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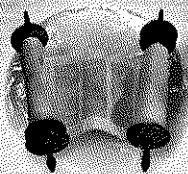
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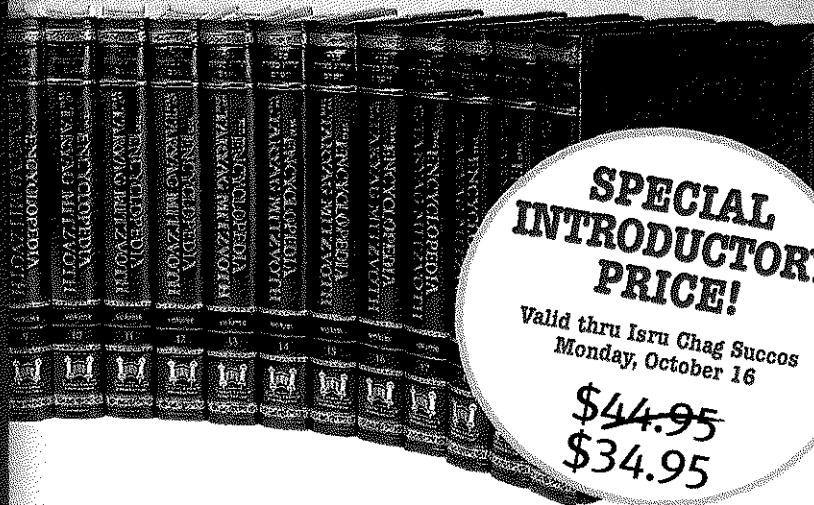
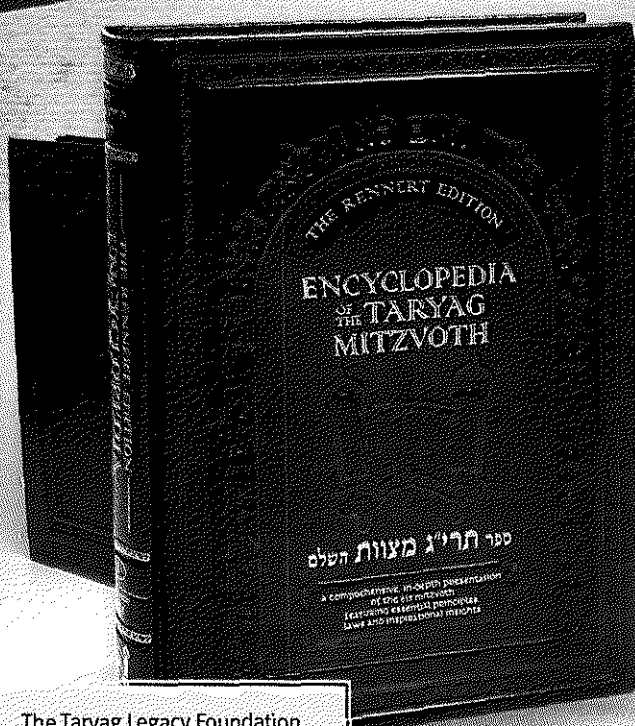
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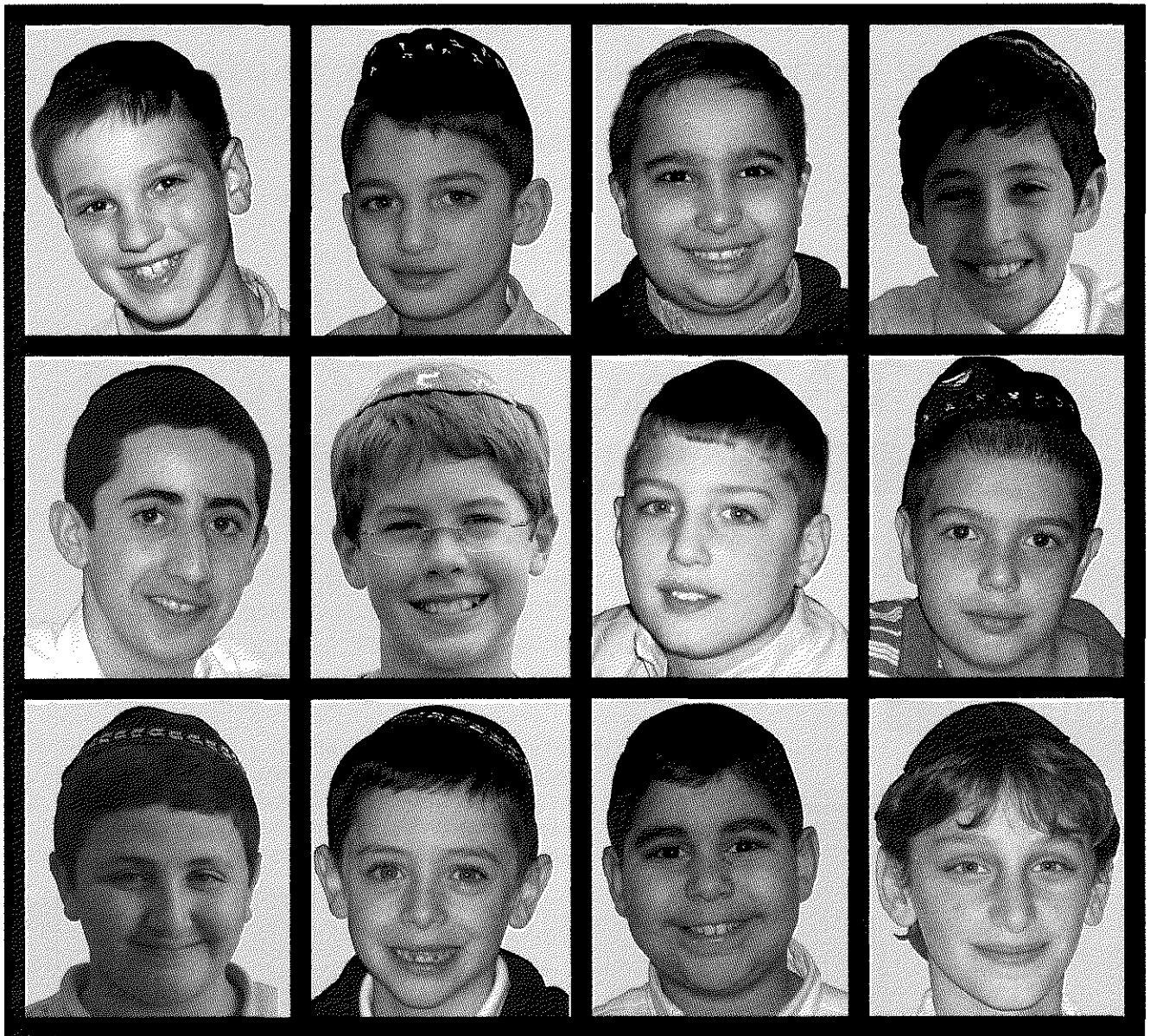
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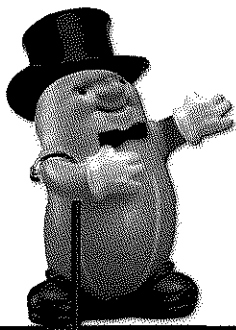
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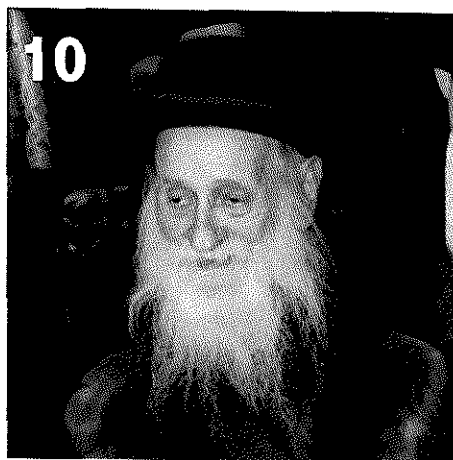
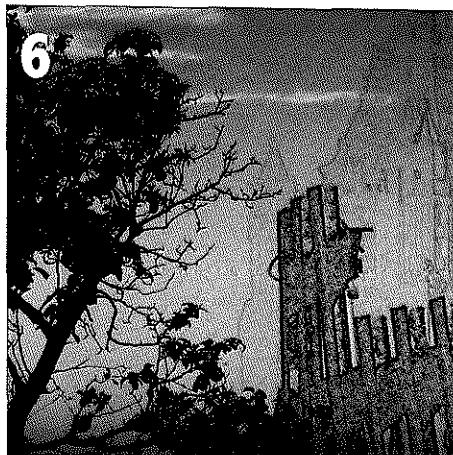
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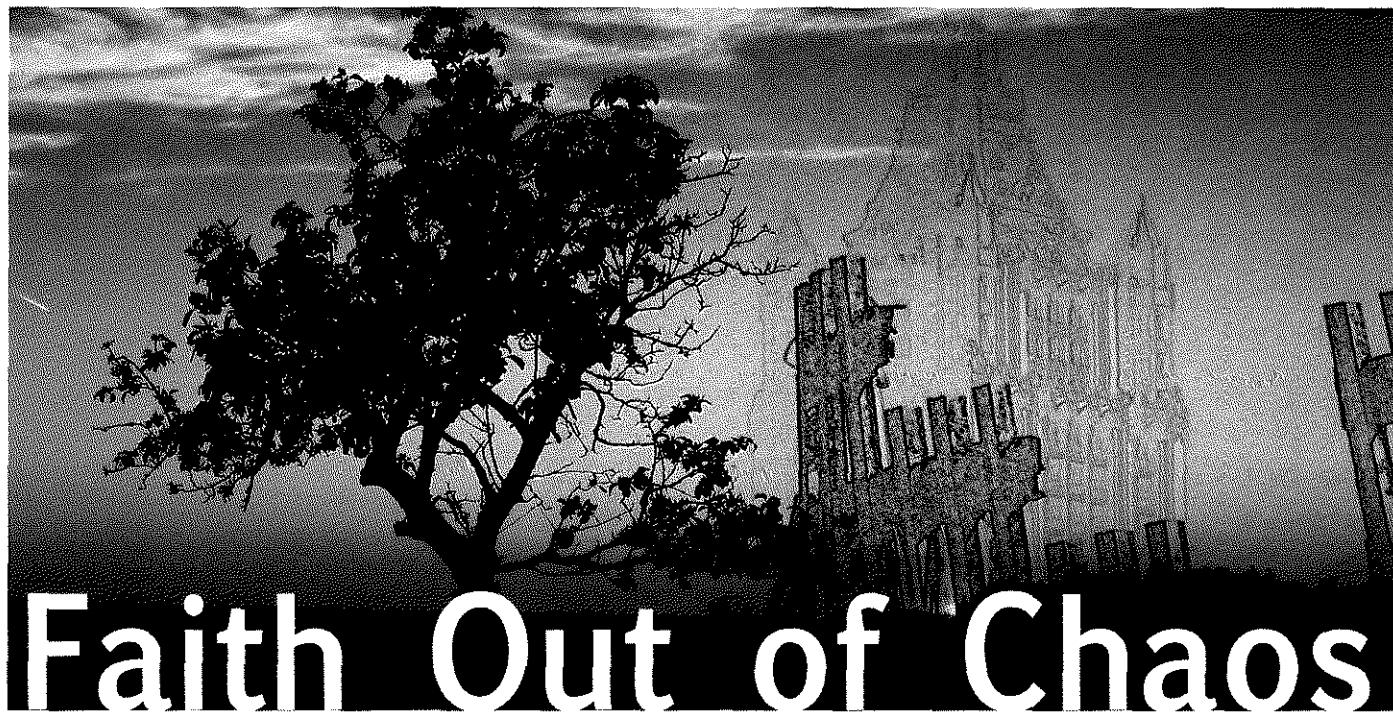
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STATEMENT OF POLICY

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RABBI MOSHE YOUNG



Faith Out of Chaos

PATTERNS IN LIFE – UNDER CONSTANT CHANGE

.....
We are so used to admiring beautiful trees and their changing foliage throughout the year, and we anticipate with so much joy the birth of a child after nine months of waiting that we find it difficult to believe that such phenomena were not the intention of *Hashem* when He created the world. It was only after the sin of Man, however, that many trees lost their ability to produce fruit and to remain leafy throughout the year, and it was only then that the formation of a child became a protracted and uncomfortable experience.

There are numerous aspects of our lives to which we have become accustomed, and we tend to forget that it is only as a result of disturbances that new patterns emerge. Changes happen over long periods of time, so that a whole generation, and even many generations, accepts situations and forms of conduct as if they have always been there.

RABBI YOUNG, WHO LIVES IN LAKEWOOD, NJ, IS A *MECHANEICH*, AND A CONTRIBUTOR TO JEWISH INTERNATIONAL JOURNALS. HE IS AUTHOR OF *APPLES FROM THE TREE* (ISRAEL BOOK SHOP).

It was not so long ago that the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York changed the world. Fear stalks the streets of the USA, and many countries wait with nervous apprehension, wondering where the next enemy attack will happen. The Arab world portrays a new menacing image which will remain with us for a very long time, if not indefinitely, until *Moshiach* comes.

More recently, natural calamities, floods, earthquakes, landslides and hurricanes, out of all proportion to previous norms, and with short intervals of respite in between, have begun to haunt the human race.

It is not by human design that such events befall society. Even where evil intent and activities cause harm to others, and responsibility for the consequences lies squarely with the predators, it is not through their initiative that it actually takes place. It is pre-ordained, but the dynamic is "*Megalgelim chov al yedei chayav*. Bad things happen through bad people."

The lives of millions of people have been changed by events, and we Jews, especially those of us who breathe the breath of Torah and mitzvos every day of

our lives, are bound to react by searching for understanding of all this.

There have been occasions, however, when we were forced by others to consider our own omissions. This would be induced by a *gezeiras shmad* (forced conversion). Through cruel and harsh decrees that host nations have issued against Jews within their realms, Jews have been obliged to recognize the lack of depth of their Torah observance, which either they had not understood or reflected an air of indifference that has permeated Jewish society.

Rabbi Dessler זצ"ל speaks about the direction that non-Jewish despotic rulers have taken in issuing decrees forbidding Torah observance (*Michtav MeEliyahu* 2). Heads of state are only too well aware of the essentials of Jewish existence. They know how to hit hard at Jewish religious sensitivities. They know about Shabbos and *bris milla*. So many times have they succeeded – and yet other times have failed – to halt *shechita*. They still persevere today in many countries. The indomitable spirit of *Klal Yisroel* has constantly resisted these moves, with Jews resorting to endless *mesiras nefesh* at all levels.

WHY THE THREATS TO TORAH LIFE?

So there are two questions to ask here. Firstly, what is the deeper reason that our enemies persist in issuing edicts on crucial issues? Secondly, what do Jews gain by bearing the brunt of such decrees? Rabbi Dessler explains that when Hashem allows a *gezeiras shmad* to be enacted, it is Hashem's way of reinforcing our mitzvos to which the Jewish soul has become desensitized. This does not necessarily mean that mitzvos have not been kept at all, but the intensity of observance has all but gone, with the *lishma*, the *penimiyus*, being taken out of them: "*mitzvas anashim melumada* – habitual observance." When Jews see that non-Jewish despots have chosen to forbid prime mitzvos on pain of death, and there emerges a sudden awareness by Jews of the great significance of those mitzvos in the eyes of non-Jews, their sense of observance is revitalized, thus changing their "*shelo lishma*" to a "*lishma*," and a merely external and superficial approach to mitzvos, "*chitzoniyus*," to an internal one, with "*penimiyus*."

There is yet another dimension that elevates us to attain a greater closeness with Hashem. Chazal have said that troubles are often placed specifically in the way of *tzaddikim* in order to stimulate them to come even closer to Hashem through their prayer. Even those of us who are less than *tzaddikim* are motivated to seek alleviation from suffering by extending ourselves in *tefilla*, so that our cries of pain reach up to the gates of Heaven. By expressing our dependence upon Hashem through increased devotion and special assemblies in times of trouble, we are in essence adding more forms of *avoda* to our existing pattern of *tefillas* and mitzvos. The fact that we are permitted to do so indicates that Hashem has increased our ability to seek and re-open channels to call in the Name of Hashem – channels that have remained closed since the destruction of the Temple.

Rav Tzaddok Hakohein זצ"ל (Tzidkas Hatzaddik 178) speaks about how decrees of the gentiles have opened up

channels for our *avoda*. He says that the gentile world in which we live in our exile from Eretz Yisroel has a share in the preservation of Torah, for Hashem, Who has established the thrones of kings among them, ordained those leaders precisely for the purpose of furthering the *avoda* of Klal Yisroel. "*Bi'melachim yimloch* – It is to project His Will that they are able to reign." This is their share in promoting Torah.

Many decrees have been made by kings and leaders, says Rav Tzaddok, in order to humiliate Jews or even destroy

them, but the result has been an increase of channels in reaching for Hashem. Haman planned to destroy the Jews, so the festival of Purim opened up a dimension of ecstatic joy in the service of Hashem. There was a time when the reading of the weekly *Sidra* was forbidden or curtailed, so the *chachamim* instituted the reading of the *Haftarah*. The words of the prophets, so apt and admonishing for all time, became entrenched in the Shabbos and *Yom Tov* service. The *berachos* before and after became an opportune statement of the

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Simcha Guidelines

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- 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 *chassuna 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.

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

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After the hostile decree has been enforced the enemy eventually disappears, but his portion in Torah has left its mark in the avoda of Klal Yisroel.

integrity of the *nevi'im*, proclaiming the eternal message of faith in *Hashem* by his loyal servants. Yet another channel to *Hashem* had been opened up in our journey through *galus*.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashana* 32b) says that originally, the shofar was blown in the morning of Rosh Hashana. Decrees by the non-Jewish authorities forbidding blowing of the shofar in the morning outside the context of *tefilla* resulted in the *chachamim* including it within the formality of the *Mussaf* prayers. Although the decree was later abrogated, it nevertheless remained part of the *Mussaf* service (see *Tosafos* *ibid*). How many extra *kavanos* and tears, caused by hostile decrees, have mingled with the sound of the shofar during *Mussaf* throughout the generations, which wended their way to *Shamayim* along channels which our enemies had wanted to detach from *Klal Yisroel*....

There was a time when Jews were for-

bidden to say the *Shema* in public services. So the *chachamim* surreptitiously included the *Shema* in the *Kedusha* of Shabbos and *Yom Tov Mussaf*. So as we shout it out in unison in *Na'aritzecha* or *Kesser yitnu*, we extend our glorification of *Hashem* by being prepared to live our lives for *Hashem*, as implied in the proclamation of *Shema* that our allegiance is with One G-d only. There is no other.

After the hostile decree has been enforced, says Rav Tzaddok, the enemy eventually disappears, but his portion in Torah has left its mark in the *avoda* of *Klal Yisroel*.

THE MIRACULOUS DYNAMICS TOWARD CHANGE

So much has changed in the life of the world since *Hashem* created it. There is the ongoing desire

by *Hashem*, as it were, to correct the maladjustments of man's own perfidy. The adjustments that *Hashem* makes to maintain a balance in the world, despite the persistent stubbornness of society to go its own destructive way, is nothing short of miraculous in the full sense of the word.

Today, we are witness to uncanny and hitherto unimagined upheavals both in the political and natural world. Words like "political quagmire" are on the lips of many. "Global warming" is another buzz-word. For those of us who are inherently endowed with *emuna* and *bitachon*, however, namely, *Klal Yisroel*, is this not the way through which *Hashem* has opened yet more and more channels for us to ascend Heavenward? The world appears to adjust even amid turmoil. It is an organized chaos with a pattern of a disturbed world emerging. It is *Hashem*, however, Who really makes adjustments to the chaos we create, and these adjustments become a catalyst for our continued spiritual growth.

In the meantime, until the world assumes its pristine state of *Moshiach's* era, we recognize *Hashgachas Hashem* even within our imperfect world. We become aware of new fears and new images, both political and geophysical, which lie on – and beyond – the horizon. Yet, out of this chaos, real and imaginary, we will emerge even stronger, as we recognize that *Hashem* is constantly opening for us so many new directions and outlets, even those which appear painful, in order for us to come closer to Him through *siyatta diShemaya*.

Would it not be better, though, if added opportunities created by our enemies to increase the number and intensity of our *tefillas* could be avoided? Perhaps we may hope that the share that our enemies have in strengthening our Torah observance is now completely exhausted so that all the *tefillas* we have today, with all the historical additions, are sufficiently comprehensive to provide us with the deepest level of devotion and complete faith in *Hashem*, so that He will protect us in all circumstances and in every situation that could ever possibly arise.

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”סומך נופלים
ורופא חולים
ומתיר אסורים...”

“...HaShem supports the fallen,
heals the sick, frees the captives...”

November 21, 1984: Jonathan Pollard

Jonathan Pollard, indicted on one count of passing information to an ally (Israel) without intent to harm the United States, began his life sentence prison term. Visit www.jonathanpollard.org for more information

June 11, 1982: Zacharia Baumel, Zvi Feldman, Yehuda Katz

Baumel, Feldman and Katz went missing during a battle with Syrian and Palestinian forces at Sultan Yakub in eastern Lebanon.

October 16, 1986: Ron Arad

Arad, an air force navigator, was captured after his plane was downed over Lebanon.

August 17, 1997: Guy Hever

Hever disappeared without a trace while serving in the Golan Heights.

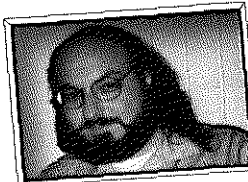
June 25, 2006: Gilad Shalit

Shalit was wounded and kidnapped by Hamas fighters who crossed into Israel from Gaza through a tunnel under the Kerem Shalom border crossing.

July 12, 2006: Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev

Reservists Goldwasser and Regev were kidnapped by Hizballah while they were on a routine patrol along the Lebanese border.

JONATHAN POLLARD



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RABBI CHAIM MOSHE STAUBER

A WOUND NOT HEALED
BY TIME

They say that time heals all wounds. Not so with the deep gash of having lost our Rebbe, a true *manhig Yisroel* who was one of a handful who were left from pre-War Europe. Passage of time only makes us realize how profound our loss really is.

Although the Rebbe lived to an advanced age of 91, and for a number of his last years he was in failing

health, the pain for us of his passing is still severe and throbbing. The loss is particularly painful for those of us who were fortunate to be close to him. The huge void created by his absence will not easily be filled.

As long as the Rebbe was alive, our youth had an authentic glimpse into the past. His *hadras panim* – a patriarchal face and demeanor that spoke volumes – reminded us of the previous Rebbe, as well as of other *tzaddikim* in previous generations. Even as *Klal*

Yisroel is *baruch Hashem* blessed with the unprecedented resurgence of Torah and Chassidus, both in the Diaspora and in *Eretz Yisroel*, we nevertheless lag sadly behind in the emergence of such figures. After all, it took more than 91 years to produce such a Rebbe. Besides all the decades of *limud haTorah* coupled with *avodas Hashem* that the Rebbe had amassed *bikedusha vetahara* (in sanctity and purity), his body had also become sanctified and elevated as a result of his life's ordeal, enduring so much

THE SATMAR REBBE



Reb Moshe
Teitelbaum זצ"ל

We Lost a Manhig Yisroel!

personal tragedy and suffering that it can be said that he hardly had a good day in his life.

The Rebbe told us how he had been singled out by the Nazis in forced-labor

RABBI STAUBER IS A TALMID OF THE PREVIOUS REBBE, AND WAS *ZOCHE* TO BE CLOSE TO BOTH REBBES. FOR MANY YEARS HE SERVED AS THE EDITOR OF *DER YID*, AND A *KLAL* ASKAN WHO, AMONG OTHER CAUSES, HAD FOUNDED PESACH TIKVAH – A NON-PROFIT MENTAL HEALTH AGENCY IN WILLIAMSBURG.

camp for brutal treatment, beatings and punishment. They murdered his young wife and three children, and his brothers and sisters and their families, including his older brother Reb Zalman Leib זצ"ל, Sigheter Rav, who was taken to the gas chambers together with the entire transport from Sighet – the old and the very young *Yidden* from his *kehilla*. He refused to part with them during the "selection," and was sent "to the left" *al kiddush Hashem*. Such suffering alone

had turned many ordinary survivors into holy beings – prominent among them, the Rebbe.

IN A CRADLE OF KEDUSHA

The Rebbe was born in Ratzfert, Hungary, where his maternal grandfather, *Hagaon* Reb Shulem Eliezer Halberstam זצ"ל had lived. The Belzer Rebbe, Reb Yissachar Ber

Rokeach זצ"ל, who lived in Ratzfert due to World War I, was his *sandak*. Young Moshe was rather weak from birth, and apparently, that was one of the reasons he was named after the *Yismach Moshe*.

The Rebbe remembered his father putting him to sleep in his *sefarim shtieb* (library), where he personally kept vigil over him. There, he observed and absorbed his father's *avodas hakodesh*, leaving an indelible impression on his *neschama*.

Many years ago, the Rebbe himself told this writer of the special bonding and feeling of closeness between himself and his famed father, *Hagaon Hakadosh* Reb Chaim Tzvi זצ"ל (known in the *Chassidishe* world as the *Atzei Chaim*, after his *sefer*).

The Rebbe was not yet 12 years of age when he was orphaned from both his parents; yet, he had already been recognized as being especially bright and sincere – an emerging *talmid chacham* whose exceptional *hasmada* in Torah study and total immersion in *avodas Hashem* foretold greatness.

IN THE VIEW OF OLDER CHASSIDIM

My father, Reb Yechezkel Menachem ben Reb Shlomo Tzvi זצ"ל, who passed away a little over a year ago at age 92, was a *shochet* and *mohel* in Antwerp for close to 30 years. During the last 20 years of his life, he lived in Williamsburg, where he was an ardent Chassid of the Rebbe, although he was the Rebbe's senior. He described how many older Rebbe'im, like the Nasuder Rav זצ"ל (who had been a staunch Chassid of the Sanzer

Rav זצ"ל) and the Biksader Rebbe זצ"ל, had stood in awe before the Rebbe even before he was bar mitzva.

The Rebbe recalled how he had immersed himself in learning Torah,

Rebbe and had many tens of thousands of *Yidden* (*bli ayin hara*) as his Chassidim in the Satmar *Kehillos* worldwide, he continued to conduct himself with modesty and incredible humility.

In addition to being a gadol baTorah vehora'a, and one of the most prominent rabbanim of the she'eiris happleita, with a vast knowledge and experience in kashrus, shechita, mikvaos, dinei Torah, etc., he was outstanding in his ahavas Yisroel.

blessed with a unique capacity for memorizing, while striving to plumb the depths of every *inyan* (topic) he learned. It was for his erudition in Torah and exceptionally refined *middos* that his family was resolved to keep him in the fold, and thus arranged that he marry his first cousin, the daughter of his uncle, the Sassover Rebbe, *Hagaon* Reb Henoch Mayer זצ"ל (son-in-law of the *Kedushas Yomtov*, Reb Lipa Teitelbaum זצ"ל). Thus, the previous Rebbe, Reb Yoel Teitelbaum זצ"ל, was his uncle from two sides. He also was his spiritual mentor, and related to him like a father.

As the Rebbe himself had said at his *hesped* for the previous Rebbe, calling out: "*Avi! Avi!* – I can justifiably cry out from the bottom of my aching and sorrowful heart: My father! My father! – Twice! When my father passed away, I was still a young child, and I grew up under the guidance and influence of my holy uncle, who was like a loving father to me all through the years. Now I am orphaned from both...."

In addition to being a *gadol baTorah vehora'a*, and one of the most prominent *rabbanim* of the *she'eiris happleita*, with a vast knowledge and experience in *kashrus*, *shechita*, *mikvaos*, *dinei Torah*, etc., he was outstanding in his *ahavas Yisroel*. Even when he was the Satmar

When someone had pointed out to the Rebbe that it was not in keeping with his *kavod* that the Rebbe's *gabbai* – Reb Moshe Friedman – be called at the *tisch* by the same name as the Rebbe ("Moshe"), his answer was: "This way I am reminded what my real name is...."

Boruch S., a nephew of mine in the hosiery import business, had an entire shipment of merchandise from Europe impounded by U.S. Customs. The customs agent told him that due to tighter scrutiny in this post-Sept. 11, '01 era, it would take considerably more time than before until they released the goods. This was a terrible blow to him and his business, and he was facing a substantial loss. He went to the Rebbe and told him his predicament. The Rebbe responded: "What do you think I can do more than you? All I can do is be *mispalleil* and say a little *Tehillim*. But that you, too, can do. So let us both *daven*, and may *Hashem* help you."

The next day, his broker called Boruch to inform him that of all the impounded containers, only his was released.

1 His father was the eldest son and successor to the *Kedushas Yomtov* (Rabbi Chanaya Yomtov Lipa, Rav in Sighet, Romania). He, in turn, was the son of the *Yeiteiv Leiv* (Rabbi Yekusiel Yehuda), who was the son of Reb Eluzor Nissan זצ"ל, Rav of Drohbitch, only son of the *Yismach Moshe*. The *Yismach Moshe* himself had attested to the special *kedusha* they had inherited, saying that his forebears for ten generations back were all great *talmidei chachamim* and meticulously holy *tzaddikim*.

When the previous Rebbe was taken from us on that dark day of 26 Av, 5739/1979, we were all devastated. A gnawing feeling of a bitter spiritual void prevailed, and deprived us of the security that we would lead our lives in accordance with Torah and *Yiddishkeit*. Many of us felt like survivors felt after Auschwitz, terribly shaken, and contemplating how we might manage to go on. Where does one experiencing difficulty having children go for a *yeshua*, and to whom does one turn to ensure a *parnassa*? There are many stories about how the Rebbe served as the good *shaliach* to bring *Yidden* their needed salvation. Let us cite one of numerous stories whose authenticity this writer can vouch for:

They were married for close to 10 years and the doctors were unable to help them. Then, Reb Eliezer A. and his wife came to the Rebbe with a *kvittel* telling him how desperate they both are. It had been quite a number of years since they were married and had no children. They both cried so hard that the Rebbe himself was also moved to tears. "You will shortly be blessed with *zera shel kayama* (lasting offspring). You can begin in earnest shopping for a baby carriage."

Exactly nine months from that day, a daughter was born to them.

Besides, my father זצ"ל also had a *gabbai* who was named Reb Nachum Hersh, like him...."

IN THE PATHWAYS OF HUMILITY

When the Torah extolls *Moshe Rabbeinu*, it does not cite his traits of holiness, knowledge or extreme devotion to his flock. Rather, the Torah praises him: "*Veha'ish Moshe*

anav me'od – And the man Moshe was very modest" (*Bamidbar* 12,3).

In 1938, he was selected as *rav* of Zenta, Yugoslavia.... Eight years later, having barely survived Auschwitz, he was drafted to be the *rav* of Sighet by the surviving remnants and agreed to help rebuild the city of his forefathers from the ruins of the war. A skeleton figure, he had been ravaged by the Nazis, who had mercilessly starved him and beaten him so savagely that he was many times very close to the end. Miraculously, he survived, and *Hashem* helped him regain enough physical strength and will power to ensure that the several scores of saved *Yidden* who had returned to Sighet would survive spiritually, as well. After two years, due to the advent of Communism, the Rebbe immigrated to the U.S.

While still in Europe, he had married a Teitelbaum cousin, the current Rebbetzin, Pessel Leah, daughter of the

Volover Rav זצ"ל, who bore him three daughters and four sons.

For close to forty years, the Rebbe was known as the Sigheter Rav, successor to the Sighet dynasty. Throughout the four decades following World War II (when he had lost his first family) the Rebbe was perfectly satisfied with a limited income to support his second family. From his modest-sized *beis midrash*, small yeshiva, and old-fashioned, simple residence in Brooklyn – first on Hewes Street in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, and later in Boro Park – he continued to be a *marbitz Torah ve'yiras Shamayim*, just as he had in pre-war Europe. And he continued giving *shiurim* (lectures) and *farhern* (examinations) as long as his health permitted. He *davened* with *hishtafchus hanefesh* (pouring out his soul), his voice often resembling that of the previous Rebbe זצ"ל. Who can forget his heart-rending *tefillos* as a *sheliach tzibbur* on



an ordinary Shabbos, not to mention *Yamim Tovim* and, most particularly, on the *Yamim Nora'im*? Or his ethereal dance during *hakafos*, very much like the previous Rebbe. The depth of his *drashos* and *divrei Torah* when conducting a *tisch* can readily be seen in his *Sefer Beirach Moshe*.

As Sigheter Rav, he was content to live in the shadow of his illustrious uncle and mentor, *Rabbeinu* Yoel Teitelbaum. They maintained a very close relationship, and it became quite apparent that the previous Rebbe, having had no surviving children of his own, wanted his nephew to succeed him.

While the previous Rebbe was still alive, the Sigheter Rav sought to preserve a vibrant *Yiddishkeit* for posterity. This writer was present at a meeting in the offices of the *Hisachdus Harabbonim* (Central Rabbinical Congress), of which the old Rebbe was *nasi* (president) and the *Beirach Moshe* the *sekan nasi* (vice-president). Even though his awe for his uncle was remarkable, and he hardly said one word without being called upon, at this meeting discussing *kashrus*, the Rebbe was adamant about the need to train *rabbanim*, *dayanim*, *shochtim*, and other *klei kodesh* for the next generation. In fact, he demanded that the Satmar *Kehilla* set the example by hiring a *dayan*. Soon after that, the current *rosh beis din* of the main Satmar *Kehilla*, Rabbi Yisroel Chaim Menashe Friedman שליט"א, who until then was the *rosh yeshiva* of the Sighet Yeshiva in Boro Park, became the Satmar *Dayan* in Williamsburg, and Rabbi Getzel Berkowitz שליט"א was engaged as *Dayan* in Kiryas Yoel-Monroe.

FOLLOWING HIS UNCLE'S LEADERSHIP

At gatherings of the *Hisachdus Harabbonim*, he would be seated next to his uncle, and in most cases, was also one of the first speakers. When he became Satmar Rebbe, he ascended to the presidency of that rabbinic body, as well as of the *Eida Hachareidis* in *Yerushalayim*;

Kollel Shomrei Hachomos – Reb Meir Baal Haness; Keren Hatzola; Rav Tov International Rescue Organization; Yeshivas Yetev Lev in *Yerushalayim*; Yeshivas Maharit in Bnei Brak; and scores of Satmar institutions in the U.S., London, Belgium, and Canada, with untold numbers of *Yiddische kinderlach* – boys and girls – receiving an exemplary *chinuch al taharas hakodesh*.

When the previous Rebbe was *niftar*, the entire Torah world was shaken. Many did not believe that Satmar would survive. It took a full year until the

Rebbe was officially named Satmar Rebbe. There were times when his very authority faced challenges from within and without, but the same *siyatta diSh-maya* that had accompanied his uncle assisted this Rebbe, as well. He, too, was *rach kekoneh vekasheh ke'erez* (flexible as a reed, strong as a cedar tree) and was *na'im halichos*, sweet and pleasant with people.

Despite his subdued style and gentle manner, he did not shy away from leading battles against *meharsei hadas* (violators of sacred tradition) and her-

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etics, wherever they may have been. The Rebbe felt it his responsibility to wage *milchama LaShem baAmaleik midor dor* with the same vigor and fire as the previous Rebbe. Whenever he deemed a response or a public demonstration imperative, the Rebbe sent out his troops.

Soon after he became Satmar Rebbe, a serious threat to the very existence of the Eida Hachareidis arose. The Rebbe took on the source of this challenge with a fury and an all-out response that was unlike anything expected from him, since he had not engaged in such fierce battles in the past. Many had been stunned, including this writer. When I said to the Rebbe that people are surprised at his vehemence, he answered, "I had no choice, for two reasons: Number one, that was the only way to save the Eida Hachareidis. Number two, I am now the Satmar Rebbe, and no longer the Sigheter Rav..."

During the Rebbe's last trip to Eretz Yisroel in 5754, I was part of his entourage. While in Bnei Brak, he visited prominent *gedolei Torah*; I was present when Hagaon Harav Shach זצ"ל paid him a return visit. It was quite moving to see Rabbi Shach, a frail old man, continually sighing deeply and saying to the Rebbe: "Satmar Rebbe, ich hob moireh az s'vet kumen a tzeit ven Yidden shom-

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rei Torah vellen do nit kennen voinen!
– I am afraid there may come a time when Torah-observant Jews will no longer be able to live here!”

The *Rebbe* put his hand on that of Rabbi Shach with affection to reassure him, that he need not be so concerned because *Hashem* had vowed to us that He will not forsake us.... That was an exchange one does not easily forget.

Rabbi Moshe Sherer זצ"ל told me the following: He had visited the *Rebbe*, as *Sigheter Rav*, and invited him to grace the dais at an upcoming National Convention of Agudath Israel of America. Rabbi Sherer was accompanied by a handful of people, one of whom *davened* regularly in the *Sigheter Beis Midrash* in Boro Park. After Rabbi Sherer made his request, the *Rebbe* pointed to this *mispalleil*, saying with a broad smile: “Even if I am not at the convention myself, I do have a *shaliach* (personal emissary) there....”

Rabbi Sherer retorted: “If it’s a question of having the *Rebbe*’s *shaliach* present at the convention, then I can fill that role.”

AN IRREPLACEABLE LOSS

Our loss with the passing of this *Rebbe* זצ"ל is profound and devastating. During the 26 years-plus since the *petira* of the *VaYoel Moshe* זצ"ל (the name of his *sefer*) – when the *Beirach Moshe* succeeded him as the Satmar *Rebbe* – it miraculously seemed to a large degree that the old *Rebbe* were still alive. Not only did he resemble and sound very much like his uncle, it was as if he had also inherited a great measure of his spiritual prowess as a *po'eil yeshuos*. (The *Rebbe*, of course, ascribed everything to the *ko'ach hashpa'a* [influence] of the previous *Rebbe*, saying: “It’s all the *ko'ach* of my holy uncle. I do not delude myself. I know it’s so!”)

The recurring theme at every gathering was the need for every *Chassid* to remember: “*Ein lanu shiyur rak haTorah hazois* – We have nothing left except this Torah,” and only through learning and keeping mitzvos in the authentic fashion we have inherited from our forefathers will we survive in this land.... On many occasions, the *Rebbe* intoned, “We each must always remember and think: What would the *Rebbe* זצ"ל have said regarding

Amidst all his suffering in the Nazi forced-labor camps, it was astounding how he clung to *emuna sheleima* in *Hashem*, and constantly encouraged other inmates to recite the Thirteen *Ikarei Emuna* (Principles of Faith). He *davened* and learned with his fellow inmates by heart at every opportunity. It was amazing to what degree he constantly reminded his listeners, even during his final days, that *bi'as Hamashiach* was imminent. Whenever the classic “*Ani Ma'amin Be'emuna Sheleima Bevi'as Hamashiach*” was sung, his face changed colors as he shed tears. Perhaps his profound *emuna* was his greatest *mofeis* (miracle).

my conduct? We must weigh everything we contemplate and do against what the *Rebbe* זצ"ל would have wanted us to do in a situation like this.”

His legacy to us is the manner in which he kept this sacred charge alive, demanding, and teaching us by his inspiring example, how to respond to this challenge. □

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CHANA NESTLEBAUM

The Kiruv Puzzle

THE FORTY YEARS' DIFFERENCE

We live in a unique period of history. Never before have there been masses of Jews who have grown up completely severed from any meaningful connection to Judaism. Not only are the fundamental skills and education missing, but even the simple emotional bonds that endow a person with a sense of belonging to the Jewish people have been effectively dissolved in the melting pot.

Fifty years ago, when I was growing up, most of the older generation had some connection to authentic *Yiddishkeit*. I remember my mother lighting three brass candlesticks on Friday night, just as her mother did. I recall driving with my parents to the city from our suburban home to buy meat at the kosher butcher shop. The sawdust on the floor and the big roll of white paper on the counter remain snapshots in my mind.

My grandparents still lived in the city, off of Blue Hill Avenue, which for decades was the throbbing center of Jewish life in Boston. When we visited on Sundays, my grandfather, whom we called "Papa," would take us to the Franklin Park Zoo. On the way, we'd be immersed in Jewish life as we passed the kosher shops and observed the elderly Jews strolling the avenue.

Because it was Sunday, there was always some challah left over from Shabbos. Even though we didn't have challah on our own table, it was there – a vestige of Shabbos – in our lives.

On the way home, we would sometimes run into Mr. Lakin, the sherbet vendor. He was my vision of an Old World Jew. With his long, grizzly white beard and gentle smile, he would scoop out some creamy, pastel-colored ices into a pleated paper cup and hand it to me carefully, as if it might break.

MRS. NESTLEBAUM IS THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR FOR OORAH KIRUV RECHOKIM, LAKEWOOD, NJ. SHE WAS MOST RECENTLY REPRESENTED IN THIS PAGES WITH "LOST AND FOUND," OCT. '04.



PAPA'S SPECIAL WORLD

Papa always wore a baseball cap. I didn't realize it at the time, but that was his yarmulke for the public arena. He had other secrets as well. There was a pile of envelopes on a desk in an unused back bedroom. They were printed with bold-faced Hebrew letters and photos of bearded old men in rabbinical garb. Who were all these rabbis, and why were they contacting Papa? It was his world, and even though we didn't know much about it, we knew it existed.

When Pesach came around, we'd drive to Bubbi's and Papa's house for the Sedarim. My sister, brother and I would race up the stairs to their second-story apartment, bursting to display our new haircuts, clothes and shoes to our faithfully admiring grandparents. We were surely, in their eyes, the most beautiful children that G-d ever placed on earth. Somehow, the excitement carried us through Papa's hurried but complete rendition of the Hagadda, pronounced in a Livtish accent that was foreign to our ears. He would beam as we, with our elementary Hebrew school education, would correct him. "Tow-rah, Papa. Not Tei-reh." As we walked out to our car in the silence of the night, the air seemed spookily saturated with angels and prophets and all the supernatural beings we had spent the night imagining.

GENERATIONS REMOVED

Fast forward fifty years. Today's American Jewish families are two or even three generations removed from those Kodachrome memories. Not

only have the children growing up today never heard a word of Yiddish, their parents have never heard one, either. They are two or three generations removed from the last Shabbos candles to grace the family's dining room table. If they eat something kosher, it's almost surely by accident. If they have a Jewish education, it's just enough to get through a bar or bat mitzvah, and then get on with life.

How, the Torah-observant world wonders, can such assimilated people ever come back to Judaism? An authentic Jewish identity is like a puzzle, composed of many interlocking pieces. There is the emotional piece that connects to home and family life, the intellectual piece that is forged in yeshiva and Bais Yaakov, the social piece developed with peers in school, at shul and in the community, and most importantly, the spiritual piece of the puzzle – the joy felt by a person's *neshama* when he learns *Hashem's* Torah or speaks to *Hashem* in *tefilla*.

Fifty years ago, there were enough pieces left to make a picture, although the allegiance to Torah and halacha – the glue that holds it all together – was missing. But a Jew growing up in the secular world today has just one of these pieces – a *neshama* that yearns to connect to *Hashem*. It is often buried so deeply that he doesn't even know it's there. If it were a puzzle piece, it would be the one that had been kicked under the rug. It's there, but where?

THE PUZZLE'S MISSING PIECES

This metaphor – a puzzle missing almost all its pieces – describes the challenge facing those working in

kiruv today. In order to foster a complete Jewish identity, the person involved in *kiruv* must supply more than one part of the picture. Learning alone won't do it. Emotions alone won't carry the person all the way. Neither will Torah-observant friends and neighbors, nor a particular rabbi or shul. For Torah observance to become someone's life, it must provide him with everything life requires.

But *kiruv* has to start somewhere. Many *kiruv* organizations work at finding those dusty, neglected puzzle pieces hidden under the rug. Once the *neshama* is unearthed and touched by the loving concern of a fellow Jew, the picture can begin to take shape. Something needs to draw out the *neshama*, to help the person feel its presence and understand what it is. That "something" might be a taste of Torah learning through Partners in Torah, an inspiring Shabbaton with Discovery or Gateways, a thought-provoking article on Aish.com, a visit to the campus Chabad House, or a Birthright trip to Israel. It might be a Shabbos meal at the next-door neighbor's house.

Kiruv has to start somewhere. The question is, where does it go from there?

SEALING THE CRACKS

According to a Rabbi Tzvi Aryeh Yoffe, *Kiruv* Director of Oorah, a Lakewood-based organization, founded by Rabbi Chaim Mintz, many people who set out to seek their Jewish identity eventually abandon the journey. While they may be enriched by what they've experienced, and may even be

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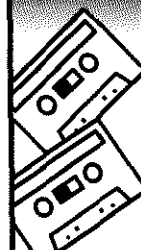
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saved from intermarriage because of it, they do not ultimately adopt a life of Torah and mitzvos.

"People fall through the cracks," he explained. "The most successful cases are those in which someone is working closely with the family, dealing with the entire *kiruv* process."

A *kiruv*-oriented school, such as the Sholom Torah Academies in New Jersey, understands clearly the need to provide more than a classroom seat.

Rabbi Eli Lapa, principal of the Western

Monmouth branch of the school, located in Manalapan, NJ, says that much of this extra dimension is provided by teachers, who are chosen for both their teaching talents and their commitment to nurturing their students' growing commitment to Torah.

"The most important component of *kiruv* is nothing that's done overtly," says Rabbi Lapa. "It's the relationships, the interactions. When teachers are genuine and sincerely care about the children, the parents sense it immediately. They

know this is something they won't find in public school."

Working with the parents is also paramount in fostering success with the children. One way in which Sholom does this is by giving due consideration to the priorities with which the secular parents enter the system.

"We have to provide excellent secular studies," says Rabbi Lapa. "That is what a family is looking for – the greatest opportunity for their child to be successful in the 'real world.' And since they recognize financial and social status as success, we have to provide a program that gives them confidence that their children will be able to attend Harvard and Yale."

On the other end of the balance, efforts must be made to help the parents adopt more Torah-oriented priorities. Sholom at one time offered its own adult education classes, but now refers its parents to classes given by Torah Links, part of Beis Medrash Govoha's Geshar outreach program.

Oorah understands that those parents who have taken the giant step of enrolling their children in yeshiva or day school often find themselves in the difficult situation of being unable to help their children with the simplest of assignments. Therefore, it offers the option of at-home learning by phone or in person.

While parent education is an essential piece of the puzzle, some *kiruv* experts point out that referrals to various community resources are effective only when there is follow-up. "For instance, what if the parents don't like the program you send them to?" says Oorah spokesman Rabbi Yoffe. "Do they come to you and tell you, or do they just quit, and you find out about it months later?"

"The problem can also evolve the other way around. Say the parents get inspired and try to become religious, and they decide to send their child to yeshiva. But what if that yeshiva doesn't work out for the child? Is there anyone the parents can turn to for advice, or will they just put the child back into public school?"

There are hundreds of other scenarios, as well, that can cause the *kiruv* process to fizzle. A person may want to become observant, but fears telling his employer that he has to leave early on Friday. He

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may be stalled by the resistance he expects from parents or friends. He may live in a neighborhood that has no shul in walking distance and no kosher shopping. One spouse might want to adopt more religious observances while the other is disinterested or outright opposed. In all these instances, a caring, sensitive mentor can be the difference between overcoming the problem and moving forward, or slipping back into the "default mode" of non-observance.

"There are so many things that happen to a person between the first 'oohs and aahs' and a real commitment to Torah," says an experienced *kiruv* volunteer. "People think of *kiruv* as the dramatic transformation, the guy who cuts off his pony tail and puts on a yarmulke. But there are many people walking around in black hats or *sheitels*, who are not quite there yet. They need a lot of support, for a long time, and that is the real, unglamorous, day-to-day work of *kiruv*."

REPLICATING GROWING UP FRUM

What goes into this type of long-term *kiruv*? "Think about growing up religious," says Rabbi Yoffe. "Think about everything that goes into raising a Jewish child. You have *rebbei'im* and teachers. You have grandparents, aunts and uncles that might take the children for a Shabbos or bring them on a *Chol Hamoed* trip. You have *rabbanim* and relatives you might ask for advice. You can't even begin to take into account the network that a religious person has at his or her disposal. This is what we try to supply to our *kiruv* families."

For instance, although children are in yeshiva, there is no Shabbos at home for many of them. At Shalom Torah Academy, two yearly Shabbatons, one sponsored by the school and another done in conjunction with Gateways, provides a taste of a rich Shabbos experience. In addition, teachers frequently invite children to their own homes for Shabbos. Oorah periodically runs a Shabbat With Oorah retreat, which helps families create warm, emotional ties to their Jewish identity and

to religious families who come to be part of the experience.

It is equally vital that *Yom Tov* be made meaningful, especially to children who are enrolled in yeshiva and learning about the laws and rituals as each season approaches. For this reason, Oorah builds *sukkos* for its families and runs *Chol Hamoed* trips for the children. Shalom keeps school open for *Chol Hamoed Sukkos*.

"We stay open for two reasons," says Rabbi Lapa. "One is that our parents are going by a secular calendar. If the

camp. Or they were going to camps that were Jewish but not Orthodox. There were no *frum* camps set up especially to deal with kids from non-*frum* homes."

As vital as all these aspects of *kiruv* are, the most vital piece of the puzzle, especially when working with children, is their success in Torah learning. It is there, as well, that great potential for difficulty arises, especially if a child starts school later in his career. For children from religious homes, there would very seldom, if ever, be a thought of removing the child

Kiruv must help Jews find comfort, warmth and friendship among their own people

children didn't have school, it would present them with a major problem. But more importantly, if we didn't bring the children to school, most of them would have no chance to sit in a *sukka* or shake a *lulav* and *esrog*."

SUMMER BACKSLIDE

Most children coming from secular homes live in non-religious neighborhoods, making it difficult for them to develop appropriate social ties outside school. Their parents may not worry at all about the backsliding the old friends and neighborhood can cause. In fact, they may be happy to see the child "balance" between his old life and his new one. Once again, therefore, the *kiruv* organization or mentor must act *in loco parentis* and provide what any caring Jewish parent would provide, given the necessary level of awareness.

Oorah answered this problem by opening up its own summer camp. The girls' camp is now in its third season, and a boys' division was launched this summer. In recruiting for the camp, Oorah found that it was filling a wide-open niche. "Most kids from non-religious homes were going to specialty camps like baseball or ballet

from the yeshiva system if he were not succeeding. But for children who have already been in public school and whose parents do not yet understand the value of what their children are receiving in yeshiva, that idea can seem like a much more realistic alternative.

Therefore, another key aspect of *kiruv* is to conduct regular, systematic follow-up, visiting families, calling parents and making sure that problems are resolved, lest the child or his parents be soured on Jewish education.

THE LAST WORD

Beyond teaching the fundamentals of Judaism, and the skills and halachos involved in Torah observance, *kiruv* has another task to perform. It must help Jews find comfort, warmth and friendship among their own people. For children who have no memory of Bubbi and Papa's seder, of the kosher butcher and the old neighborhood, new memories must be made. And that is not the job of a *kiruv* organization. It is the job of every religious Jew. When our brethren find serenity, enthusiasm and joy in our world, they want what we have. Then, the pieces fall into place. □

PLONIS ALMONIS

About three years ago, I signed up with Project Y.E.S. as a volunteer. At the time, I had numerous reservations about being a mentor – but the years have proven that for me, and I believe for her, the rewards have been immeasurable. I have often suggested to friends that they become a mentor, and they've mentioned many of the same concerns I had. Among them: Too busy. Lack professional skills. Inexperienced with kids at risk. Not hip or cool. Kids wouldn't relate to me. Unwilling to neglect my own children. My family will suffer....

Recently, I was *zocheh* to chat with my "mentee," Nechama, about her work with at-risk children and her recent engagement. It's a time for me to reflect on how much the mentoring has done for me and for my family. Hopefully, it will inspire some others who currently share my own initial concerns to jump in and forge a connection with a Jewish child.

WHAT A
DIFFERENCE AN
HOUR MAKES
.....

My overwhelming concern was: *When will I find the time without neglecting my family?*

Even though the program only required one hour a week, as a working mother with, *baruch Hashem*, a large

family, ranging in age from newborn to twelve, one hour seemed like a lot. It turned out that Nechama, like many kids in trouble, was keeping pretty late hours, and for my own family, leaving the house one night a week from 9 to 10 was least invasive. Even then, the two-year-old, a napper, was occasionally up, and he actually came along with us sometimes. I was pretty exact about

guess that's called "time management for mothers." It was amazing to see that the hour could be found, and moreover, that one hour a week could really make a difference. Very rarely did I speak on the phone with or see Nechama outside of our weekly hour, yet, over time, we developed a strong bond.

Rather than being neglected, my children benefited from my mentoring.

Most importantly, it was an invaluable role model for them in two areas: *ahavas Yisroel* and keeping a commitment. There were a few times over the years that I was literally too exhausted to go out, and considered canceling, but my husband and daughter brought Nechama to my house, propped me up on pillows, and set up our hour. This was a strong example for them on the importance of a commitment.

Saying "Yes" to Y.E.S.

Opening My Eyes and My Heart to a Teenager at Risk

my one-hour allotment, which actually suited Nechama fine. I think it made the relationship more appealing to her.

The benefits for me were several. First, I learned something about squeezing time from seemingly nowhere. I

THE POWER
OF LISTENING
.....

Another major concern, beyond time, was: *How would a teen at risk relate to me?*

I'm a middle-aged mother, not particularly cool or street smart. Old car, plain house. Nechama was a trendy teenager who loved shopping and talking about bargains. She was also very intuitive and street smart. But I soon learned that simply being myself, an imperfect adult, somewhat more mature than her, who cared enough to meet with her for a short time on a consistent basis, was enough. And in our relationship, I

PROJECT Y.E.S. (YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES), A PROJECT OF AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA, IS AN ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONALLY TRAINED VOLUNTEERS WHO FOCUS ON THE CHALLENGES FACING AT-RISK TEENS. SERVICES – CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IN NEW YORK, CHICAGO, DETROIT, AND MINNEAPOLIS – INCLUDE A HOTLINE, MENTORING PROGRAM, ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PLACEMENT, PROFESSIONAL REFERRALS, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING AND JOB PLACEMENT.

learned the power of a lot of skills that I use (or should, anyway) with my own children.

Probably, the most invaluable lesson I learned was the power of listening. Fortunately, Nechama loved to talk – and I'm a decent listener. I'd ask her about her week, and for much of the time she'd talk. At first, she'd tell me all about her shopping (I'd try to facilitate minimally so that she wouldn't realize the depths of my ignorance), and then, as time went on, she'd bring up the real issues in her life. I'd give her my opinion, if it seemed she was open to it, trying to be as honest as possible without being critical. It was often a juggling act. Gradually, I came to realize that she appreciated my being a straight shooter with her. I remember her once laughing ruefully after she asked me for advice about some lies she planned to tell her parents, "What am I asking you for? You always see their side, too."

I was constantly amazed that she trusted me simply because I was willing to listen and to give her the respect that an honest response implied.

LESSONS IN THE PROCESS

Despite her issues, there was much to compliment, and I tried to sprinkle my listening with as many subtle compliments as possible – not too overt or forced, but genuine compliments: About her shopping smarts (that was more in the beginning), her street smarts, her intuition, and eventually, about her willingness to lay down her self-absorption and really work on her character. This conscious attempt to make her feel respected was great practice for me for my own children. This had a bonus benefit for me: I learned to polish my *ayin tova* (generous eye) by seeking the good in her... there was, indeed, much of it. Hopefully I can apply that to my other fellow Jews.

I also garnished some tips about what NOT to do with my own children. For example, she once complained about her mother's seemingly interminable phone calls to her, undoubtedly due to her mother's desperate need to connect with

her. *Hmmm. That was exactly what I was doing with my son, who was learning out of town.* I think he was pleasantly surprised when our protracted calls became short, upbeat conversations. Like many kids at risk, she held those around her to a much higher standard than herself – she should have been a *mashgiach* – and honed in on any possible inconsistencies she found in her parents' behavior or observance. I resisted joining her in her parent bashing (a very tempting way to forge a connection with kids), but listened thoughtfully, and processed that message....

And yet another lesson: Like many of the mentors at the Project Y.E.S. meeting, I was dubious at first that a teen would have any interest in being mentored, since it was the parents who initiated this relationship. We were assured that nearly all the kids who were referred for mentoring were open to it, and with Nechama, that was indeed the case. Overcoming my own fear of challenge (and rejection) was a plus for me. While Nechama easily accepted our relationship, and enjoyed it, one approach that definitely did not work was pontification or preaching. On very few occasions, since I learned my lessons quickly, I tried to share what I thought was an inspiring *d'var Torah* with Nechama. Her eyes glazed, she became intensely bored very suddenly, and it was evident that this approach was a bit too direct. But the indirect approach, of simply being an honest, loving friend whose own family was imperfect but happy, did work. I was stunned when one day, a few years after I began mentoring her, we were discussing her future family, and she talked about how idyllic my life seemed to her.

NOT AN OVERNIGHT PROCESS

Her evolution into a true *bas Yisroel*, with a deep understanding and appreciation of people, was something to behold. It was slow in coming, and many factors other than the mentoring, including wonderful, involved teachers, family, seminary experience, and time, intertwined to help her flower. Still, it was not an overnight

process, and so, yet another lesson was brought home: patience...

Of course, my most important lessons came from learning from Nechama's example. Here she was, a young girl saddled with some pretty difficult issues, and yet, she summoned the will to deal with them, and to grow from them. Her strength of character, and personal growth, emotionally and in *Yiddishkeit*, are an example for me: Whatever situation *Hashem* sends our way, deal with it. Grow from it. She has.

Finally, a plug for Project Y.E.S. Theoretically, I should have been able to take on responsibility for helping another mother's child in a committed way, on a regular basis. I think that without doing it in a formal way, my commitment would not have been the same. Also, despite my large extended family and friendly block – like many *frum* Jews in the big city, I crave for community. Doing this as part of an organization filled my need to feel connected.

THE NET GAINS

So, to recap, these are some of the areas in which I've grown (or should have), thanks to Nechama – time management, involving my family in *chesed*, learning to listen and compliment, understanding my own children better, recognizing the relative ineffectiveness of direct *mussar*, learning to conduct my own observance more consistently, gaining patience, and the ability to surmount challenges... Most important, though, I've learned to love her. When we first met, I wasn't sure how I could possibly relate to a very materialistic girl – as I dimwittedly and simplistically saw her at the very beginning. But just like each child expands one's understanding of and connection to different types of people, so did Nechama expand my outlook. Despite our differences, we came to love each other and appreciate the breadth of each other's personalities. If I can take that love and appreciation and bring them to my relationships with all my fellow Jews, then I indeed will have gained beyond measure. ✠

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YOEL C. GOLDBERG



KIRUV: PHASE II

ARE WE
UP TO
THE TASK?

Seldom do a few months go by without the topic of *kiruv rechokim* appearing in these pages, as in most other Orthodox periodicals. It is *baruch Hashem* a burgeoning “industry,” employing enormous talent and utilizing the most technologically advanced methods of reaching out to Jews across the globe in unprecedented numbers. While this reality makes us feel good, we must take a good hard look at the second and more important phase of this phenomenon, and that is the integration of these *Yidden* into our society. In other words, what are we doing for them once they have made the commitment to become observant?

Deciding to become an active participant in the *Am Hashem*, as difficult as

it is, pales in comparison to actualizing this change over the long term. *Kiruv* professionals and regular *frum* Jews who support and assist them step by step as they make the slow and arduous journey give them the courage and stamina to continue to grow until they can swim on their own. The stark reality is, however, that we often let them down at various stages after their commitment. The whys and hows will be discussed further in this article. But needless to say, this phenomenon is cause for great concern for many reasons, including:

1. The Torah in several places prohibits us from oppressing or abusing the *ger*. *Rashi* (*Shemos* 22,20) defines the *ger* “as a foreigner who was not born in our country.” I would like to suggest that *Rashi* seems to indicate that a *ger* is not limited to a convert, but refers to any newcomer to our camp, either geographically or ethnically – in other words, anyone who would feel out of place in their new surroundings. An Israeli family that moved to Monsey; a Lakewood *yungerman* relocated to St. Louis to teach; no less, a newly

married *ba'al teshuva* couple in your shul – they all need a helping hand. We are *biblically* obligated to make them feel at home in every way possible.¹

2. Enormous resources are being expended in the *kiruv* effort. If we only invest in phase one – bringing them in the door – and don’t have a plan for integration, we are in effect squandering our scarce monetary resources and incredible talent.
3. By not properly integrating our dear brethren into our society, we are in effect creating a *ba'al teshuva* subculture, which can be very dangerous to *Yiddishkeit*. *Hanhagas haYehudi* – a Jewish mode of conduct – must come from our sacred *mesora* (tradition). This element is their biggest deficit. If we don’t bequeath it to them, then not only are we short-changing them, but

¹ *Rashi* (*Shemos* 23,9) further states that particularly in these instances, “oppressing them is bad.” *Sifsei Chachamim* explains *Rashi* in two ways: 1) His *yeitzer hara* is very difficult and it is therefore very vulnerable. 2) Once you turn him off, you will never be able to convince him to come back.

YOEL GOLDBERG, A RESIDENT OF SPRING VALLEY NY, HAS BEEN AFFILIATED WITH OHR SOMAYACH IN MONSEY FOR MANY YEARS. HE HAS RECENTLY COFOUNDED CHAYEI OLAM, AN ORGANIZATION THAT WILL SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE BA'AL TESHUVA COMMUNITY. FOR MORE INFORMATION, HE CAN BE CONTACTED VIA EMAIL AT YGOLDBERG@CHAYEIOLAM.COM. THE AUTHOR WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE OF YAAKOV ASTOR IN PREPARING THIS ARTICLE.

we are also allowing foreign ideas to creep into our *mesora*, and that affects *us* even more.²

4. The children of *ba'alei teshuva*, who go to yeshivos and Bais Yaakovs just as ours, are often at a disadvantage. Our school curriculum generally assumes certain knowledge gleaned from the home.³ Additionally, parents are expected to assist with homework assignments. By not continuing the adult education of these parents, we are unfairly short-changing them and their children. Our schools must also do more in training their teaching staffs to accommodate these students and parents.
5. We have to realize that there are things that go on in our community that can dampen the enthusiasm and even threaten the teshuva of the BT. These things can include spiritual shortcomings, such as misplaced emphasis on materialism and *chitzoniyus* (superficiality), to outright moral failings of the most condemnable nature. These shortcomings and failings, of course, also affect the *Frum From Birth* (hereafter

referred to as FFB). To the BT, however, they can be particularly devastating. They have made the choice to leave the secular world and its trappings because they are intimate with its moral bankruptcies and because they recognize the moral and spiritual substance Torah living offers. When they witness – or worse: becomes victims of – individuals' and perhaps even communal attitudes that are anything but moral and spiritual, it can undermine the foundations and very reasons they decided to become *frum* in the first place.

6. By letting down these true *mevakshei Hashem*, we collectively are guilty of *chillul Hashem* of the highest order.

ARE WE LETTING THEM DOWN?

First and foremost, we must be extremely sensitive to their needs and not push them to grow faster than they can handle. *Teshuva* is a process. It should not be measured in visible results. People grow at different rates. We are often impatient getting them to be what we consider "normal," i.e., full-fledged clones of ourselves. That is tantamount to baking a cake at 600

degrees and trying to eat it when the surface looks crisp.

Often, it seems that it is they, not we, who are pursuing a fast timetable. That, however, comes mostly as a result of the desire to "fit in." We therefore have to make them feel very comfortable just as they are, wherever they are up to in the process. Out-of-town communities do a much better job at that than major centers of Torah life.

Similarly, we assume that since a BT has been *frum* for several months, he knows almost all our customs by osmosis. Perhaps that's why we generally let go, and let them swim on their own all too soon. We must realize that regardless of how comfortable a BT feels in shul or at our Shabbos table, it can take years for them to fully learn the intricacies of *halacha* and *minhagim*. The amount of information they are digesting is staggering. We grew up seeing and living these things, and unfortunately often practice by rote, without much understanding or meaning to what we're doing. BTs, however, as intelligent adults, are doing these things by learning and understanding what they're doing. This process takes a very long time to implement.

We must also realize that we, as a community, have a very complex infrastructure, which is very difficult and sometimes downright intimidating for the BT to navigate. A few examples: Getting kids into schools and summer camps, confronting yeshiva curricula, *shidduchim*, *simchos*, making *Yamim Tovim*, etc... all these often require connections and know-how, and may very well be issues many years after they've become observant. Even those BTs who have had the benefit of learning in a yeshiva or seminary have rarely experienced the running of a *frum* home and learning all the things they missed growing up. After all, even the FFB who has the knowledge and experience finds many of these areas quite challenging. In the most critical areas, those of *shalom bayis* and raising families, their entire life

2 This is despite the fact that, as we will point out further in this article, we do have much to learn from them that can actually enhance our practice of *Yiddishkeit*.

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and obstacles from swamping their dreams and goals.

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Regardless of how comfortable a baal teshuva feels in shul or at our Shabbos table, it can take years for them to fully learn the intricacies of halacha and minhagim. The amount of information they are digesting is staggering.

experience has been from a secular perspective, which generally promotes the antithesis of our ideals, *hashkafos* and way of life.

Additionally, today, since *ba'alei teshuva* settle throughout our communities, conventional *rabbanim*, despite their hectic schedules, must reach out to these constituents and educate themselves as to the specific needs of this group. Rabbi Avrohom Braun, *menaheil* of Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Monsey relates the following story when lecturing to aspiring *rabbanim*:

A fine BT couple living in Flatbush, who were expecting their first child, decided to spend a Sunday before the birth shopping for baby furniture. When his chavrusa heard of their plans, he told him that the minhag is not to shop prior to the baby being born, and that he should consult with his rav. Upon doing so, the rav told him that because of ayin hara, it is preferable to wait till after the birth. The gentleman thanked the rav for his suggestion, and willingly obliged.

All went well until the baby was born. The birth was on a Thursday afternoon, and the new father was unable to take off from work on Friday. As he had to put together a Shalom Zachor for the first time, he was unable to purchase any furniture for the new arrival on that short day.

Mother and baby came home from the hospital on Sunday, and needless to say, panic and pandemonium reigned. Had the rav understood the dynamics of their situation, either he would have paskened differently, or made sure that someone in the neighborhood would be there to assist. In this case, however, the rav was taking for granted that there were parents, family and friends who could make all this happen, as is usually the case with the FFB.

A PROPOSAL OF MUTUAL BENEFIT

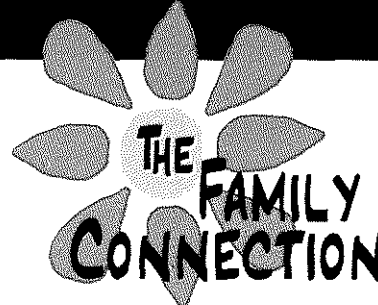
The only way *baalei teshuva* can successfully integrate into our world is if each BT family has a place to call home. Each one of us who is able must partner with a BT family, to become as family to one another and bequeath to them the *mesora* we are fortunate enough to have. At the same time, that allows them to share their enthusiasm and fresh perspective on *Yiddishkeit* with us. That encompasses everything from raising children to making Pesach, from teaching them the songs the small children are going to learn in school to helping them find a high school for their older ones, from helping them find a *rav* to providing them with a place to leave their kids for a couple of days. I

can assure you that while you may ask yourself – *How on earth can I find time for this when we don't even have enough time for our own family?* – you will see that being selfless endows you and your family with untold rewards, including time and great friendships. It will also provide tremendous spiritual growth for you and your family, as *Yiddishkeit* becomes alive. And as previously mentioned, their idealism and enthusiasm often breathes fresh air into our habitual rituals and stagnated growth.

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how, despite the relatively lower level of day school education, how much more *Yiddishkeit* means to them and their children. Your experience will be no different, but you'll also have the best of both worlds.

It is told that when Rabbi Aaron Kotler sent his *talmidim* to open yeshivos out of town, where *chinuch* was a problem, Reb Aaron promised that the children would not lose out. If you take care of Hashem's children, He takes care of yours. I think the

same concept can be applied here. Just consider all the *hashkafa* that your children will overhear. This is an opportunity one should not pass up.

Additionally, consider giving *shiurim* for both fathers and mothers on the material that is being taught to their children at school. These *shiurim*, aside from being extremely helpful to both the parents and their children, also tend to foster friendships in which families grow extremely close.

WORDS OF CAUTION

Adopting a family means giving lots of time, and spending many Shabbosos and *Yamim Tovim* together, just as you would with your own children. Therefore, only do it if you are sure you can handle it.

Also, do not undertake more than one family. Taking on more than you can handle will be to everyone's detriment. That is the current problem. The few families doing it are overwhelmed. They need your help!

Additionally, unless you have experience in dealing with *baalei teshuva*, don't take this on until you speak to an outreach professional who can fill you in on at least some of the basics. You must understand the world they are coming from, so you can know how to guide them. Most of it is common sense, but do not assume that you have all the answers. The most important thing is that you know whom to ask or whom to send them to when an issue arises. After all, don't we seek out a *chacham* to consult when we ourselves have issues?

Incidentally, you must tell them that, as well. Often BTs think that only *they* have difficulties managing. They think that our lives are hunky-dory. I call that the Shabbos Table Syndrome. Virtually their only exposure to our homes and family life is when they come in to a nicely set Shabbos table, with the kids all bathed and dressed in clean clothing. They must be invited during rush hour, between 6 and 9 each evening, so they can see what life in a *heimishe* home is really like. They must experience sensible discipline and the positive approach to child rearing while commanding respect. They must see time managed properly and *simchas hachayim*.

How's this self-test doing? I told you, you would gain immeasurably! But don't give up, folks, that's just it! Show them we're normal, too. They must also see us falling apart...but yes, picking ourselves up and moving forward, proud to be able to be part of this great Am Hashem. ❏

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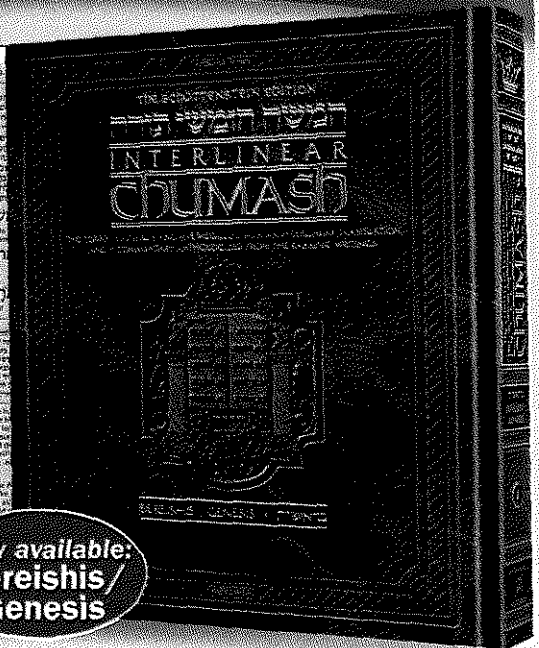
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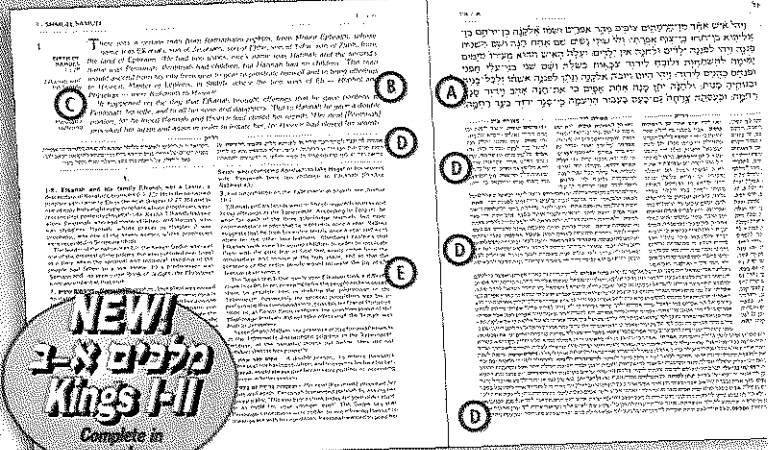
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MARSHA SMAGLEY



A Flower That Bloomed in Brooklyn

**A Tribute to Esther,
My Partner in Torah**

Esther Solomon was my partner in Torah for four years. She was tragically hit by a car *Erev Shabbos* (June 30/4 Tamuz) on a street near her home in Flatbush, Brooklyn, and died. She was only fifty-nine years old, and had just celebrated her thirty-second wedding anniversary with her husband, Nosson. This article is a tribute to my partner in Torah, my dear friend, Esther, *aleha hashalom*.

Esther caused each soul that she touched to bloom. I was fortunate to be one of those whom she touched. Esther was carrying flowers, which she had just gone out to buy for Shabbos, when she was hit by the car. When I told my nine-year-old daughter that Esther had died, she declared that Esther went straight to *Gan Eden*, while carrying flowers for Shabbos.

We began to learn Torah over the telephone through the Partners in

Torah program when Esther called me from the predominantly observant community of Flatbush. I lived in Highland Park, Illinois, a largely secular Jewish community. Esther, speaking with an authentic New York accent, disseminated beautiful lessons in Hebrew and *tefilla* (prayer), while personifying eternal lessons in living Torah.

As a *ba'alas teshuva* of seven years with a deep desire to discover my Jewish heritage, I asked Esther so many, many questions. There was so much I needed to learn. I was most impressed with her breadth of knowledge and kind patience. Although I only heard a voice over a telephone, her words painted a picture of what she truly was, a strong woman who loved to bring Torah into her home and into mine.

As I was not raised in an observant home, I needed words of inspiration to forge the conviction to change my entire life to come to Torah. Not Esther. She was raised with Torah and exemplified the strength and clarity of living each moment to do what we as Jewish people were created to do – to serve G-d and to shine forth His light. Esther illuminated her teachings with light. Her practical

style of living Torah in all that she did became my inspiration.

PESACH IN BROOKLYN: BRINGING NEW MEANING TO WELCOMING GUESTS

As the holiday of Pesach approached during our first year of learning, Esther invited me and my family to stay with her family for Pesach. I asked her if she wanted us to come for the beginning or the end of the holiday. In her direct manner of speaking, she asked why we should have to change over our home for Pesach and also pack up to travel. She insisted that we stay for the entire Pesach.

I did not think that I heard her correctly and asked her to repeat her offer. I could not believe that she wished to invite me, a woman she had only met on the telephone, my husband, and at that time, my six-year-old daughter and twelve-year-old son, to stay with her family for ten days. As a newcomer to Torah, I was touched by the beauty of observant living, where families would invite strangers to stay for Shabbos and holidays; yet, I sensed that her offer went

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. HER "TO TOUCH A STONE, TO FIND A HEART" APPEARED IN JO, JUNE '06.

far beyond the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim* (welcoming guests). I was to soon learn that Esther embraced this mitzvah with every part of her being.

My family agreed to come to Flatbush. I had never been to Flatbush. The name even sounded strange to me, and Brooklyn seemed like a world of its own. Although my husband, at that point, was not ready to change his life to one of Torah, he was raised in New York, and loved the idea of spending time in his native city with a nice family. We booked our flights, embarking

on an adventure in *Yiddishkeit*, hosted by the friendly Solomons. How could we have possibly known that this Pesach visit would result in changing our lives forever?

Esther appeared nothing like I had imagined her to look. Her strong voice portrayed a picture of a tall, large woman. Esther looked nothing like that. She was short in physical size, and as she was finishing her Pesach preparations, was dressed comfortably, wearing a baseball cap. She greeted me with a huge smile and a warm hug. I

could see that although she was small physically, she was a giant, spiritually. I felt comfortable from that very first meeting, as did my family.

As we had arrived in New York on the night before Pesach, we went with her family to an Italian kosher restaurant, each of us yearning to consume his last morsels of pasta and bread. Her husband, Nosson, was extremely kind. Her teenaged daughter, Chavi, and her two sons who lived at home, Moshe Chaim and Yehoshua, who were both in their twenties, were equally welcoming. We later met her married son, Avraham, and his wife, Leah, and Esther's young granddaughter, Michal. *Hashem* not only gave us the gift of Esther, He also gave us the gift of becoming part of her beautiful family.

MY GUIDE INTO "LIVING" TORAH

I had begun to learn Torah a little while before I met Esther. Torah transcended my secular world. Each precious word of Torah that I read gave me a glimpse into an entirely new world, into an entirely new reality: G-d's reality. There are no words to describe the enormity of the gift of Torah, which I pray will transform the lives of my family and its future generations.

With help from *Shamayim* (Heaven), I had been trying to lead my family towards observance. During that first year, we had transferred our children from public school to an Orthodox school. It is a daunting task to change worlds, to shed all that you have learned to be true and to start life anew. This is especially difficult after being married for a long time and already having children.

I wished to make our home into a place where *Hashem* could dwell; I wished to learn how to be able to live Torah. It was Esther and her amazing family that gave my family the opportunity to experience Torah living. This happened while we shared meals in their home, *davened* together, and walked down the many avenues of Flatbush.

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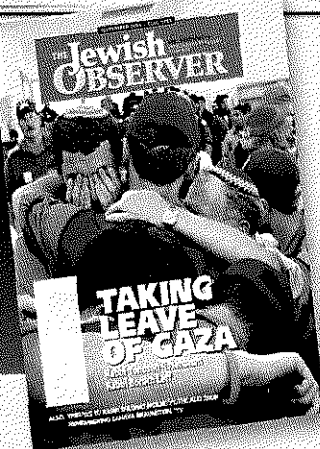
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It was overwhelming at first to be immersed into Torah living within this huge observant community. I remember walking with Esther in her neighborhood, sighting in the distant horizon what appeared to be armies of men dressed in black and white, wearing black hats, walking towards us. I had never seen anything like this before. I must admit I was a bit scared.

As these armies came closer to us, to my relief, I could see that it was actually Orthodox men joined by their wives and children, many pushing strollers carrying more little children, all warmly greeting us with a "Good Yontif." Esther, with a big smile on her face, speaking with her strong voice, kindly greeted each person and introduced me to all she knew, which seemed to be everyone.

Esther, with her immense *ahavas habriyos* (love of people), became my guide into her world of Torah. With Esther at my side, the men dressed in black and white no longer appeared to be part of a military army, but rather part of the army of *Hashem*, clothed in an outer uniform that revealed their deep inner devotion to Torah. I began to feel much comfort in their presence and really enjoyed saying "Good Yontif."

ENTERING OUR HEARTS THROUGH OUR STOMACHS

Esther was an extraordinary cook. I believe this greatly impacted on my family's desire to become observant. I have tried each Shabbos to recreate her dishes, and I just cannot. Without reading a cookbook, she conjured up such delicious culinary delights that we did not even realize that we had finished the Pesach Seder at 2:00 a.m.!

I remember my then-six-year-old daughter lining up just before midnight to fill her plate with scrumptious roasted chicken. Just the smell alone of Esther's food helped us to continue to consume the many pieces of *shemura matza* with hoards of romaine lettuce.

Esther invited us to stay with her family again the following year for

Pesach, and we did. Esther's mother, Mrs. Chaya Klein-Weinreb, affectionately called "Bubby," joined us for the end of the holiday. We instantly loved her. After meeting Bubby, I could understand where Esther gained her ability to so generously give without complaint.

As Pesach was drawing to a close, and the ability to eat *chometz* was near, Esther decided to make homemade blintzes. Bubby, with a knowing grin on her face, lovingly said that only Esther would start making blintzes when Pesach was ending. They tasted heavenly.

HOW DO YOU PRONOUNCE "FRUM"?

I loved to sit at the Solomons' holiday table and join in this rich family heritage, filled with song and *divrei Torah*, words of Torah. I had never experienced this before; it was so beautiful. One time at the table, Esther proclaimed that I did not pronounce the word "*frum*" (piously observant) properly. She then illustrated how to say it. I thought I had correctly repeated this word, but not according to Esther. She then gave me words that

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rhymed with "frum," saying that it was a cross between "room" and "from." I still could not say it. Everyone then joined in with words to help me pronounce this word, including my children, but to no avail.

I recently shared this "frum" table memory with Esther. I had no idea that this would be the last time that we would ever speak. This experience had inspired me to wish to write a future article entitled "How Could I Have Become So 'Frum,' If I Could Not Even Say the Word 'Frum'?" She burst out laughing, the kind of laugh that conveyed a special connection between friends, one that comes from a significant sharing of lives. Even though I still cannot correctly pronounce the word, Esther truly inspired me to become "frum."

EXPERIENCING TRUE ACHDUS

The Solomons never made us feel bad about all that we did not know; instead, they caused us to feel that they were actually learning from us. They conveyed that it was my family that was giving to them, that we were bringing exciting new life to their Pesach celebration. This could be seen through the light in their eyes, the joy in their faces, and the thrill in their voices as they answered our many questions.

They influenced us most, not by preaching observance, but simply by being a nice family that just naturally lived Torah in their low-key way. They also expressed a true caring for us in everything they did, and it was clear that our lives really mattered to them. This caring gave us the needed support and courage to transform our lives.

I remember how *bentching* Grace After Meals had seemed so daunting to me. I wished to recite this prayer in Hebrew, determined not to miss a single word. As I had learned Hebrew many years before in Hebrew school, it took me forever to finish it. I would still be *bentching* long after everyone, including my family, had left the table. Esther took notice of this, and urged

me to sing this prayer; she said that she did not want me to be left behind my family. Although even now, I am still the last one to finish *bentching* at our table, Esther's teaching me to sing my praises to *Hashem* has ensured that I am not left behind.

Nosson thoughtfully spent much time with my husband, researching and answering his questions in a way that appealed to his reasoning. My husband recalls that one rainy Shabbos day, while walking together to shul, he asked Nosson why we cannot carry an umbrella on Shabbos. It did not make sense to my husband to think that G-d would want us to get soaked while walking to shul to *daven*.

Nosson explained the reasons why, and then used an example from the business world, which my husband, who works as a Chief Financial Officer, could relate to. Nosson asked my husband, "Would your father want you to correct a fraudulent situation at work even if it meant losing your job?"

My husband responded, "Of course he would want me to do the right thing." This was a turning point for my husband. It helped him to understand that even if there are short-term, negative consequences, we must choose to do what is "right," which is always to trust and to follow *Hashem's* will.

My husband, for the first time in his life, wore a *kippa* each day during our first Pesach stay. He became comfortable enough wearing the *kippa* that he continued to wear one after he returned home, even at work in a secular company. It simply did not make sense to him anymore not to have a *kippa* on his head just because the holiday was over. It was the action of wearing a *kippa* that helped my husband move from observance only during the holidays, which he was accustomed to as a secular Jew, to eventually incorporating Torah into his daily life.

Only one month after spending that first Pesach at the Solomons, at age forty-five, my husband suffered a heart attack. Fortunately, he came through in excellent health, which I cannot help but believe was from the merit of observing Pesach with the Solomons, along with his growing observance, which followed.

Esther and her family, in all that they did, became an eternal part of my family's journey to Torah. We appreciated learning from them, and they appreciated seeing Torah through our eyes—eyes which they helped to open to see into *Hashem's* world. Our journeys to come closer to our Creator became one, and together, we experienced true *achdus* (unity).

ESTHER, THE MORNING STAR

King David, in Psalm 22, pays tribute to Queen Esther, referring to her as *Ayelles Hashachar*, the morning star. The personality of Queen Esther represents the slow dawning of the light of the Jews who were engulfed in the darkness of exile. Esther is derived from "*Istahar*," a very bright star (ArtScroll Psalms, *Yalkut Shimoni* – *Megillas Esther* 1053).

Esther, as her name illuminates, was blessed with the ability to shine forth her bright light throughout her entire life, a light that caused all the souls that she touched to bloom. This world is now missing Esther, who brought so much light to my family. I will forever miss Esther, my partner in Torah, and my dear friend, the special soul that left this world carrying Shabbos flowers to *Gan Eden*.

I pray that *Moshiach* will come speedily, bringing us *shalom* (peace). May each precious Jewish *neshama* (soul) cause a rose to bloom within the thorns of this long and bitter *galus* (exile), and may we no longer feel its sadness and pain. May we all merit becoming a shining star, an emissary of *Hashem's* exquisite light.

May this tribute serve as a merit for the elevation of the neshama of Esther bas Avraham.

10

Daf Hayomi – D'var Yom Be'yomo

YOSSI HUTTLER

every day I turn
a page
another appears before me
a day's distance away

some days, getting ahead of everyone else and
myself shorter of breath running
parchment-skin unsteady hands I keep turning
learning praying that the coming days
can today be squirreled away too

but these are the rules:
a page
a day
no guarantees beyond
today
and its daf

YOSSI HUTTLER, WHO LIVES IN STATEN ISLAND, NY, IS AN ATTORNEY AND AN ORAL HISTORIAN, HAVING CONDUCTED OVER 120 INTERVIEWS OF SURVIVORS OF CHURBAN EUROPE FOR THE SHOAH FOUNDATION.

ELIYAHU MAYER

A Lesson From Hakafos

A lesson from *hakafos*? I never thought you're supposed to learn anything from *hakafos*. You're just supposed to be inspired, uplifted – even enchanted – by *hakafos*. But learning? Aren't you just supposed to throw yourself into the singing and dancing, and get lost in the spiritual celebration?

That's what I thought – until last Simchas Torah, when the *hakafos* taught me, or rather, reminded me, of a very valuable lesson.

"BEGINNING THE NEXT HAKAFA"

The *gabba'im* are bellowing out the all-clear signal of "Ad kan *hakafa*...!" Their voices trail off and I don't hear the last word. Now which *hakafa* was it? I wonder. Actually, it makes me feel as if I'm more into the dancing if I lose track of where we're holding.

The *gabba'im* have just reassigned all of the *Sifrei Torah* and we're about to begin the next *hakafa*. The man leading this *hakafa* is starting a familiar *niggun*, which everyone picks up quickly. I join in the singing, too, as my off-key voice is mercifully swallowed by the more melodious tones of my fellow congregants.

The *niggun* has caught on and is now heated up like a barbecue grill in which all of the briquettes have turned grey. Everyone has joined in with this familiar,

lively tune which seems to have been created just for this occasion. But I am bothered by a discomforting realization: I don't know the words. At least, I don't know *all* of the words to it. Some of the words are easily discernable and familiar. "*Ashrei ish shelo yishkachecha...*" (Praiseworthy is the man who does not forget You.) Yes, and happy is the one who does not forget the words to familiar *niggunim*, I think to myself, somewhat embarrassed at my inability to make out all of the words to this song. Oh, well, they'll probably change to another *niggun* soon, anyway.

The *bachurim* are raising the volume of their voices with such intensity that my hopes of a *niggun* change are quickly dashed. This is ridiculous, I think to myself. All I need to do is listen harder the next time those slurred words are being sung and I'll be able to figure them out.

"*Ashrei adam...*" I find it virtually impossible to catch those few missing words each time we come to them. I could simply ask someone what the words are. Now, whom should I ask?

No, I can't ask him. I'd be too embarrassed to let him know that I don't know the words to such a familiar tune.... And I can't ask *him*. It's probably a very well-known *passuk*. I'd look like a total *am ha'aretz*.

NO ONE TO ASK

As I look around, I conclude that there is no one I would feel comfortable asking. Why don't they just change to another song already?

Now I'm singing along, and I cough when we get to the words I don't know.

Next time, I just drop my voice. I wish they'd just change the *niggun*. My friend, Berel, is approaching me now, I'm feeling my face redden. It's harder to stifle a blush than a yawn.

Not only is Berel a respected *talmid chacham*, but he is also a gifted *ba'al menagein* and *ba'al tefilla*. He's positively the last person I would want to find out that I don't know the words to the *niggun*.

"*Gut Yom Tov*, Eliyahu. How are you?"

"*Baruch Hashem*, Berel. Are we going to hear from you at all this *Yom Tov* from the *amud*?"

"I think I'm supposed to *daven Shacharis* tomorrow," Berel replies, modestly. Then, changing the subject himself, he adds, "Everyone seems to be really getting into this *niggun*."

I gulp hard. Could he have noticed that I was only faking the words? I wonder.

"Uh, tell me, Eliyahu," Berel begins, sheepishly, "do you know the words to this *niggun*? I feel a little funny admitting it. I know the last part starts with, '*Ashrei adam*,' but what is the rest of the *passuk*?"

I try to hide my relief as I reply, "Uh, what a coincidence. I was just about to ask you the same question."

Berel is pulled away by his son and I try to absorb what has just taken place. One of the most respected *mispallelim* in shul was not ashamed to ask me for the words to this *niggun*, while I was too embarrassed to even consider asking anyone. I am reminded of the *Chazal*: "*Ein habayshan lomeid*. One who is easily embarrassed will not [be able to]

ELIYAHU MAYER, A NEW YORK-BASED WRITER, IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES, MOST RECENTLY WITH "A TIME FOR LETTING GO," OCTOBER '05.

learn [Torah]." (*Derech Eretz Zuta* 3)

THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Both Berel and I were not fully engaged in this *hakafa*. But the difference between us is that Berel was willing to ask, while I simply tried to hide. My mind wanders to other examples of how our fear of embarrassment can interfere with our Torah life: not clarifying the halacha regarding a *she'eila* of *bishul* (cooking) on Shabbos; not asking the *maggid shiur* to explain a concept that he assumed was universally understood; relying on "*sofeik berachos lehakeil*," instead of inquiring about the appropriate *beracha* – all in order to conceal that we don't know that which we feel we should already know.

I suppose the lesson I could learn from all of this is to stop trying to appear more knowledgeable than I really am. Perhaps if I take this lesson to heart, I will be able to learn that much more Torah this year, *be'ezras Hashem*. And if I do learn more Torah as a result of that lesson, then I really have something to rejoice about now, during *hakafos*.

These thoughts are still fresh in my mind as Berel approaches me again, wearing a broad grin and a twinkle in his eye. "It's a *passuk* in *Tehillim*," he informs me, bowing his head and lifting his eyebrows, as if confessing a sin. Berel grabs a *Tehillim* and points to the *passuk* (84:6): "*Ashrei adam oz lo vach*."

We both smile nervously at each other. The *hakafa* has ended. The *gabba'im* are redistributing the *sifrei Torah*. The *rav* is distributing bags of potato chips to the younger members of the shul. Berel and I are standing next to each other, lost in our private thoughts.

Berel is the first to break the silence: "Funny how we both didn't know the words to that last *niggun* and each one of us was afraid to ask. It feels as if there's a lesson to be learned here somehow, but I'm not sure just what it is."

We laugh in mutual agreement. After further reflection, Berel adds, "So I guess we'll just have to wait to find out what lesson we're supposed to learn until one of us writes about this in *The Jewish Observer*."

We both laugh again, this time at the absurdity of the idea.

LOOKING FORWARD

I'm really looking forward to Simchas Torah this year. I'm going to try to channel more energy into the *hakafos* as a way of expressing appreciation for the Torah I have been privileged to learn over the past twelve months.

I'm also looking forward to whenever my shul starts singing, "*Ashrei adam oz lo vach*." That's when I expect to catch Berel's eye and recall our mutual self-disclosure during last year's *hakafos*... together with the lesson I learned. ☞

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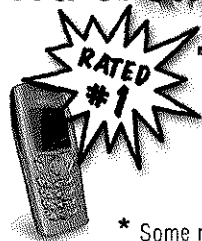
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RABBI SHLOMO LORINCZ

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY YONOSON ROSENBLUM

In the January/February issue, *The Jewish Observer* featured the first installment of Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz's memoirs of his encounters with the Chazon Ish. As mentioned, Rabbi Lorincz represented Agudath Israel in the Israeli Knesset from 1951-1984, during which time he was an intimate of a number of Torah luminaries of the past half century. The extensive notes that he kept on those meetings serve as the basis of this series of articles.

The Chazon Ish

The Man and His Vision

Part II

Speech [is to be used] for the purpose of praising intellectual attainments or the refinement of character... to awaken the soul to such qualities through stories... to praise great people and give thanks for their attainments, in order that their actions appear praiseworthy in the eyes of others (Rambam on Pirkei Avos 1:17).

HE MERITED MANY GIFTS

Rabbi Meir said, "All who are involved in Torah *lishma* merit many gifts" (*Pirkei Avos* 6:1).

Who can be described as learning Torah *lishma* if not the Chazon Ish? For decades, he learned alone in a non-descript shul in Kaidan, and afterwards in Vilna, without anyone hearing of him. Even as Torah scholars learned his *sefarim*, no one knew who the author was. Can there be a greater element of *lishma* than that? I was privileged to be in daily contact with the Chazon Ish

RABBI ROSENBLUM, WHO LIVES IN JERUSALEM, IS A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR TO *THE JEWISH OBSERVER*. HE IS ALSO DIRECTOR OF THE ISRAELI DIVISION OF AM ECHAD, THE AGUDATH ISRAEL-INSPIRED EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH EFFORT AND MEDIA RESOURCE. THE ABOVE IS BASED ON RABBI LORINCZ'S NOTES, WHICH ARE CURRENTLY BEING PUBLISHED IN BOTH THE HEBREW AND ENGLISH *YATED NE'EMAN* IN ISRAEL.

for 14 years, and I had the opportunity to witness the (above) words of Rabbi Meir come to life many times.

His medical and anatomical knowledge was equal to that of the greatest doctors. There are many stories of the pinpoint medical advice he gave to sick people, some critically so. The pathways of the heavens were known to him. His vast astronomical knowledge was revealed when he was called upon to resolve complicated issues concerning the proper day to observe Shabbos and Yom Kippur on the other side of the International Date Line. These questions were posed by the students of Mirrer Yeshiva, who were stranded in Shanghai during the war years.

His business acumen and knowledge of financial matters was equally startling. He advised some of the greatest merchants, and prominent businessmen came to seek his advice on the most complicated financial matters. They all went away astounded by the quality of his advice.

What connection did he have to these matters? His knowledge could only have come from Heaven, for he truly "merited many gifts."

Despite miraculous stories that were told about him, his uniqueness did not lie in his wondrous deeds, but rather,

in the seemingly small daily actions. So, I will seek only to relate those stories that fall into the category of "this, too, is Torah, and I must learn it," to tell only that which is worthy of emulation, as described by the *Rambam* in the epigram that opens this chapter. As the *Ramban* advises his son in a famous epistle, "When you arise from [reading] a book, review what you have learned to determine whether there is anything in it that you can put into action."

"EVERY BEN TORAH MUST ASPIRE TO GREATNESS IN TORAH"

I first visited the Chazon Ish at the beginning of 5700 (1939), not long after my arrival in *Eretz Yisroel*. Rabbi Chaim Zev Finkel, the *mashgiach* in Yeshivas Bais HaTalmud in Tel Aviv, where I was then learning, brought me to visit him.

After introducing myself and describing the yeshivos in which I had learned in Europe, I was ready to ask the Chazon Ish an important question. *Eretz Yisroel* in those days represented a true ingathering of the exiles from every corner of the globe. Some came from the great Lithuanian yeshivos, where the emphasis



was on in-depth understanding. Others were representatives of the Hungarian yeshivos, where the stress was on gaining a familiarity with a great deal of material, aimed at extracting practical halacha. These were but two examples of the wide variety of approaches to Gemara learning that one encountered.

I proposed dividing up the younger yeshiva *bachurim* in the country according to their abilities, and then guiding them to the yeshiva most appropriate for their talents. Some *bachurim* were not suited for deep *lamdus*. Even if they learned in Lithuanian-style yeshivos, these boys had little chance of developing into *roshei yeshivos* or Torah scholars of the first rank. At the end of the day, they would be *baalebattim*. After all, doesn't the Gemara say, "A thousand enter to learn, and one goes out to *hora'a* (to be a halachic decisor)"? Surely, one not blessed with outstanding natural abilities would not be that one, I reasoned.

That being the case, would it not be better to send those with no chance of being that "one" to yeshivos where they would learn a page of Gemara, with *Rashi* and *Tosafos*, acquire a solid understanding of the matter, and follow through to *Shulchan Aruch* and *halacha le'ma'aseh*? In Europe, there were many yeshivos that learned in this fashion.

I added that if those not blessed with outstanding abilities were forced into Lithuanian-style yeshivos, there was a danger that they would be left with nothing. They would not even emerge as solid *baalebattim*, with an enjoyment of learning. My own experience in the Mirrer Yeshiva was that many less talented *bachurim* completely failed to grasp or appreciate the deep ideas they heard.

By way of contrast, those yeshivos where the style of learning was more straightforward succeeded in producing many *baalebattim* for whom learning was their principle occupation and their business was secondary, and who had a solid grasp of much of the Talmud. In my native Hungary, for instance, there were many *baalebattim* who rose at 3:00 a.m. every morning to learn and who

devoted a substantial part of their day to learning. They knew much of *Shas* with *Rashi* and *Tosafos*, and a great deal of halacha, as well.

Wasn't this a question of "Educate the youth according to his path"? I wondered. And furthermore, since *Eretz Yisroel* had gathered Jews from all parts of the world, they possessed many different approaches to learning, should we not take advantage of the availability of all those different approaches for the benefit of the young?

To my great surprise, the Chazon Ish completely rejected my approach. "It is incumbent upon us to offer each *bachur* the opportunity to grow into a *gadol baTorah*," he said.

"According to you, we should assume from the beginning that a boy with lesser talents will eventually be a *baalebos*, albeit someone for whom his Torah-learning is fixed and all else is secondary. We have no right to make any such assumption," the Chazon Ish insisted. "We are commanded to do everything possible to assist that boy to grow to be a *gadol baTorah*."

To my point that not everyone has the talents to be a *gadol baTorah*, he replied, in these words, "True, logic is with you, for in order to be a *gadol baTorah* one needs to be blessed with talents. But one can be born with no natural abilities, with a stopped head,

and just as one can turn the corner from one street into another, and suddenly whole new vistas open up, so too can all the talents and all the wellsprings of understanding open up before a person, and he can be transformed into a person of exceptional gifts."

He did not explain himself further. But it seems clear that he believed that if a person truly desires something with all his heart, the gates of understanding will open before him.

My understanding was confirmed by a story that he proceeded to share with me about one of the *gedolei hador*. Not only was he not exceptionally gifted, said the Chazon Ish, he was considered a complete dunce. When he was 18, he once asked me to explain a comment of *Rashi*. *Rashi* explains that where a word requires a "*Lamed*" at the beginning [to indicate movement towards] it is often written in *Lashon Hakodesh* with a "*Hay*" at the end, as in the word "*Charana*." This *bachur* could not understand what *Rashi* meant, since *Charana* does not begin with a "*Lamed*."

"Could there be a greater blockhead than that?" asked the Chazon Ish, with a big smile. "According to your way of thinking, this *bachur*, who at the age of eighteen had so little to show for his learning, should have been placed into a yeshiva designed to produce fine *baalebattim*. Is that not what 'Educate

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the youth according to his way' requires? Yet, that person grew to be one of the most respected *gedolei Torah* of our time."

I was struck by his words, and pressed the Chazon Ish to tell me about whom he was speaking. He refused, and asked

gadol baTorah depended on one's merit, and a grandmother's tears could be an important part of that calculus.

The Chazon Ish devoted a great deal of time on that occasion to convey to me how each boy had to be granted an equal chance of becoming "the one in a

yeshivos.

"Know that this yeshiva definitely stands *berumo shel olam*" (literally, at the height of the world), he replied. "Everything outside of the yeshiva is subsidiary. Not only a large yeshiva whose value is clear to all, but every yeshiva, no matter how small – even if it is just getting started and you have never heard of it. Even *that* yeshiva stands at the height of the world. See to it that they can complete their building and begin learning in it."

Above all, the Chazon Ish demanded of him that he recognize his own capacity to reach the heights of Torah learning – "the matter is not beyond you."

THE BEN TORAH: CENTER OF THE WORLD

The Chazon Ish was always ready to devote both his time and strength to any question concerning *inei Torah*. He was a father to every yeshiva student who turned to him. He would spend hours searching for ways to help a yeshiva *bachur* advance in his *hasmada*, *yiras Shamayim*, *middos*, and Gemara learning.

He personally guided hundreds of yeshiva *bachurim*. Any young *bachur* who found himself stymied in his spiritual aliyah, or felt unable to concentrate for long periods, or was caught up in the struggle with his *yeitzer hara* and could not figure out how to overcome it, would consult with the Chazon Ish.

He had infinite patience to listen to any yeshiva *bachur* describe his problems, discuss the matter, and then give him guidance. And at the end of the meeting, he would invariably tell the *bachur*, "Return to tell me how you are progressing." The *bachur* would report back to him, and he would tell him to return once more, until he was convinced that the *bachur* was on the right path.

It was amazing! The leader of the entire Torah world – fully occupied with writing and publishing his own *chiddushei Torah*, and whose nights were devoted to fundamental issues confronting the entire Torah world – nevertheless had time for every 14- or 15-year-old *bachur* who came to him with a *kushiya* in a *sugya* or who

me what purpose would be served by knowing the name of the person. I replied that it would be a source of encouragement to all those who feel themselves to be lacking in talents, and doubt their ability to achieve a high level in Torah knowledge. If they hear of someone who today is an admired *talmid chacham*, and was once in exactly their situation, that could give them much encouragement.

The Chazon Ish considered what I had said for quite a while before replying, "Despite what you say, my conclusion is that it would not be appropriate to reveal his name, for to do so might hurt him [in some way]." Two or three years later, I again asked him to reveal the name of the *gadol*. This time he was definitive that it would be impermissible since the person had passed away in the interim. His discretion in this matter was characteristic of his extreme care in guarding against any form of improper speech.

At that first meeting, he also told me that becoming a *gadol baTorah* also resulted from the tears and prayers of a grandmother on behalf of her grandson. His message was that becoming a

thousand," no matter how improbable that outcome may seem.

THE PIVOTAL IMPORTANCE OF THE YESHIVA

The extent to which he focused on yeshivos was revealed to me prior to one of my frequent trips abroad. Before each such trip, I always visited the Chazon Ish to check on whether there was anything that I needed to attend to prior to my departure. Before this particular trip, the Chazon Ish informed me that a certain yeshiva could not complete its building for want of five tons cement, and he requested that I help them obtain it. At that time, there was a shortage of cement in the country, and it was being rationed. The Chazon Ish insisted, however, that the building could not be delayed any longer, and once again urged me to take care of the matter prior to flying.

I asked in surprise if the matter really was one of the highest priority. We were speaking about a small institution, which seemingly did not occupy an important position in the world of

was having difficulty understanding a particular topic. He showed every *bachur* infinite patience and gave him as much time as he needed. No wonder the *bachurim* felt like a beloved only child in his presence, and developed a deep personal connection. Many of those young *bachurim* developed over time into outstanding *talmidei chachamim* and teachers of Torah.

The concern he showed for every *ben Torah* was based on the words of Chazal, "Nothing remains to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* in this world, except for the four *amos* of halacha." Everything else was secondary. The goal and purpose of Creation was the true *ben Torah*, and to help that *ben Torah* develop.

A QUILL ON THE HEART

To gain an appreciation of even a fraction of the Chazon Ish's efforts on behalf of individuals, one need only study the collection of his letters. At first glance, many of them may appear to be little more than a few lines. But study them in depth, as one studies his halachic works, and you will be amazed at his ability to give to each correspondent exactly what he needed at that moment.

Some 500 letters were published in *Koveitz Igros*. It is fair to assume that these represent only a fraction of the letters he wrote.

The Chazon Ish told me once, "I don't just shake my advice out of my sleeve. Each conclusion costs me in blood." For those who wrote to him, the issues discussed were life determinative, and he related to them as if rendering a decision in matters of life and death. How much thought went in to figuring out how to save those who sought his guidance – to guide them to greater *hasmada* or in overcoming the siren call of the *yeitzer*. And not one such letter, but a thousand or more.

I cannot begin to fathom where he found the strength. Around each letter, there could have been hours of personal conversation, both before and afterwards. He knew each of his cor-

respondents, and accompanied them every step of the way on their spiritual journeys.

The greatest riddle of all was where he found the time. Whenever one entered his home, he was learning. His *sefarim Chazon Ish* encompass all of Torah, and demanded his full concentration. So where did he find the time to lead the *klal*, much less every individual who sought him out?

I want to quote just one short letter published in *Koveitz Igros* (13:1) in order to illustrate what went into each letter. The Chazon Ish writes:

I must argue with you. I see that you do not adequately value your own capabilities, and as a consequence, you inadvertently denigrate the value of Torah knowledge. One who has acquired knowledge of the Torah walks among his fellow human beings, and he appears to them as just another human being. But, in reality, he is an angel dwelling among mortal men. He leads a life of nobility and elevation beyond any blessing or praise.

True, your life experiences have caused you to dedicate your years in this world to the acquisition of Torah wisdom. In this, your natural abilities have stood you in good stead. But Torah demands an extra degree of sacrifice. It is not acquired while leading a "normal" life, or with the normal amount of effort. My heart does not permit me to believe that sitting alone, you will be able to acquire Torah knowledge. It is clear that you will do far better learning together with a *chabura*, and that a group of colleagues will help you advance.

[Greatness in Torah] is not beyond your capacities. But the *Satan* (the Tempter) will cause you to view an obstacle of a hairsbreadth as if it were a tall mountain. You are not yet sufficiently armed to surmount far smaller obstacles.

I am lovesick with my great desire to see you a *talmid chacham*. I look forward to discussing with you personally the path that you desire and

have chosen with eternal love.

At 11:00 p.m., I will be waiting for you.

One who is attached to you with love,

A.Y.

From the letter, it appears that it is addressed to a yeshiva *bachur* who has decided to devote himself to Torah learning. No doubt, he expected the Chazon Ish to be delighted with that decision. Yet, the Chazon Ish did not content himself with words of praise. To the contrary, he begins by announcing that he must object to certain aspects of his correspondent's course. And he identifies the source of those incorrect decisions as deriving from a too low valuation of his own worth.

Why? Because the Chazon Ish saw in him the capacity to reach even greater heights, to attain the level to which true Torah learning should bring a person – the level of a supernal being living in the outer garb of a mere mortal. And because the Chazon Ish realized that he could not reach that level learning independently, apart from a group of similarly dedicated Torah scholars, he urged him to attach himself to a *chabura*.

Above all, the Chazon Ish demanded of him that he recognize his own capacity to reach the heights of Torah learning – "the matter is not beyond you."

Nor did the Chazon Ish content himself with a letter. Rather, he wrote that he was looking forward to discussing the matter further in person, and invited the young man to come to him at 11:00 p.m., after a full day of intense Torah study. And we can assume that the Chazon Ish's guidance on the path to reaching the supernal realms was not something he proffered in a few minutes. The conversation must have lasted long into the night. Experiencing the Chazon Ish's dedication to him, the young man must truly have felt himself the object of the Chazon Ish's love.

I doubt whether it is even within our capacity to understand how much love of Torah, love of a *ben Torah*, is encompassed in those two words "*hadavuk b'ahavasecha* – one who is bound to you with love."

☛

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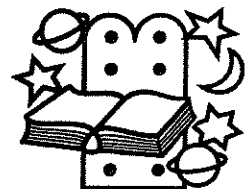
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SIMCHOS AND QUALITY OF LIFE: EITHER/OR?

To the Editor:

As exhausted as I was due to my *simcha* schedule of this past June's wedding season (*baruch Hashem*), I read every word of Rabbi Ginzberg's article on "Simchos vs. Quality of Life" (May '06).

I wonder who will be the brave one to finally emulate the European style of only inviting immediate family members to the after-*chuppa* sit-down dinner. What a *tova* it would be, allowing us to be *mesamei'ach chassan vekalla*, and still get home at a reasonable hour, to be with our families.

One more question:

Who invented the ridiculous rule that siblings of the *chassan/kalla* (married and single) must wear an evening gown, reminiscent of the bridesmaids at a church wedding? These attention-grabbing designs are certainly not in the spirit of *tzeniyus* that we hear so much about.

And then there is the outrageous cost! The term "Gown *Gemach*" is almost always a misnomer, as they charge several hundred dollars for one night's rental (plus cleaning costs, which are easily over a hundred dollars)!

If there are several siblings, the costs are prohibitive and the stress involved in acquiring them is immense. (Don't forget, they have to match the color scheme.)

When will this lunacy end?

A BROKENHEARTED AND BROKE PARENT
OF A RECENT KALLA (*BARUCH HASHEM*)

PRAISE FOR OFF THE DERECH: OFF THE MARK

To the Editor:

In his review of Faranak Margolese's *Off the Derech* (JO, January-February '06), Rabbi Avrohom Meir Gluck found the book "balanced, well researched, [and] gripping." I, too, read the book and it does indeed contain some fascinating insights into the off-the-*derech* phenomenon, but somehow, I believe, the reviewer overlooked some of the book's glaring shortcomings. May I point out some of these problems?

LOOKING FOR REASONS

Kids going off the *derech* is a most elusive, multi-faceted issue, and it takes more than figures and statistics, to establish the cause-and-effect of *why* it happens. It takes experience, insight, and the proper perspective.

The questions often boil down to, "What makes the most sense?" which means, "What makes the most sense *to me*?" – making it necessary to rely on one's own subjective outlook, understanding, and values to form conclusions. It is imperative, therefore, that when searching for answers, we turn to those people who have an appreciation for our sacred value system and *hashkafa* (outlook), and are interested in perpetuating this *derech* in the most successful way possible.

Faranak Margolese clearly is an intelligent, firmly religious individual. But she never was a member of the yeshiva world.

She continually endorses a "broader" (read: more modern) Judaism and berates the yeshiva system time and time again, pointing out "fallacies" and suggesting reforms that have major implications on how the *mesora* of Torah is transmitted. These suggestions are objectionable on two counts. Firstly, major alterations of the *mesora* require the judgment of *gedolei Yisroel*, with whom Margolese has failed to consult. Secondly, after being informed (at length) of the author's disenchantment with black-hat Judaism (see chapter 3), the reader is left wondering if Margolese's "solutions" are products of her research, or if her research is being used to validate her conclusions.

INCONCLUSIVE RESEARCH

The crux of Margolese's research is the extensive interviews that she conducted with children and adults who have gone off the *derech*. She quotes candidly from these interviews, giving the reader an earful of complaints, frustrations, and angry, resentful and blasphemous remarks, making them the foundation upon which most of the book rests (rendering parts of the book *not* for a general readership). Margolese admits that these interviews may not reflect reality. As experienced mental health professionals can testify, this is usually the case. Nevertheless, she argues, we need to understand what these people went through in terms of their own experiences (pg. 16).

True, if you are counseling someone and helping them work through their feelings, it is more important to know "what they went through" subjectively than what actually transpired. But when your objective is to determine the *real* causes of people going off the *derech*, it is imperative that you know what *really* transpired.

People often look for excuses for why they chose to deviate from a Torah life. The decision to deviate, in effect, looks for an excuse. And often it comes after the fact, not before. Can one trust such a rationale?

Although many or most of her interviewees were unable to properly identify

their reasons for going off the *derech*, enough people did come up with the same superficial reasons, and these speculative patterns became Margolese's truth. What really ends up happening in this book is that Margolese uses the interviews to support her own theories.

LEAVING WHICH ORTHODOXY?

Early in the book, Margolese struggles to provide evidence that there is indeed a significant number of people abandoning Orthodox Judaism. The premise of the book is, after all, that the off-the-*derech* phenomenon is an epidemic, which would justify implementing the drastic changes that the author proposes for the yeshiva system. Nevertheless, she seems to be unable to show that the problem has reached such magnitude. Finally, she reverts to the argument that if 90% of Jews today, each of whom had religious ancestors, are non-observant, that is a clear indication that people are abandoning *Yiddishkeit* because our contemporary Torah life is inherently flawed. Here, the author assigns an assumed cause to a statistic that is the product of a multitude of factors that spans many decades of Jewish history. The statistic has no clear relevance to the subject of *Off the Derech*.

Aside from personal interviews,

Margolese's research included a survey that she conducted on the Internet. There are a number of problems with this source of information. Firstly, as explained above, one cannot rely on the spin of those who went off the *derech*.

Secondly, *over seventy percent* of the poll's responses are from people who were brought up either secular or marginally Orthodox (not *shomer* halacha, other than Shabbos and kashrus). Throughout the book, Margolese refers to the answers supplied by these people in her analysis of the yeshiva community (one of the primary focuses of *Off the Derech*). This is like testing apples in a laboratory to find out the properties of oranges.

PROBLEMS WITH HER CONCLUSIONS

1. The following is one of Margolese's solutions to the off-the-*derech* epidemic: "To establish strong belief, we need to encourage our children to explore their beliefs, ask questions, and *challenge* [emphasis mine] the status quo." (pg.374) She asserts that we must let adolescents "find their own Torah" instead of imposing faith on them (pg. 73). Although, she admits, this is risky, "we must walk in G-d's ways and allow our children free choice, just as Adam, the first child, was allowed to falter" (*ibid.*).

She goes on to argue that going through a period of grappling with belief is essential to the religious development of every Jew. The author thus presents a "solution" that is clearly incompatible with the *hashkafos* of our *mesora* as taught by the leaders of our generation and their predecessors. Firstly, it is forbidden by halacha to study alternative religions and "lifestyles," and to engage in challenging our G-d-given *mesora*. Secondly, the very exploratory type of education that Margolese suggests is likely to send many children down a path of no return – hardly a solution to the problem of defection from Judaism. According to our *mesora*, it is only after a strong foundation is established that intellectual exploration of any sort is in place. Thirdly, creating a strong basis of *emuna* in young children requires teaching them to experience G-d as a reality. By doing so, we are instilling a belief that runs deeper than any intellectual understanding. Encouraging youth to challenge this reality can run contrary to the development of *emuna* as "second nature" (*emuna peshuta*).

2. One of the causes of kids going off the *derech*, according to Margolese, is when teachers claim to be able to transmit foundations of belief with certainty. Since we cannot be certain that G-d exists, she asserts, it is wrong to "trick" children into thinking so:

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"There is always an element of doubt when it comes to our life beliefs, but we pick a side anyway – we take a leap" (page 179).

By asserting that to believe in G-d's existence, one must take a "leap of faith," the author makes a terrible error. We are, in fact, commanded to KNOW that there is a G-d: "*Veyadata hayom vahashevosa el levavecha ki Hashem hu haElokim...*" (Devarim 4,39). There are countless authoritative sources stating this fundamental halacha (see, for example, *Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 1:1; *Ramchal*, beginning of *Da'as Tevunos*, etc...), and this is how it has been for millennia. In her flawed understanding, Margolese misrepresents a basic foundation of *Yiddishkeit*.

3. Page after page, Margolese makes unfounded, sweeping statements. For example:

"[They] stress mitzvot *bein adam laMakom* and ignore the interpersonal mitzvot."

"[They] focus on everything else at the expense of *hashkafa*, truth at

the expense of meaning... fear at the expense of love" (pg. 253).

In sum, she totally misrepresents the yeshiva community and educational system, giving the reader the impression that it is repressive, unsophisticated, and out of touch with reality, when any visitor to yeshivos cannot but be invigorated by the pervasive atmosphere, permeated with a joyful sense of purpose and dedication to personal growth.

Although her criticisms are stated in a universal fashion, they are almost always illustrated with stories of yeshiva/Bais Yaakov students whose parents/teachers/communities exhibited undesirable behavior.

IN SUMMARY

In conclusion, within the 400 pages of her book, Margolese occasionally hits on some important points and eloquently presents well thought-out analyses that are on the mark, as indicated in Rabbi Gluck's review. In light of all the aforementioned objections, however, these morsels of truth are hardly sufficient to validate the book as a whole. In fact, one of the greatest dangers of *Off the Derech* is that its good points and objectionable material are interspersed. The average

reader, finding points that he or she agrees with, is likely to overlook *Off the Derech's* shortcomings and be lured into concurring with its conclusions.

Let us consult our own leaders, our own *mechanchim*, and our own mental health professionals who are in tune with *daas Torah*, on matters that are clearly of a *hashkafa* nature.

While the reviewer found "her work a must-read for anyone who works... with Orthodox... youth under threat," I would strongly limit that endorsement for the reasons outlined above.

YAIR SPOLTER
Kiryat Sefer

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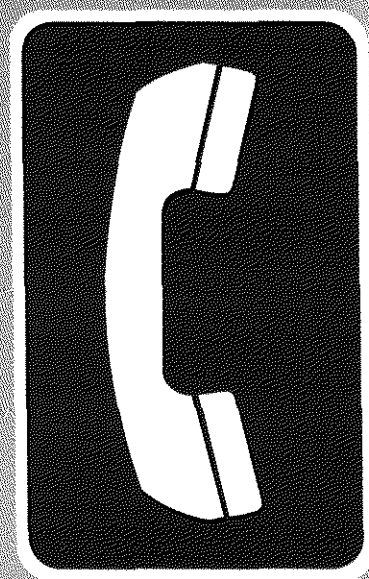
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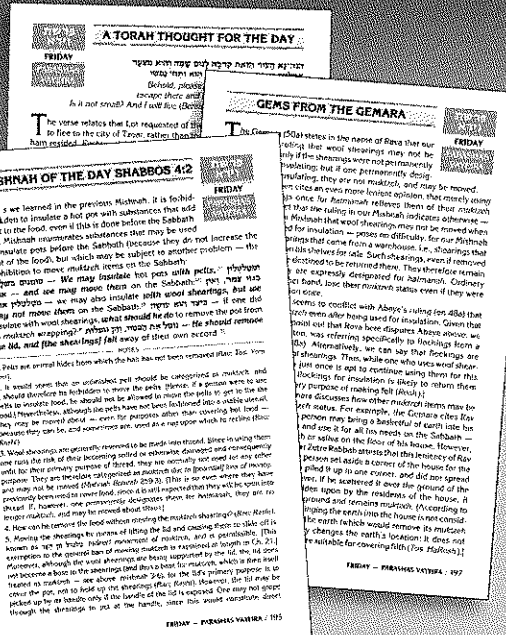
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