masks that portray Mordechai or Esther. A Purim mask does just the opposite of a Halloween mask; it *reveals* one's inner self, exposing the soul. Suddenly, because my dawning understanding caused me to relate to the world differently, everything

looked new, enveloped in light. Each day has become a miraculous opportunity, filled with purpose. If I try, I can transcend the limited, physical world to see Hashem's hand in every aspect of my life. I can see what is internal; I can see through to my soul.

SEEING THROUGH MY HALLOWEEN MASK

I used to love Halloween. Although I hated the skeletons and the bloody "scream" masks, I really liked the pumpkins. I loved watching my children's delight in wearing costumes and in going trick-or-treating. I admit that I actually wore a pumpkin-themed vest and turtleneck.

Later, I gave my Halloween turtleneck to our housekeeper. She kept wearing it on Fridays, of all days! Not wanting to see images of Halloween as I cooked for Shabbos, I eventually asked her not to wear it in our home. Of course, she

didn't wear it on Fridays deliberately.... It must have been a Divine test.

SAYING GOOD-BYE TO HALLOWEEN

Halloween began to seem hollow. I remembered having served as "room mom" in my daughter's kindergarten class. I was asked to help the children write on their drawings the names of the characters that they were going to dress up as for Halloween. Almost all of the five-year-old girls in the class, most of whom were Jewish, wished to dress up as a teen rock star. I was so glad that my daughter wanted to be a firefighter. In this world in which G-d is hidden, their aspirations seemed quite normal. It made me very sad.

I thought of Queen Esther, whose modesty and courage set an impeccable example for Jewish women. Women are, by nature, "inner focused"; yet, western culture trumpets their "external" aspects. I was beginning to learn about modesty in Judaism, and felt that Queen Esther was a far better role model, one that I wished to emulate for my daughter's sake as well as for my own.

PURIM TEACHES US TO SEE THROUGH THE VEIL OF NATURE

Why call the mask that manifests the light of Torah my "Purim mask"? The answer lies in the eternal message of Purim, which, I have discovered, is the very essence of what it means to be a Jew.

Purim teaches us to penetrate the veil of this world. On Purim, we read *Megillas Esther*, which literally means, "to reveal what is hidden." Recognizing that Hashem's presence is masked by seemingly natural events, the Jews of Shushan acted in unison to do His will. They fasted and prayed, accepting the Torah with love, and miraculously were delivered from the King of Persia's fatal decree. The festival of Purim, which commemorates this Divine interven-

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tion, is more than a celebration. It instructs us that seemingly devastating events are instances of G-d's prodding us, from behind the scenes, to return to Him. When all seems lost, the situation can be reversed in the blink of an eye, if only one transcends the world of nature to find G-d.

FINDING MY PURIM MASK

My Purim mask makes visible the absolute truth of Torah, despite the illusion presented by the natural world. Torah has penetrated the depths of my heart; my soul has found its Purim mask. The journey of Purim mirrors my very journey to Torah. My soul has gone from "wandering" to "wondering," and finally has found its way back to its Creator, to experience the pure joy and revelation of return.

Before I found my Purim mask, I was missing a rich and profound Jewish heritage, and the opportunity to pursue a personal relationship with G-d. I cannot imagine how I used to go through

the day without talking to Him, without reciting blessings, without thanking G-d for all that He has given me. My soul was starving, and I had no idea!

Torah teaches us that after Adam and Chava ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and tried to hide from Hashem, He responded by concealing His face behind a mask of nature. Of course, nature itself is miraculous, authored by G-d and continuously renewed.

Before Torah illuminated my world, I was engaged, unwittingly, in a realm of illusion. The Hebrew word for "world" is *olam*, from the word *he'eleim*, which means "hidden." The very word signals to us our mission, as Jews, to uncover the divine.

CHOOSING HOW TO SEE THE WORLD

I am so grateful to have discovered that there is more than one mask through which to view the world. While Halloween and Purim may appear similar to outsiders, with their cos-

tumes and candy, they are actually the antithesis of each other. Purim's joyous festivities are imbued with purpose, and Purim's eternal message embodies our very calling as Jews.

Megillas Esther (8:16) proclaims, "The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor." Purim conferred upon the Jewish people the ability to recognize G-d's providence, even when it is greatly concealed. We inherited the potential to see the world through our Purim masks. If more Jews were aware of this festival's pure light and joy, perhaps they, too, would reach for their Purim masks.

It is my sincere hope that my children internalize the lesson of Purim, that they become *mentschen* (virtuous people), and that they develop a loving relationship with G-d. I pray that they live in a world in which Hashem is seen rather than hidden.

May we all merit to personally experience the lesson of Purim, and to find Hashem in the darkness of our long and bitter *galus*. May we serve Him with passionate Jewish hearts and cause Him to reveal His light. And may we merit the pure *ge'ula* (redemption) of Purim. ✪

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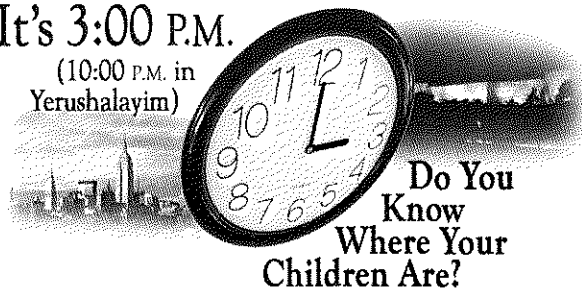
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Postscript

It's 3:00 P.M.

(10:00 P.M. in
Yerushalayim)



The previous issue of The Jewish Observer featured an article "It's 3:00 P.M.10 P.M. in Yerushalayim. Do You Know Where Your Children Are?" by Rabbi Aryeh Z. Ginzberg, which focused on the importance of the year or two years that boys and girls in their late teens and early 20s spend in yeshivos and seminaries in Eretz Yisroel, along with the hazards and pitfalls that can be part of the experience there. The article inspired much discussion, including the following response by Rabbi Shlomo Furst, Mashgiach Ruchani of Kollel Ruach Chaim, which is affiliated with Yeshiva Torah Ore in Jerusalem.

NO GUARANTEES

After reading Rabbi Aryeh Z. Ginzberg's insightful and telling article, several points should be mentioned. First, just to reinforce the message, *kedushas Ha'aretz* provides no guarantee of *aliya* or protection from *yerida*. Therefore, parents must take responsibility to safeguard their children's future in the best way possible.

Second, concerning the question of the ability of the yeshivos and seminaries to do more, the correct answer should be Yes rather than No. Third and last, Rabbi Ginzberg's article presents just the tip of the iceberg. The spiritual dangers are both much more subtle and much more grave than Rabbi Ginzberg's article depicts.

For example: according to one *bachur*, simply walking down the street is much more challenging here in *Eretz Yisroel* than in *chutz la'aretz*. There is an automatic affinity to fellow Jews and

Jewesses, whether they be religious or secular. Temptations are much more appealing.

Parents should know that night-time cafes easily become hangouts for *bachurim*. What they do there, whom they meet, and where they go afterwards should concern everyone. Checking for e-mail, aside from the predictable exposure to electronic pornography, runs another risk: purchase of both over- and under-the-counter pornography.

Another example: We should know that a seemingly innocent trip to the *Kosel* is also a chance to meet old friends — and even make new ones. Word has it that there are mixed gatherings not too far from this Holy Site.

Missionaries also haunt the *Kosel*, as well as other locations. More than ten years ago, a *bachur* admitted that while on a trip to the Dead Sea, he was approached by missionaries. As an enticement for continuing their conversation, the *bachur* was given directions to a "clothesless" beach. These are just several examples of how the *yeitzer hara* can lead us astray. The rule is, as *Chazal* teach us in the Gemara (*Shabbos* 104a): One who comes to defile himself will encounter no resistance. *Eretz Yisroel* cannot protect us against ourselves.

THE FIRST STEP: MOTIVATION

Chazal also teach us: "[When] one comes to purify himself, he will be helped." If we make an extra effort to succeed in life, we can achieve spiritual greatness. To receive *siyata diShmaya*, we must make an effort, for that is the proof that we truly want

it. *Eretz Yisroel* can contribute to this. Before embarking upon any trip, we must realize why we are taking the trip; what are our motivations, what are the purpose and the goal that we seek.

Simply because everyone else is doing it, it becomes expected and even required — but that is not sufficient reason to warrant a year or two in *Eretz Yisroel*. Our presence in *Eretz Yisroel* is a mitzva, and therefore requires as much proper intention, *lishma* — especially on the part of the parents — as any other mitzva. If not, the results could be disastrous.

Tosafos (*Chagiga* 15a) list many causes for the heretical demise of *Acheir* (Rabbi Elisha ben Avuvhu). One is that *Acheir's* father was so impressed with the glory and honor bestowed on those who learn Torah, that at the time of *Acheir's* *bris milla*, he decided that his son should become a *ben Torah*. This decision, however, did not stem from pure motivations. It was *shelo lishma*. Therefore, although the consequences were not apparent for many years, the hope that *Acheir* would be a *ben Torah* was not realized. In the end, *Acheir* turned far from the true path, resulting in spiritual ruin.

It is incumbent on us to help our children far before their departure to *Eretz Yisroel*. Many of those who come to *Eretz Yisroel* do succeed, but we cannot be naïve. Everyone is at risk. Our children's success starts with us; our motivations are vital. Realizing this, we can take practical steps to ensure that our children will be as protected and productive as possible.

First, we must know our sons and daughters. Putting all of our hopes and dreams aside, we must carefully evaluate

what type of yeshiva or seminary is best for them. What are their goals? What are their dreams? Many times, we must ask their teachers and friends, for they may know more about our children than we do. We must know our children's strengths and weaknesses, for they will soon be on their own and away from our direct supervision.

Even when children live at home, today's world makes it almost impossible to shelter them from negative influences. Once they are in *Eretz Yisroel*, it is even harder. Away from home, the *yeitzer hara*, which is very active in young adults, will exert a great influence.

Second, we must actively research which yeshiva or seminary will best suit our children's needs, especially in regard to supervision. Although Rabbi Ginzberg's article states that educators in *Eretz Yisroel* maintain that they cannot do more than what is currently being done, there is a different view: that if parents would wholeheartedly support yeshiva policies of discipline, much more could be done.

"*Shemira, shemira*, and then more *shemira*" is excellent and necessary advice. But for yeshivos and seminaries to be successful, we need parental participation both before and after their children come to *Eretz Yisroel*.

WHEN PARENTS BACK THE SCHOOLS

Third, parents must back the staffs in their efforts to keep watch over their children. Parents should not supply their children with cell-phones, iPods, palms – anything that will give our young adults access to unwanted influences. Also, too much money is a negative factor. Credit cards and monthly budgets of more than \$100 are an invitation to trouble. Alcohol is not the only addictive substance freely available here in *Eretz Yisroel*.

If our sons and daughters are coming to *Eretz Yisroel* for an *aliya*, let them leave the technology and excess money back home. Funds are much better spent on hiring an experienced tutor to help

guide the *talmid* through the difficulties of advanced learning — and also steer him through the challenges of life.

We must foresee every possible danger. The *nisyonos* begin even before the movies start to play during the air flight. Mini vacation stopovers in European cities are an increasingly popular way to get the most from the travel dollar. We must advise our sons and daughters on avoiding such temptations.

Moreover, we have to realize the irreversible damage that occurs to *shteiging* when mid-z'man, we summon our chil-

dren home to join a family or friend's *simcha*. Bringing them home before the z'man ends also ruins the *ruach* of the *beis midrash* and encourages others to follow suit. If we value Torah, we should be careful not to cause *bittul* Torah.

"OFF SHABBOS," "FREE SHABBOS," OR "OUT SHABBOS"?

In selecting a yeshiva or seminary, we should be sensitive to how the *talmidim* are allowed and

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encouraged to spend their non-scheduled time. *Bein hasedarim* (between classes), *erev Shabbos*, and *Shabbos* are dangerous times. Expressions such as "off Shabbos/free Shabbos" are indicative of a lax attitude; there is no taking off or getting free from our responsibility to put all of our time and energies to the best use possible. Using the phrase "out Shabbos" subtly but effectively transmits this message. We may be going somewhere else, but we are taking our responsibilities with us.

Also, the school's involvement in *bein hazemanim* (intercession) activities

must be investigated. Are there organized trips, and are they safe? Driving in *Eretz Yisroel* can be very dangerous. Are *talmidim* allowed to tour by themselves? Will they be going to hotels, movies, or worse?

During the *z'man*, we must speak frequently with those who know our children. If the *roshei yeshiva* and *rebbe'im*, and especially our children, know we want to *shep nachas*, everyone will put in extra efforts to give us the good news we want to hear. Also, we should try to get to know our children's roommates and *chavrusos*. A semi-regular phone call, beginning

with a friendly, "*Shalom Aleichem!* How are you and my son doing in yeshiva?" indicates our concern. If we take an honest interest, we can get honest answers. Do not be content with past reports and performance. The *yeitzer hara* can change everything overnight.

Even if a yeshiva has a curfew and a bed-check at midnight, this does not preclude the possibility of "getting out" for a few hours between one and three a.m., returning, sleeping and getting to *davening* by seven-thirty. The roommates and *chavrusos* will know if someone is sleeping at night or during *seder*. If the *rebbe* happens to notice that someone is sleeping during *shuir*, most likely there is a negative reason for it. Roommates and *chavrusos* may know the truth.

Ideally, a dormitory should have counselors who are experienced, understanding and accessible; people who are good role models, particularly in the *derech eretz* of how to get along with people, how to keep a room and personal belongings clean and neat. Surprisingly, but true, knowing that there is a "big brother" who is a good friend waiting back at the dorm makes it so much easier to return from "off campus" diversions on time. It also makes it easier not to go out at all!

If we hope that our children will change for the better in *Eretz Yisroel*, then we must prepare them for a real change. Let them leave all the useless distractions behind so that they can devote themselves entirely to their studies, to growth in *yir'a*, *ahava*, *middos*, *avoda* and *chessed*. We have to ask ourselves if we really want all these vitally important virtues for our children. If we do, we must prepare them and pray for their success.

Prayers are answered if they are honest. Can we truly pray for our children to be spared spiritual demise if we personally focus on the temptations of this world? When our children visit the *Kosel*, will they prepare to meet *Hashem*, or will they prepare to meet friends? So much of what they do depends on us.

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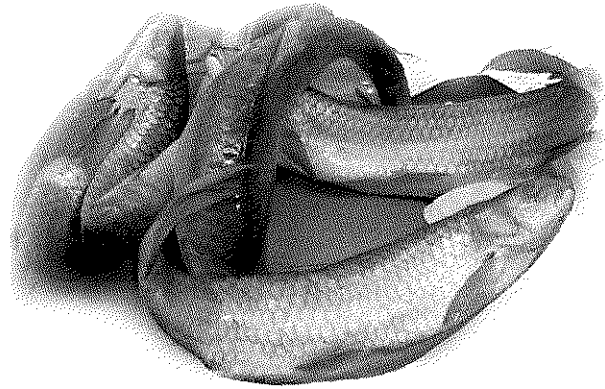
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A Fishy Tale

Identifying the Talmudic Shibuta



Rava ate it for his Shabbos meal. It is the most widely mentioned fish in the Talmud. And yet, for over a thousand years, there has been uncertainty and confusion about the identity of the *shibuta*.

The Jews of the biblical and talmudic periods were very much in touch with nature and knew a great deal about the plant and animal kingdoms. The *Tanach* records names of numerous plants, animals, and birds, but never identifies a particular species of fish.¹ For example, when listing the kosher and non-kosher species, the Torah names all of the kosher land animals and four examples of non-kosher animals, and it lists all of the non-kosher birds and the kosher grasshoppers by name. But with regard to fish, there are no names, neither kosher nor non-kosher. Rabbinic literature does list fish names, but only rarely, with a total of only five names appearing in the Mishna and a few dozen in the Talmud. Because Babylonian life was centered on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, it is reasonable to assume that for the *Amora'im* of the Babylonian Talmud, fish was an important item on their menu. Of these, probably the most prominent fish named in rabbinic

literature is the *shibuta*, which is cited in a host of different contexts as a popular and tasty fish. Given the multitude of occurrences in the Talmud, it is understandable that attempts have been made to identify it, and given the variety of clues, it is somewhat surprising that the suggestions have been so divergent and seemingly erroneous.

Perhaps the most famous context in which the *shibuta* appears is in the delightful story regarding kosher and permitted equivalents of non-kosher foods and prohibited actions.² The Gemara (*Chullin* 109b)³ records that Yalta, the wife of Rav Nachman, noted that every item that G-d prohibited has a permitted counterpart. For example, He prohibited blood, but He permitted liver [which is halachically regarded as made of blood]; He prohibited the *cheilev* (specific fats) of domesticated animals [*beheima*], but permitted it in non-domesticated ones [*chaya*]; He prohibited the flesh of swine, but permitted

the brain of the *shibuta* [a fish whose brain tastes like pork].⁴ Based on this categorical observation, she requested the taste of meat cooked with milk. In response, her husband ordered up some broiled udder. The *shibuta* was thus recognized for its "special" taste.

We know that Yalta was not describing a rare treat because there is evidence that the *shibuta* was widely eaten in Bavel. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 119a, *Kiddushin* 41a) illustrates various methods by which the *Amora'im* would involve themselves in Shabbos preparations, and as one example, states that Rava would personally salt the *shibuta* for the Shabbos meal. From the fact that Rava prepared it regularly for Shabbos it is clear that it was a popular fish which

4 That one food can mimic another, and even that a fish can taste like pork is not unheard of. There is a fish found in the Amazon known as the tambaqui (*Colossoma macropomum*) that is supposedly a delicious fish with a light, mild pork taste. And it is kosher. See <http://www.acuteangling.com/Peacock/Morethan.htm> where it states: "The tambaqui is the best tasting fish I have ever eaten, bar none. It is typically grilled, its large ribs making generous individual servings. With its firm, fleshy meat and a taste like light, mild pork, it is a wonderful treat. Even if you aren't lucky enough to come across one on a fishing trip and enjoy it fresh from the river, all of the better restaurants in Manaus will offer very, very good tambaqui dinners. This is a meal you shouldn't miss." Of course the tambaqui, being a South American fish, is clearly not the Talmudic *shibuta*.

That different foods could be almost identical in taste is not uncommon. See, for example, the letter to the editor, *Science News* 156:19 (July 10, 1999) that the barndoor skate tastes so much like scallop that unscrupulous restaurateurs are known to have "punched" "scallops" out of skate fins.

1 The only possible exception is the *liviyan*, created by G-d on the fifth day of creation. See *Pardeis Yoseif*, *Vayikra* 11:9 and *Ba'al Haturim*, *Vayikra* 11:9 regarding fish not having names.

RABBI ZIVOTOFSKY LIVES IN BEIT SHEMESH, FROM WHERE HE WRITES WIDELY ON JEWISH TOPICS. HIS LAST APPEARANCE IN THESE PAGES WAS "TAX FILING SEASON - AS REQUIRED BY HALACHA" (APR. '05).

2 On the desirability of craving such equivalents, see Ari Z. Zivotofsky, "Baco Bits and Non-Kosher Taste: Halacha and Hashkafa," *The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, Sukkos 5766 / Fall 2005, 50:89-109.

3 Parallel versions of this account exist in various other *Midrashim*, most dated later than the Talmud. For example: *Vayikra Rabba* (Vilna), *parasha* 22; *Tanchuma* (Buber), *Shemini* 12; *Tanchuma* (Warsaw) *Shemini*, 8; *Midrash Aggada* (Buber, p. 30) *Vayikra* 11; *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Shemini* 536; *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Tehillim*, 888. The variations between the texts are mostly minor. For example, the addition of *shatnez/tzitzis*, spleen in the place of liver, and the tongue of the *shibuta* in place of its brain.

enjoyed a status that qualified it to be served by an *Amora* on Shabbos.

The *shibuta* was also thought to impact, both positively and negatively, on one's health. A salted *shibuta* was recommended as a treatment for *yarkuna* (jaundice?) (*Shabbos* 110b), and a *shibuta* in the month of Nissan was considered inauspicious because it can lead to *tzara'as* (*Pesachim* 112b).

In several contexts, the Talmud discusses the laws restricting plowing with different species of animals. In an interesting twist, it (*Babba Kamma* 55a,⁵ *Sanhedrin* 59b)⁶ queries about plowing with a fish and a goat yoked together. The fish that is cited as capable of plowing is the *shibuta*, indicating that it is a relatively large fish.

POST TALMUDIC DISCUSSIONS

References to the *shibuta* did not vanish with the closing of the Talmud. Rav Hai Gaon mentions it in his commentary to *Taharos*.⁷ He identifies the *kulis ha'ispanon* mentioned in the Mishna in *Shabbos* 22:2 and *Machshirin* 6:3 as *kufia* in rabbinic language, and in the yeshivos, he says, this is understood to be the *shibuta*. The *kufia* mentioned by Rav Hai Gaon is mentioned in *Pesachim* 39a as having an extremely bitter taste, and is suggested and then rejected as a possible source for *marror*. *Rabbeinu Chananel*, in commenting on that Gemara, says that the *kufia* is the *shibuta*, which is the *kulis ha'ispanon*, and its gall bladder is very bitter tasting.⁸

The *Rambam* likewise commented on the Mishnaic term *kulis ha'ispanon*. He identifies the *kulis ha'ispanon* as a fish with a very thin skin that in the

west is known as *al-shabut*. He does not use the word *shibuta*, but seeing that Rav Hai Gaon and the *Rambam* are discussing the same fish, it is likely that *al-shabut* is *Rambam's* term for *shibuta*. Rav Yosef Kapuch in his commentary on the *Rambam's* commentary (p. 405, note 7) identifies the fish. He writes that it is a small fish that is found in rivers year-round; it has a small head and a wide body covered with fins along the entire length of the body. In English it is called Sole, and in German, *schollen*. In modern Hebrew, it is called "*dag Moshe Rabbeinu* – the fish of Moses."⁹ Furthermore, it is not, as some who do not have a tradition suggest, the Spanish mackerel (*scomber colias*). Rav Kapuch is implying that unlike those other people, he does have a tradition as to the fish's identity, and it is sole. Interestingly, he suspects that *Rambam* never saw the fish, because he comments that *Rambam's* description of a "very thin skin" is based on a Mishna (*Shabbos* 22:2). If the *Rambam* was actually familiar with the fish, why the need to base a physical description on a Mishna?

The *Aruch* (*Kohat* ed., vol. 8 p.11 s.v. *shibut*) identifies it as a large fish that is found in "*Aspania*," and equates the *alshaboot* (Arabic) with the *shibuta* (Hebrew) and the *kufya* (rabbinic Hebrew). The *Aruch* (*Kohat* edition, vol. 1, page 189-190, s.v. *spanin*) also suggests that the fish called *ispania* in certain places is called in Hebrew (see *Shu"t Mishne Halachos* 13:147 that it may be Aramaic) *shibuta*. He further cites an additional tradition that identified it with the *tunina* (tuna; *thunnus*). The *Rosh* (*Shu"t HaRosh*, 2:16) notes that the *shibuta* was eaten in France, as well.

MODERN IDENTIFICATIONS

In the last 150 years, a variety of attempts have been made to identify the many animals and plants of the

Talmud, including, of course, the *shibuta*. Ludwig Lewysohn (1819-1901)¹⁰ was a rabbi in Germany and Stockholm, had a doctorate from the University of Halle, and was called a *chacham* by Rabbi David Zvi Hoffman (*Melameid Leho'il*, YD:21). Lewysohn identified the *shibuta* as *Acipenser* (sturgeon – which is not kosher!). Interestingly, he (p. 270) identifies the *chamra deyama* ("sea donkey"; cf. AZ 39a) as the *shibut* and belonging to the genus *Gadus*, which includes many types of codfish.

Yisrael Aharoni (Aharonovitz) (1882-1946) was born in Vidgy, learned in Telz Yeshiva, and moved to Israel in 1901, where he became a pioneer of research of fauna of *Eretz Yisroel* and neighboring countries. He established the Zoological Museum at the Hebrew University, where he was a lecturer on zoology. He identified *shibuta* as *Scomber scomber* (mackerel).¹¹

Menachem Dor (*Hachai Bimei Hamikra Hamishna Vehatalmud*, 1997, page 174), for many years a zoologist at Tel Aviv University, identified it as *Merluccius rafinesque* (codfish). He cites Lewysohn's identification of *Acipenser*, but rejects it out of hand because, he says, sturgeon is not found in waters near Israel. [Furthermore, sturgeon is not kosher.-N.W.]

Dr. Fred Rosner (*The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 25, 1972: 628), in discussing treatment for jaundice, cites the Talmudic suggestion (*Shabbos* 110b) of boiling the head of a salted *shibuta* in beer and drinking it. Regarding the *shibuta*, he notes that it is the "name of a fish, probably mullet." He provides no source for this identification, but it is likely that he took it from Marcus Jastrow's dictionary of Aramaic. Jastrow (p. 1556) translated *shibuta* as: "name of fish, probably mullet (cephalus)." *Mugil cephalus* is the Latin name for the Flathead mullet (family: *Mugilidae*.) It is an important commercial fish in

¹⁰ Author of the well-respected *Die Zoologie des Talmuds. Eine umfassende Darstellung der rabbinischen Zoologie, unter steter Vergleichung der Forschungen älterer und neuerer Schriftsteller*. Frankfurt A. M., Baer, 1858.

¹¹ *Zichronot Zoolog Ivri*, 2, Tel Aviv, 5706, p. 253.

⁵ Based on this Gemara, *Tosafos* to AZ 39a, s.v. *Ve'simancha*, identifies the *shibuta* with the *az shel yam* (*iza d'yama*, lit., goat of the sea). It is described in *Babba Basra* 74a as a massive mythical fish measuring 300 *parsaos* in length with inscribed horns.

⁶ Also cited in *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Bereishis remez* 15

⁷ J.N. Epstein, *The Gaonic Commentary on the order Taharos* attributed to Rav Hai Gaon, 5742, p. 130

⁸ I thank Rabbi Dovid Cohen for this source.

⁹ The binomial name is *Solea quensel*, and in modern Hebrew it is also known as *sulit*. Dor (*Hachai Bimei Hamikra Hamishna Vehatalmud*, 1997, p. 178) identifies the sole as the Talmudic (*Eruvin* 28a) *putaisa*.

many parts of the world and is found in the Mediterranean, although not in the waters off of Iraq. Jastrow provides as his source Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, first volume, 4029.

As noted above, Rav Kapuch identified the *al-shabut* as the Sole. Others have suggested that the *shibuta* is the *turbot* (*steinbuut*).¹²

SUGGESTED IDENTIFICATION

A final, important clue as to the identity of the *shibuta* is that the Talmud indicates that in their era it was not available in the Land of Israel. The *Yerushalmi* (*Ta'anis* chap. 4)¹³ states that numerous kosher animals, birds, and fish were exiled with the Jews to *Bavel* and returned with them. The only exception was the *shibuta*, which did not return. It seems clear that according to sources originating in the Land of Israel, the *shibuta* was unavailable to them, while the previously cited Babylonian sources portray it as a popular fish in *Bavel*. Thus, in searching for the *shibuta*, what should be looked for is a species that exists in the region of modern Iraq, but not in the Mediterranean or Kinneret, and certainly not in inland Europe.¹⁴ It appears that most of the European researchers were acting as the proverbial man searching for lost money under a street lamp who explained to a bewildered passerby that he had lost the money on the other side of the street, but it was dark there and so he was looking instead under the light. So, too, the Europeans found it much

easier to look in Europe than *Bavel*, and thus missed the obvious answer that was known to all who simply looked in the right place.

The true identity of the large, Babylonian *shibuta* is really no secret. A novel finding for one person may be obvious to another. And that is the case here. For Jews in Europe and the Mediterranean region, the identification of the *shibuta* was an enigma, but as will be seen, for Jews (and non-Jews) in Iraq, it was not even a question.

Ken Ovitz,¹⁵ a NY-based chef who is currently writing a cookbook, came across a recipe that speaks of a fish in ancient Iraq called *Shaboot*, that is a variety of carp. And an Iraqi taxi driver in Tel Aviv told me (AZZ) about the paradise that he remembers of the Baghdad of his youth. One of the items he described was the large *shaboot* fish sold in sections from the

¹⁵ Ken is owed a large debt of gratitude for being the impetus behind this research.

back of trucks.

In a discussion of ancient Babylonian cuisine, the book entitled *Delights From the Garden of Eden: A Cookbook and a History of the Iraqi Cuisine*¹⁶ states: "Fish from the river Tigris was highly valued by the medieval Baghdadis because they believed that the best fish came from running cold water sources, with stony riverbeds. Euphrates followed in excellence. Top quality fishes were *shabout* (carp), *bunni* and *zajar* (now called *dhakar*), fishes with which we are still familiar. ... Fish tongues were a treat. Hundreds of them would be cooked to make a dish fit for a caliph.... Of the commercially important fishes that are still swimming in the two rivers, the medieval favorites still hold their ground, especially the *shabout* (carp). The British called it 'the salmon of the Tigris' for, apparently, besides their delicious flavor,

¹⁶ Nawal Nasrallah, published in 2003 by Authorhouse

¹² Lunz in his comments to *Tvuos Haaretz*, p. 380; Krauss in *Kadmoniyos Hatalmud* (Tel Aviv, 5689) p. 217

¹³ There are parallel passages in: *Eicha Rabba*, *Pesichta* 34 (Buber, p. 39) and *Psikta d'Rav Kahana*, *parsha* 13 (Mandelbaum, p. 234)

¹⁴ A puzzle that also must be dealt with is that the Talmud seems to be describing a large fish capable of plowing, while Rav Kapuch claimed to have a tradition identifying it as a small fish. An attempted resolution is offered by Rav Yehosef Schwartz in his 19th century *Tvuos Ha'aretz* (p. 380), who suggests that there are two fish called *shibuta*, or *al-shabut* in Arabic.



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both swim against the current.”¹⁷

The Iraq war of 2004 has partially reopened Iraq to the West. On July 12, 2004, CNN correspondent Michael Holmes reported: “On the Tigris River, brothers Ali and Mohammed (ph) ply an ancient trade, ignoring the sounds of their country’s unfinished war, seeking the local *shabut* and other species of

fish.”¹⁸ The fish is still known by the same name and is still popular! If one merely knows the local Babylonian cuisine, the identity is no mystery.

Nonetheless, its identity perplexed more than just Talmudic scholars. In an 1896 letter from Ourfa (Edessa) (Armenia), it states:¹⁹

“And now I think I will conclude this little letter with something of quite a different character, something interesting to me, and perhaps not altogether uninteresting to you. If you will look in Helen Harris’s translation of the *Apology of Aristides*, you will find that in the account of the superstitions of the Egyptians, amongst other things, they are charged with worshipping a sacred fish, whose name is Shebyta. This fish has been a great perplexity to the editors of *Aristides*. ... I must tell you how

I solved this riddle. First of all, when we crossed the Euphrates at Biredjik, and had taken up our quarters in a very dirty khan, a man brought us a large fish, something like a salmon. Something reminded me of *Aristides*, and I said, ‘What is its name?’ He said, ‘Shebyta’.... I was visiting, under guard of a Turkish soldier, the most beautiful part of Edessa, the fish-pond.... The pool is full of fish, which it is prohibited under severe penalty to kill, and which every one feeds with bread and pennyworths of parched corn. Such a rush when you throw it in! They tumble over one another, and jump half out of the water. Obviously, the protection and support which the fish enjoy comes from a time when they were considered sacred. So I asked my soldier what was the name of the fish, and his answer was, ‘In Arabic, they are called *shabut*.’”

So here was my fish again, and the explanation of the whole riddle. The translation of *Aristides* was made in Edessa, on the borders of the sacred pool, and when the translator came to the passage dealing with Egyptian fish-worship, he substituted the Syrian sacred fish for what he found in his Greek text.

This identification of the Talmudic *shibuta* with the Arabic *Shabout* seems to be relying on a non-Jewish tradition to identify the fish. What does halacha say about reliance on a non-Jewish *mesora*? The *Radbaz* (*Shu”t haRadbaz* 6:2206) used a non-Jewish tradition, i.e., an Arabic place name, as part of his effort to establish one of the borders of the Land of Israel by identifying the biblical *Nachal Mitzrayim* with Wadi El Arish.

But it is not only non-Jewish Iraqis who have preserved this tradition. The famous Rav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad also listed the *shaboot* as a kosher fish that was commonly consumed in Baghdad. And he commented that it is the Talmudic *shibuta*.²⁰

But what is this fish that is called

²⁰ Ben Ish Chai, second year, end of *Emor*: 18

¹⁷ Some refer to the closely related *Barbus esocinus* as the “Tigris salmon” or “Euphrates salmon.” The closely related *Barbus kosswigi* is also found in the Tigris River basin and is known locally as *shebhe shirbot*.

¹⁸ Downloaded from <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/040712/Iol.02.html> on Jan 9, 2006

¹⁹ Downloaded from <http://armenianhouse.org/harris/armenia/letter11.html> on Jan 9, 2006

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shaboot in Arabic? Various fish lists and articles identify a freshwater Iraqi fish with the common name of *shab-bout* and the scientific name *Barbus grypus*. For example, an FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) website²¹ that offers a fishing profile on each country lists under the important fish in Iraq the *Barbus grypus*, which is known as the *shabbout*. It further states that the most important Iraqi indigenous fishes belong to the genus *Barbus*. There are two other species of that genus common in Iraq, *Barbus xanthopterus* (*kattan*) and *Barbus luteus* (*himri*). The fishbase website²² notes that *Barbus grypus* is in the Family Cyprinidae (Minnows and carps), and Order Cypriniformes (carps), and that it is found in the Tigris-Euphrates basin.

There is little question that the true identity of the Talmudic *shibuta* is the Iraqi *shabout*, a type of carp known today by the binomial designation *Barbus grypus*. It is also found in Iran in the Khuzestan Province in the Gulf and Hormuz basins, where it is known as *shirbot*, *shilbot* or *shaboot* in Farsi. It reaches a reputed maximal length of 2 meters and 60 Kg. A sample is shown below:

An interesting halachic ramification may exist. The Talmud (*Pesachim* 76b) gives a warning not to eat *binisa* that was cooked with meat because of health risks. Many authorities assume *binisa* is any type of fish, and thus prohibit consuming meat and (any) fish that were cooked together. Others limit it to the specific fish, *binisa*. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef (*Yabia Omer* 1, YD, 7:8) cites a *teshuva* that cites *Rashi*²³ that *binisa* is *shibuta*, and thus the prohibition would be limited to eating

meat cooked with *Barbus grypus*.²⁴

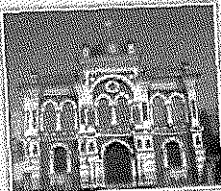
The species *Barbus grypus* does not currently live in Israel, but closely related species do. Two such species are *Barbus longiceps*, a fish that grows to about 70 cm and is found exclusively in the Kinneret and its tributaries, and *Barbus canis*, a fish found in many parts of Europe and Asia including the Jordan River. Mendel

²⁴ *Binisa* appears in other contexts, as well. In *Babba Basra* 133b, it was fed to a postpartum woman and in *Gittin* 69b it is ascribed medicinal value when roasted.

Nun²⁵ reports that during the inter-war period, when the British occupied both Israel and Iraq, there was an attempt to import *Barbus grypus* to Israel.

The *Midrash* (*Yalkut Shimoni*, *Yirmeyahu* 281) observes that although the *shibuta* failed to return to the Land of Israel with the return of the exiles from *Bavel*, all species including the *shibuta* will return with the future ingathering of the exiles. May it be speedily in our day. □

²⁵ *Ha'dayag Ha'Ivri Hakadum*, 5764, p. 162.



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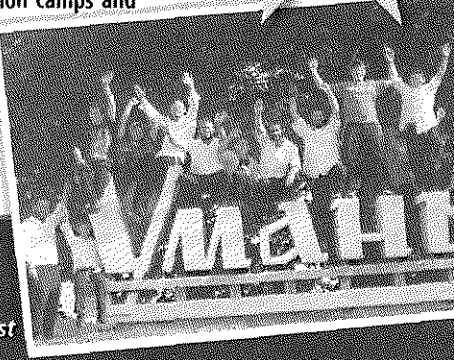
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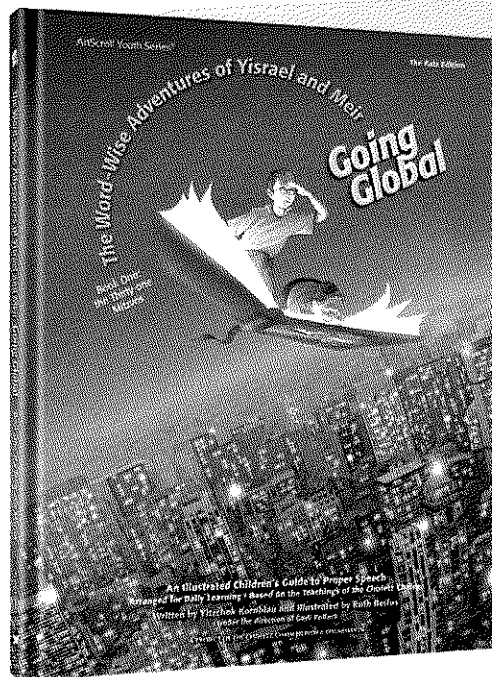
²¹ <http://www.fao.org/fi/fcp/en/yem/irq/profile.htm> downloaded Jan 9, 2006. I thank Amy McCune who pointed this cite out to Prof Joe Regenstein who then directed me to the site. Both of them are at Cornell University.

²² <http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/SpeciesSummary.cfm?id=54808> downloaded Jan 9, 2006.

²³ The current editions do not have this in *Rashi*.

RABBI MOSHE EISEMANN

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CHILDHOOD – A MILESTONE IN GROWTH

When art was still in its infancy, it was customary to paint children as small adults. Of course, nobody can really know what went on in the artist's mind, and why he ignored what seems obvious to all of us. From the little reading that I have done on the subject, it appears to me that these people saw painting not as some

RABBI EISEMANN, A REBBI IN YESHIVA NER ISRAEL OF BALTIMORE, IS AUTHOR OF THE TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY OF THE ARTSCROLL MESORAH YECHEZKEL, DIVREI HAYAMIM, AND IYOV, AS WELL AS OTHER BOOKS UNDER PRIVATE LABEL, INCLUDING THE MACHZOR COMPANION AND LIGHTING UP THE NIGHT. HE IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES.

form of photography – that is, as a means of recording what they had seen – but rather, as an attempt to penetrate to the inner meaning, mostly in a religious sense, of what was taking place around them. For example, painters would often render the

sky in gold, not because that is how they actually saw it, but because they wanted to convey the feeling of awe which permeated them when they contemplated the heavens, seat of the *Ribono shel Olam*, as they understood Him.

And so, in essence if not in form, children were perceived as adults who had not yet quite made it. Rather than sensing that children have a wisdom of their own, that they occupy a world that boasts of its own perfection, they saw childhood as being defined by deficiency, a state of becoming rather than one of being.

Chazal taught us differently. It is not for nothing that they tell us that the *keruvim* (cherubs) on the Ark had the faces of children, nor that our mother Sarah's glory lay in the fact that, at the end of her life, although she was a sage and a prophetess in her own right, she still harbored the seven-year-old girl that she had been, within her personality. She had not lost the freshness, the enthusiasm, the

simple faith of childhood. Childhood in the Torah is not a barren way station to adulthood, but a milestone against which later life is to be measured, a challenge to the weary cynicism which often accompanies the passage of years.

THE WORLD ON A WORD... OR MORE

Which brings us to *lashon hara* and *The Word-Wise Adventures of Yisrael and Meir* – a projected trilogy of which the first volume, *Going Global*, has just come out. I have always maintained and it is now confirmed once again that there is a special *beracha* that attaches to everything that the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation touches. Why would it be otherwise? With the Chofetz Chaim זצ"ל and Rabbi Yehudah Segal זצ"ל, the late Manchester *Rosh Hayeshiva*, smiling down upon them from their place near the *Kisei Hakavod*, they cannot but succeed in their determined efforts to make all of us a little nicer, a little cleaner, a little more holy. This time, using the amazing graphic presentation of Ben Gasner Studios and teamed up with Mesorah Publications, there is every reason to anticipate that these books accomplish the lofty goals for which all the participants are rooting.

The series is, of course, directed at

our precious children. It is my feeling, however, that we parents are as much beneficiaries as are they. We cannot place such an instructive, growth-oriented book into their trusting hands unless we are ourselves able and determined to live up to its exacting standards. Without reading a word of the book, we will still turn into better *Yidden*. How is that for a bonus?

It is quite clear that a great deal of thought went into planning this book. The plot around which it spins its magic was dreamed up by artist and educator Gadi Pollak. Yisrael, studying the *Chofetz Chaim*, finds out that it is uncontrolled, wagging tongues that keep us in our exile. He shares this awful piece of news with his younger brother, Meir, who immediately suggests that they not just talk about it, but do what needs to be done to rescue *Yidden* from their distress. The boys leap into a world map and immediately find themselves on a journey that takes them to a variety of places. Each of the globe-circling voyages brings its own adventures for the boys. Each adventure shows them another aspect of the *shemiras halashon* that is demanded of us.

The book, attractively illustrated in full color by Ruth Beifus, combines the analysis of the halachos with all kinds of general knowledge tidbits, appropriate to the countries in which the boys land. Each page provides a map so that the readers can have an idea of where they are being transported.

On each stop, Yisrael and Meir collect souvenirs which, in one way or another, tie into the sensitivities that the book is attempting to instill. The brothers each keeps a journal of their travels, which allow their fellow travelers to savor the tastes and smells and sights of the foreign places that make up the background to the tale. In addition, these journals allow the readers to become acquainted with Yisrael and Meir, and it is reasonable to hope that this acquaintanceship will eventually flower into friendship and even identification. Such a relationship will stand the young readers in good stead when they get

to the second and third volumes of the trilogy.

All these, of course, are simply trimmings, designed to generate the interest of the young readers, even when the halachos – the meat and potatoes of this colorful and tasty banquet – begin to drag a little upon their attention span. This reviewer, abetted by his wife, even thought that all these goodies might detract a little from the value of the book, simply because of an overload of information and a page which, at first sight,

appeared to be a little too busy. I have been assured by the editors, however, that, on the contrary, experts in child education criticized an earlier version of the book, which contained only the *lashon hara* material, and insisted

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that for the book to be really effective, a little lighter fare would have to be offered. I am happy to accept the judgment of the experts.

THE DO'S AND DON'T'S OF DISCIPLINED SPEECH

The main body of the work, carefully written by Yitzchak Kornblau under the general guidance of Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Lowy, consists of pictures and car-

toon-like sequences, which tell the story of the boys' adventures. This first volume of the trilogy concentrates upon the do's (*mitzvos aseil*) and don't's (*mitzvos lo sa'aseh*) that may be transgressed through careless speech. Each adventure involves one of these commandments, and these youngsters, who initially set out to reform the world, learn gently but seriously, that they themselves still have a long way to go.

The illustrated adventures are always accompanied by four sec-

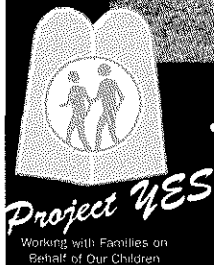
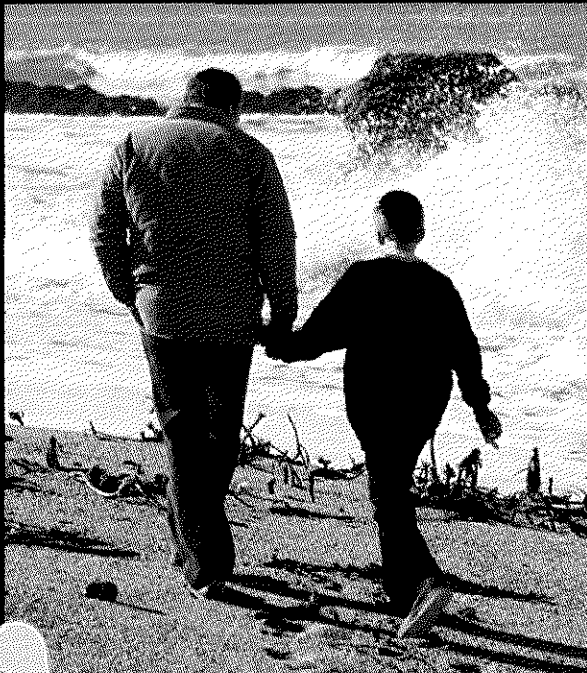
tions of text which really constitute what the book is all about. The first of these is headed either "Positive Command #x" or "Negative Command #x," and simply states what that command demands. The second section is headed, "Understanding the Rule," and does precisely what this heading indicates. It expands upon the first section up to the point at which the entire range of the implications is made clear. Then we have "Measuring Up," which explains in vivid language the circumstance and state of mind in which one might be tempted to transgress this particular command, and attempts to persuade the young reader that adherence to the Torah's norms makes the most sense. Finally, we have "Reaping its Riches," which argues that we can all gain immeasurably by accepting the Torah's discipline in this matter.

The combination of the gripping adventure, together with the lessons that are to be learned and internalized, allows for a wide range in the ages of the readership. Younger children will love the stories and the illustrations, and their older siblings will relish the understanding that they gradually acquire through the four sections described above.

I find something profoundly moving in both the thinking that provided the stimulus for the undertaking of this vast project, and in the loving and fastidious execution that is evident on every page. A great many intelligent and highly talented people clearly cared very deeply that our *Yiddishe kinderlach* should learn the secrets of non-lethal speech.

The publishers of this important book have helped all of us take a giant step towards redemption. After all, it was Hillel who taught us that the entire Torah is no more than a commentary to the principle that we are not to engage in behavior towards others that we would consider hateful if it were directed towards ourselves. To paraphrase Hillel, we should all say to our children, "Tsay ulema!" – Go and learn this wonderful book! □

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RABBI SHIMON FINKELMAN

Rav Pam on Chumash and Rav Pam on Festivals by Rabbi Sholom Smith (published by Mesorah Publications, Brooklyn, NY).

BOOKS IN REVIEW

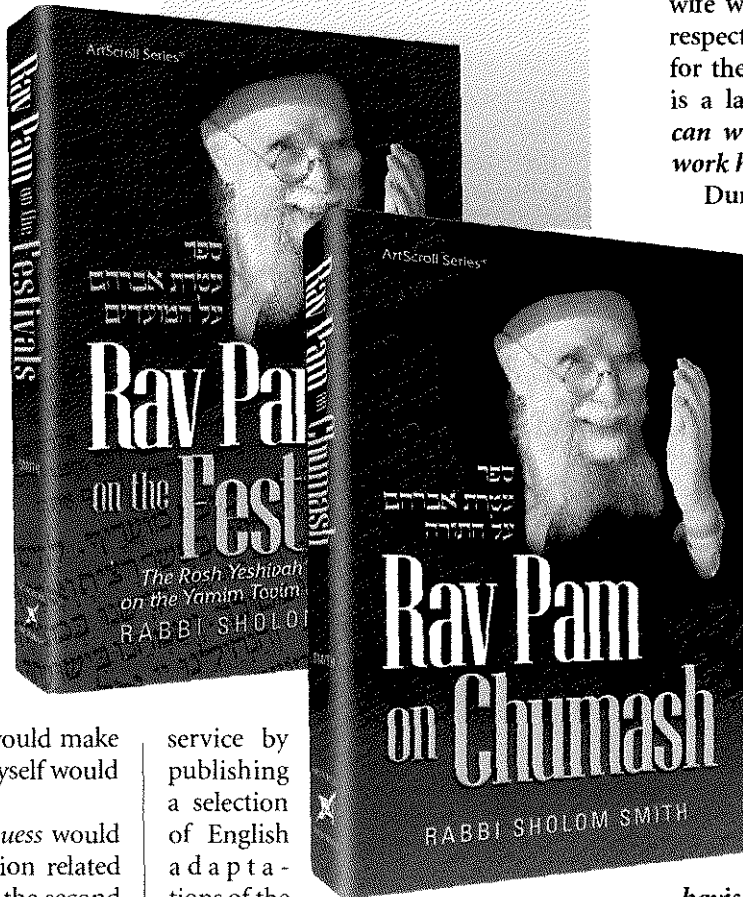
It has been said that the Chofetz Chaim's *shmuessen* (ethical discourses) were unique in that they could be understood on different levels and therefore resonated with every type of listener, from the accomplished *talmid chacham* to the simple laborer. In a similar way, the *shmuessen* of Rabbi Avraham Yaakov Hakohein Pam attracted a very disparate audience, including *rabbanim*, *magidei shiur*, businessmen and young *beis midrash bachurim*.

During Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky's tenure as *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, he told someone, "If I was not afraid that it would make Rav Pam uncomfortable, I myself would attend his *shmuessen*."

The first half of his *shmuess* would focus on a halachic discussion related to the weekly *parasha*, while the second half dwelled on *parasha*-related lessons in character development and other themes of *hashkafa*. Each *shmuess* was a masterpiece; carefully constructed, clear and uncomplicated, inspiring and instructive. Their effect was powerful, and in later years, Rabbi Pam would take great pride that the image of Torah Vodaath *talmidim* was one of *noam hamiddos* -- pleasant in demeanor.

Rabbi Sholom Smith, a member of the Torah Vodaath *kollel* and a close *talmid* of Rabbi Pam, has done a great public

RABBI FINKELMAN, A REBBIN YESHIVA DARCHEI TORAH, FAR ROCKAWAY, NY, IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES, MOST RECENTLY WITH "THE DAF YOMI AND ITS FOUNDER" (FEB. '05). HE IS THE AUTHOR OF SEVERAL BIOGRAPHIES PUBLISHED BY ARTSCROLL MESORAH PUBLICATIONS.



service by publishing a selection of English adaptations of the *middos-hashkafa* part of Rav Pam's *shmuessen*. *The Pleasant Way on Chumash*, published more than three years ago, was very well received. Rabbi Smith's more recent publications, *Rav Pam on Chumash* and *Rav Pam on the Festivals* are outstanding renditions of his *rebbe's* teachings.

THE COMPLETE BEN TORAH

In his discourses, Rabbi Pam placed heavy emphasis on how *talmidim* should relate to others: to parents, peers and, eventually, to one's wife and children. These themes are beautifully presented in *Rav Pam on Chumash*. Of particular note in this regard is Rabbi

Pam's famous *shmuess* of *Parashas Chayei Sara* on the topic of *shidduchim*:

It is important to remember that after the *chasuna*, the courtship must continue. A husband must treat his wife with the utmost courtesy and respect. The most common cause for the breakdown of *shalom bayis* is a lack of proper speech. *Words can work wonders and words can work horrors*.

During the dating process, both sides invest great care and forethought into what they say and how they say it. After the date, they review in their minds the conversations that took place and make a careful analysis: "What did she mean when she said that?" or "What did he have in mind with that remark?" One realizes that a poor impression made by a wrong word or inference might negatively affect the outcome of the *shidduch*. Yet, unfortunately, this *zehirus bedibbur* (care in speech) does not continue after the wedding. Speaking without thinking causes great breaches in *shalom bayis* (p. 39).

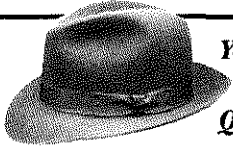
Rabbi Pam dealt with *hashkafa* topics as well, in a practical, down-to-earth way. The revelation of Yoseif to his brothers demonstrated that there is no stopping the Divine will from being executed; *Hashem* had willed that Yoseif should be a ruler, and his brothers' selling him into slavery actually set that plan into motion.

Rabbi Pam applied this to the following situation:

An elderly parent becomes seriously ill and the children consult with specialists to determine the best course of treatment.... After careful consultation and deliberation, they decide on one method of treatment. Sadly, the treatment fails and the parent dies. The children are overcome with feelings of guilt.

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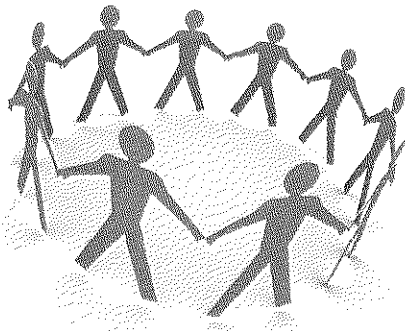
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"We should have gone with the other method...." Or "We should have used that doctor or that hospital," and so on....

While such a response is understandable, it is nevertheless incorrect. As difficult as it is for the family members to accept, they must realize that they cannot overturn the plan of Hashem. It was destined that this path of treatment be taken. The family did the best they could and there is no reason for the family to feel guilty (p. 61).

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What is the significance of *kiddush hachodesh* (the sanctification of the new month) being the first mitzva presented to the Jewish people as they prepared to leave Egypt as a nation liberated from their oppressors?

Kiddush Hachodesh is the manner by which Jews measure the passage of time.... A slave has no time to call his own. His days and nights are controlled by his master. Freedom means the ability to use time as one wishes ...

When a person has a sizeable amount of money to invest, he does not simply accept the first offer that comes his way. He will seek the advice of expert investment bankers to guide him.... Yet, while most people understand that investing money requires careful forethought, very few people realize that even more careful forethought, advice and planning is required in investing time — a commodity infinitely more valuable than money (pp. 80-81).

SEEKING MERIT

In his works on forbidden speech, the Chofetz Chaim makes abundantly clear that the workings of Heaven are a reflection of our interactions on this world. When Jews seek to find merit for one another on this world, the *Satan* is silenced; but when Jews speak ill of one another, the opposite occurs.

Rabbi Pam was unusually careful not to speak ill of his fellow Jews, and he always sought to find merit for others. In Rabbi Smith's work, Rabbi Pam offers a remarkable insight on the particular obligation of *bnei Torah* to seek merit for *Klal Yisroel*.

A *ben Torah* is trained to look for the merit in an incomprehensible statement or halachic opinion found in *Shas* or *Shulchan Aruch*. He will spend hours trying to resolve a contradiction found in the words of the Sages or to defend *Rashi* from the seemingly irrefutable challenges of *Tosafos*. He will exert great mental effort to justify the two sides in a halachic dispute

between *Shach* or *Taz*, or to refute the *Raavad's* critique of the *Rambam*.

A *ben Torah* is taught not to judge a matter on its surface but to delve deeply into the reasoning behind a particularly puzzling statement or opinion.... He is trained to focus on the wider picture and not automatically accept as fact that which appears to be correct at first glance.... Shouldn't this Talmudic training be equally applied to everyday situations in life when the questionable actions of a person or community can be seen in different ways and yet judged favorably? One should always try to find merit for one's fellow Jews. This will evoke the gratitude of Hashem and bring blessing and success on the person and his nation.

PRACTICAL FESTIVAL LESSONS

In *Rav Pam on the Festivals*, the messages are, as in the previous volumes, down-to-earth and practical.

There is a "message" in the fact that we experience the long *Mussaf* of Rosh Hashana without any talking at all (so as not to cause a *hefseik* between the *berachos* on the mitzva of shofar and the *teki'os*). Rabbi Pam cites the Mishna in *Avos* (4:3) which states that one should not be scornful of any individual, for there is no person without his "hour," his special moment when his hidden qualities come to the fore. The *Alter* of Novarodok would paraphrase this idea by saying that every Jew has his "hour of special achievement" in *avodas Hashem*, which may stand as an indictment against him in the Next World. For he may be asked, "You accomplished so much in that hour – why couldn't you do the same at other times?"

Rabbi Pam reflected:

The *Mussaf* of Rosh Hashana is that "special hour" which invalidates the many excuses people have for their inability to be silent during *davening*. They will have no response to the following charge: "If you found it impossible not to talk during *davening*, how were you able

to control yourself for such a long period of time on Rosh Hashana?"

USE YOUR SEFARIM WISELY

It would be advisable to read and absorb Rabbi Yisroel Reisman's magnificent Forward to *Rav Pam on the Festivals* before reading either volume. He concludes with the following:

Two people can learn from the same *sefer*. One catches the wonderful sweetness of the *divrei Torah*. The

other absorbs more; he sees the soul of the *sefer*, the *hashkafa* behind the lessons, the common threads of a *penimiyus-based* view of the world. He sees a meaningful way of life. He sees his *rebbe*.

For those who were Rabbi Avraham Pam's *talmidim* and for those who aspire to be, Rabbi Sholom Smith's *sefarim* are our tools to live more meaningful and happy lives.

For this, we owe Rabbi Smith a debt of gratitude, *mipenimiyus haleiv*, from the innermost heart. □

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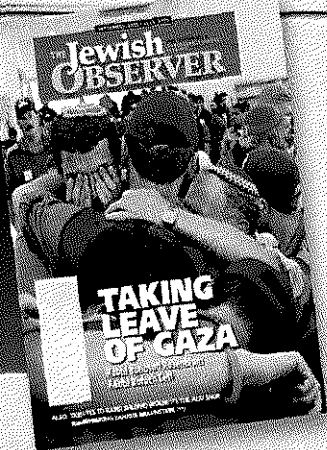
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DR. MEIR WIKLER

**A First
Person
Perspective
on Two
Holocaust
Museums
from a
Jewish
Observer**

Bearing Witness

"ZECHOR (REMEMBER)!"

The above word stands out in bold relief on top of the fifty foot obelisk which towers above the open plaza between the Central Bus Station and Binyanei Ha'uma at the entrance to *Yerushalayim*. Built in the early 50's, it was one of the first memorials dedicated to *Churban Europa*, or the Holocaust.

Exactly what are we supposed to remember? Which aspects of that cataclysmic period are most essential to preserve for future generations? And what ultimate purpose is achieved by our remembering?

The obelisk in *Yerushalayim* was built at a time when such questions could not even be asked. In the last half-century, however, these questions have been debated, discussed and dissected by countless historians, scholars, and *mechanchim*.¹

¹ See, for example, the special issue, "The Lessons of *Churban Europa* and How to Teach Them," *JO*, May, '05.

THE MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE

In the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Battery Park, New York, only one third of the space is devoted to documenting the persecution and destruction of European Jewry. The rest of the museum showcases the dual subjects of pre-War European Jewry and the post-War renewal of Jewish life in the United States and Israel.

With the clear purpose of being inclusive, the "Jewish" part of "Jewish life" includes social, cultural and secular aspects of the pre- and post-War periods. Religious components, or what we think of when we hear the phrase "Jewish life," are also included, but only as a sideshow – not as the main event. As a result, for example, scant references are made to the fundamentally central role of yeshivos, *chadarim* and Bais Yaakov schools in the lives of pre- and post-War Jewry.

Most of the videotaped testimonies of survivors describing their pre-War Jewish experiences seemed too cut off from the present. The survivors described Shabbos and *Yom Tov* scenes with the nostalgia reserved for something from one's past to which one has lost all connection in the present. It was as if the survivors were intimating, "I do not keep Shabbos today, but I remember fondly how we kept it so beautifully in Europe when I was a child."

For this Jewish observer, the most memorable experience in the museum was the brief film footage of a *Chassidische Rebbe* tearfully exhorting his pre-War audience in Yiddish not to abandon *shemiras Shabbos*. It seemed as if he were trying to reach out across time and space to remind us now to put Torah learning and observance at the very top of our personal and communal agendas.

YAD VASHEM

Yad Vashem in *Yerushalayim* has always been the gold standard by which all other Holocaust museums have been measured. The massive complex of libraries, archives, memorial groves and museums are visited by liter-

DR. WIKLER, A PSYCHOTHERAPIST AND FAMILY COUNSELOR IN PRIVATE PRACTICE, LIVES IN BROOKLYN, NY. HE IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES, MOST RECENTLY WITH, "AN ENCOUNTER WITH RABBI SHLOMO WOLBE," *JO*, SEPT. '05.

ally thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish tourists and students every single day. Practically all of the almost three million yearly visitors to Israel have been to Yad Vashem at least once. As a result of its prominence, Yad Vashem has an enormous impact on the world's impression of the Jewish people in general, and the Holocaust, in particular.

This past year, Yad Vashem opened an entirely new wing, featuring state-of-the-art exhibits. Clearly, great effort and expense were invested to insure that this new building would document every aspect of the Holocaust, from the roots of anti-Semitism through persecution and annihilation. Artifacts, photos, film clips and videotaped testimonies of survivors were creatively arranged, both chronologically and thematically, so the visitor both literally and figuratively walks through this most devastating period of recent Jewish history.

What especially impressed this Jewish observer was the painfully graphic detail in which the deportations to the ghettos are portrayed. The crushing reality of this aspect of the Holocaust is driven home by the extensive film footage of this ordeal. Actual films of young and old carrying, dragging or pushing meager possessions into what was to be only a temporary stopover on their journey to extermination are most unforgettable.

After leaving this new wing, however, I felt that something significant was missing. It was so unsettling that I returned the very next day to retrace my steps more slowly in case it was I, and not the museum curators, who had been negligent. My second visit, however, confirmed my initial impression that the following critical components of Holocaust history were not being told, inadvertently or by design.

1. Orthodox survivors were grossly under-represented among the videotaped testimonies screened throughout the exhibit. Only one of the dozens of men speaking wore a yarmulke. And none of the women survivors, presumably married or widowed, wore head coverings of any kind. Chassidic survivors were not represented at all. This gave

the completely false impression that while many Orthodox and Chassidic Jews perished, hardly any survived.

2. The heroic and tireless rescue efforts of the Rabbis and volunteers of the Vaad Hatzolah were also completely omitted. While a brief passing reference was made to Rabbi Michel Dov Weismandle זצ"ל (but not his unceasing and courageous rescue efforts), the historic work of Rabbi Aharon Kotler זצ"ל, and Rabbi Avrohom Kalmanowitz זצ"ל, among others, was entirely overlooked.
3. The countless acts of spiritual heroism throughout World War II were also ignored. I am referring here to the clandestine *chadarim* and yeshivos, the communal soup kitchens and *chessed* projects in the ghettos and the superhuman examples of steadfastly maintaining *emuna*, *bitachon* and mitzva observance in hiding, in cattle cars, and even in the concentration camps.

If the mission of Yad Vashem is to tell the complete story of the Holocaust, then this museum must be given a failing grade for purging their presentation of critical religious content.

Worse yet, as of this past summer, should a Torah-oriented group — a tour, or yeshiva or Bais Yaakov classes — choose to visit Yad Vashem with its own guide, the administration will not permit it. Only

their appointed guides may lead tours.

THE POWER OF PROTEST

A few years ago, an essay appeared in these pages encouraging readers to actively protest whenever they encounter museums which demonstrate religious insensitivity.² It included a success story illustrating the constructive power of written complaints. Taking inspiration from that article, this author wrote to the director of Yad Vashem, calling attention to the omissions and distortions outlined above.

Two replies have been received so far, one from the American office of Yad Vashem and one from the main office in *Yerushalayim*. Although I requested it from both responders, I did not receive permission to reprint either of their letters in this article. The gist of their comments, however was as follows.

We did the best we could. We couldn't include everything to please everyone. Some of the survivors who gave videotape testimonies were religious, "though not necessarily Hasidic or ultra-Orthodox." Thanks for writing.

On behalf of the six million *korbanos* of *Churban Europa*, should we accept that response? When we meet these

2 "Protest Pays," by Eliyahu Mayer, *JO*, Jan.'98

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victims *achar mei'a ve'esrim*, will we be able to defend our not protesting this injustice by saying, "Well, I never went to Yad Vashem," or "My family and I just don't go to Holocaust museums?"

If each and every one of us took pen

in hand to write to Yad Vashem, we could create a tsunami of protest and we could make a difference." No, I do not expect Yad Vashem to completely redesign their multimillion dollar new wing. It is possible, however, for them to

make a few simple but critical *additions* that could correct the historical record for the thousands of visitors who come to that museum each day.

We owe it to ourselves. We owe it to our children. We owe it to all future visitors to Yad Vashem. And we owe it to six million martyrs and *neshamos tehoros* who perished *al kiddush Hashem*. ✪

* Letters can be mailed to: Mr. Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Directorate, Yad Vashem, P. O. B. 3477, 91034 ISRAEL, or faxed to (02) 644-3443.

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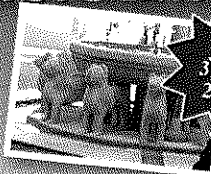
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RESTRUCTURING THE SEMINARY YEAR IN JERUSALEM

To the Editor:

As someone who has had several sons and daughters study in Israeli yeshivos and seminaries, I wish to comment on Rabbi Aryeh Z. Ginzberg's article regarding the sending of post-high school boys and girls to study in Israel. (Jan.-Feb. '06)

There is something concrete that can be done to help alleviate the problems of inappropriate fraternization between boys and girls that we know exists in so many places.

My suggestion will be strongly denounced by many, but I have spoken with a number of *roshei yeshivos*, *mechanchim* and *mechanchos*, and they all agree with me. They just say, "It'll never happen!"

My suggestion:

Girls' seminaries should start AFTER Sukkos and end BEFORE Pesach!

Many of the problems begin at the airport and on the airplanes, as the boys and girls leave to their respective schools. Furthermore, the first few weeks are loaded with time off due to all the *Yamim Tovim*, allowing young boys and girls free time in a country 6,000 miles away from parental guidance and supervision.

Additionally, many of the schools request that their students fend for themselves in finding places to eat for Shabbos and *Yom Tov*, throwing them into a tizzy that they have never experienced. Many of the girls who do not have easy access to family in Israel find themselves brokenhearted. And all this for only \$15,000 tuition, or so.

Then comes the *hefkeirus* of *Chol Hamo'eid* excursions and concerts all over the country. These are serious issues that should not be ignored.

The actual learning days that would be missed are few, and the boys will be more able to immerse their heads into their learning, rather than into socialization. I've heard from many who say that after Sukkos, the boys settle down to more serious learning. But why sub-

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ject them to these weeks of *nisyonos*? The seminaries might consider pre-sem curricula for the girls to busy themselves with on the days before they come.

I can hear the screams: "But they will miss the Eretz Yisroel-Yom Tov experience!"

I submit that the gamble of them getting the wrong "experience" is too risky to take. In addition, shouldn't these girls be with their mothers for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, possibly the last ones of their single lives?

And what would be so bad if they would take their final exams in the USA after Pesach, allowing them to come home for Pesach and help

their mothers with Pesach preparations? (...not to mention the airfare savings.)

This suggestion should also lower the overall, exorbitant costs of the seminaries, which put a tremendous strain on most of us.

My feeling is that many of the seminaries will resist, but I believe, and I'm sure you do, too, that our children's well-being takes precedence over everything else.

ARYEH GOLDBERG
Rockland, NY

INSPIRATION FOR RABBI WOLBE'S MOVE TO MIR

To the Editor:

I just completed reading and reviewing your wonderful articles about the great *baal mussar* whose life had an impact on three generations, the *Mashgiach*, Rav Shlomo Wolbe זצ"ל (JO Sept. '05). These essays are a strong motivating force for the reader to learn with depth



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his magnificent *sefarim*, of which
many excerpts are mentioned in the
articles.

I do want to add one point of infor-
mation concerning the beginnings of
the *Mashgiach's* development, influ-
encing him to leave Berlin and join
Yeshivas Mir in Eastern Europe. In
1980, twenty-five years ago, when the
noble Munk *mishpacha* of Boro Park
and *Eretz Yisroel* was sitting *shiva* for
their unforgettable, renowned father,
Rabbi Yechiel Aryeh Munk זצ"ל, in
Yerushalayim, Rabbi Wolbe walked in

to be *menacheim aveil*. The *Mashgiach*
told the *Rebbetzin* and the children,
"If not for your father, I would not
be where I am today. Your father
came back from Slobodka during *bein
hazemanim*, spoke to the Ezra groups
(similar to today's *Pirchei* groups)
and told us to make the move to the
yeshivos in Eastern Europe, and I
wound up in Mir."

Another *maaleh gedola* of this *וכל בניך*
זצ"ל Rabbi Munk לימודיה.

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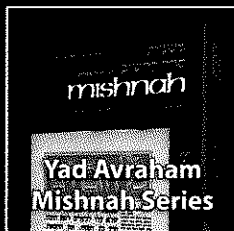


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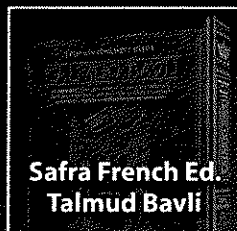
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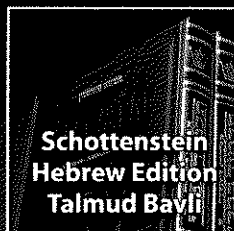
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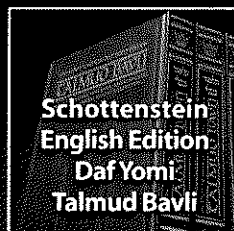
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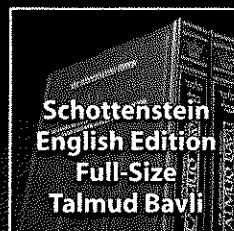
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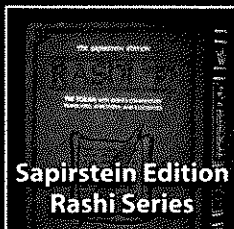
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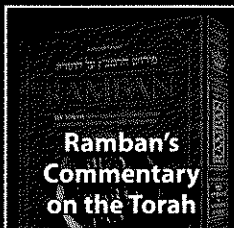
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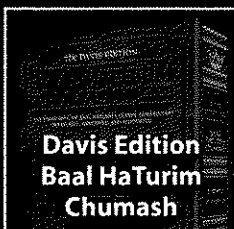
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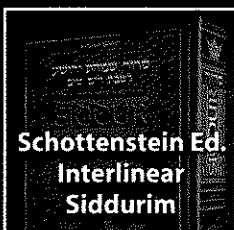
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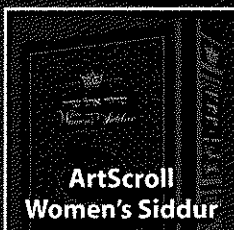
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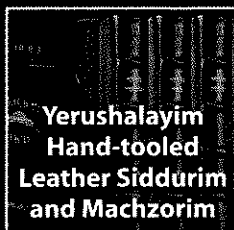
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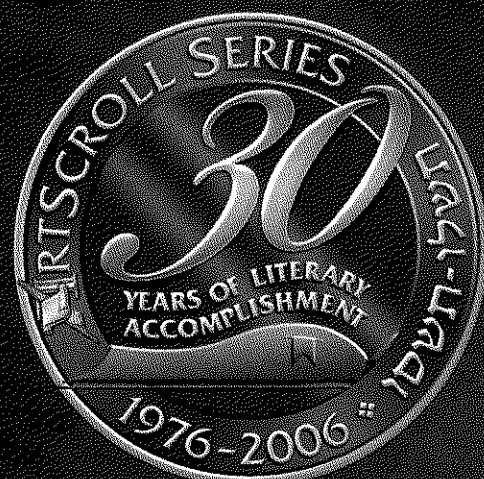
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