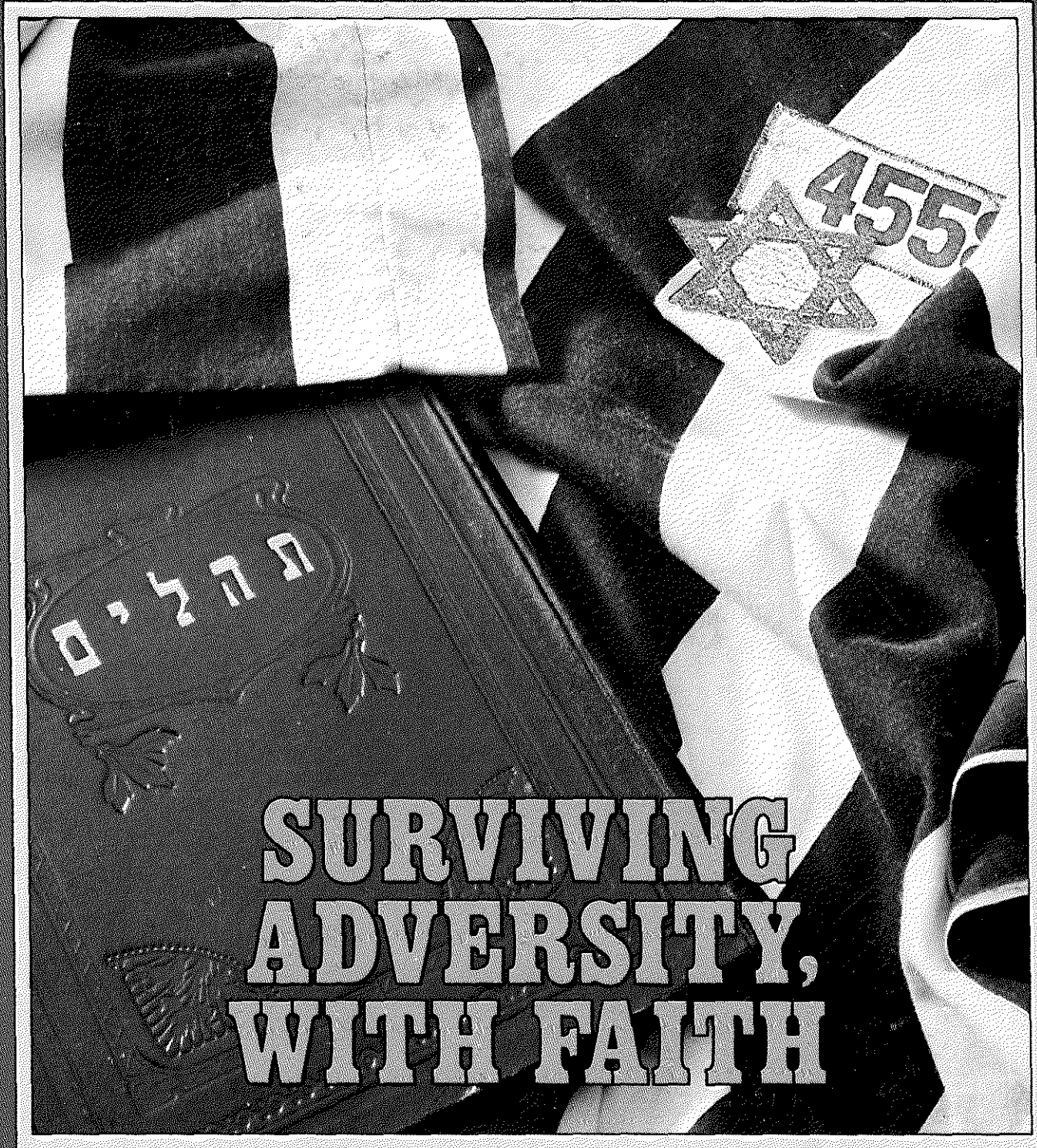


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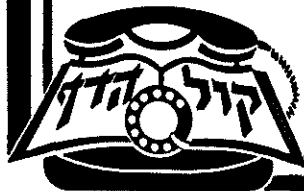
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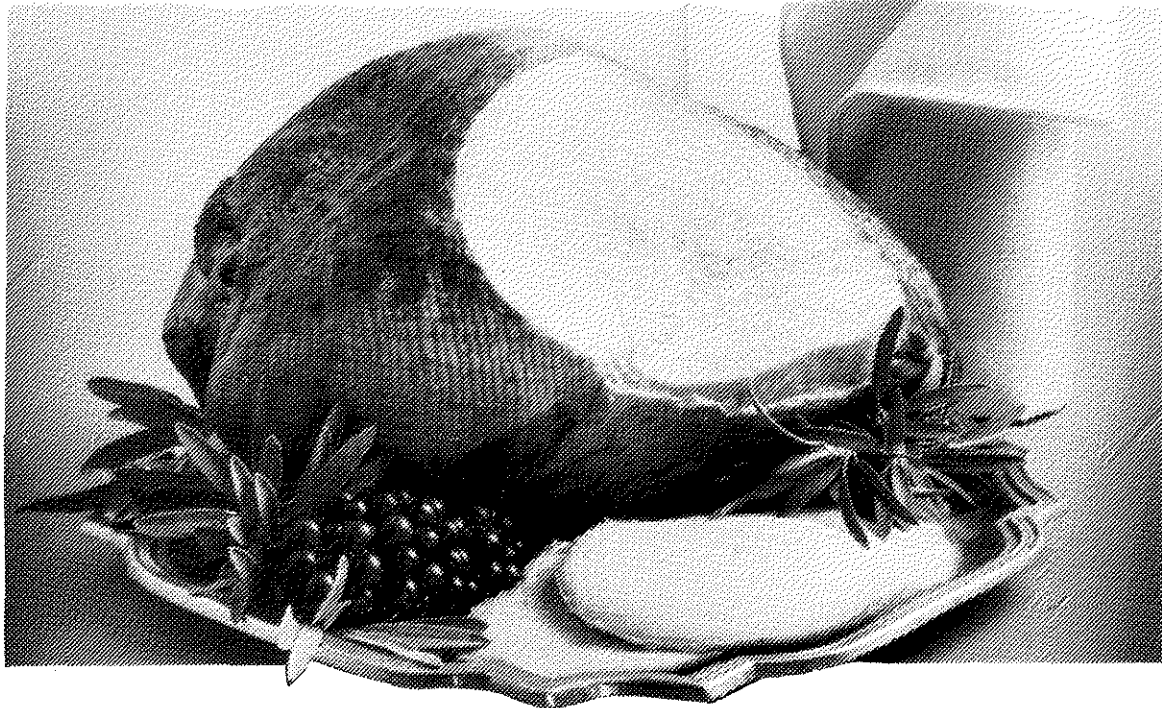
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June 1989
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IRAN AFTER KHOMEINI:

What's In Store For The Jews?

PREDICTABLE UNCERTAINTY

The dust has barely settled in the ten months since the declaration of a cease fire in the Iran/Iraq war, and now Ayatollah Khomeini has died. The immediate reaction among most freedom-loving people—especially the Jews—might well be one of relief. After all, Khomeini had come to symbolize the Islamic Revolution, which swept away the Pahlavi regime, and was responsible for the oppression of all religious groups, aside from the fundamentalist Shiite Moslems. Under his tight-fisted, despotic rule, Jewish education became nonexistent, and opportunities for full-expression of Jewish religious life dwindled.

Yet the uncertainty that now faces the Jews of Iran—possibly the world's oldest continuing Jewish

community—is in some ways worse than the oppression of this last decade. There is always the possibility that the situation could deteriorate *וּנְהַרְסוּ*, as rivalries that have been long suppressed under Khomeini can now erupt. To help us appreciate the volatile situation in Iran, let us look closely at some of the forces at work there.

THE POWER STRUGGLE . . .

Power, which devolved from the "Holy City" of Qom and its most famous resident, the Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini, is legally vested in the *majlis*—or constituent assembly. There are many viewpoints within this assembly as to how to deal with the numerous issues facing the country, and each is supported by its own interest group. Each group—such as the merchants of the various bazaars (called Bazaarists), the professional classes, and the agricultural bloc—

has a particular ayatollah or other representative in the *majlis* whose ideas come closest to its own. Frequently, one ayatollah, whose power comes from these legitimate constituencies, may bicker with other clerics, in or out of parliament. Many continue to lead their own militias in order to translate their agendas into reality.

Khomeini had actively refereed between different clerics and their constituencies. Nonetheless, stability was lacking. For instance, the *New York Times* on December 13, 1988, reported that "at least eleven religious leaders associated with Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, the man [then] designated to succeed Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as Iran's spiritual leader, have been executed as part of power struggles between political factions." Moreover, throughout the 80's, various factions within the country were engaged in a low-level civil war of attrition, which unleashed a torrent of blackmail, and an endless supply

Shlomo Berger is the director of the Near-and Middle-East Section of Agudath Israel's Vaad L'Hatzolas Nidchei Yisroel.

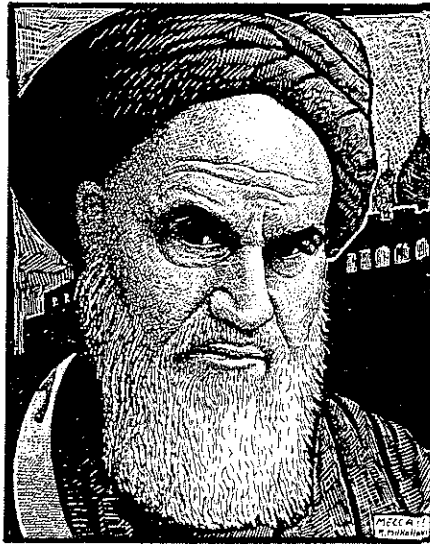
Many ayatollahs favor the promulgation of Islamic religious law in all aspects of daily life, which causes further concern among the Jews of Iran.

of informers. This situation, which culminated in extraordinary show-trials, helped root out counter-revolutionary elements from Iranian religious, social, and political life, but it also produced unparalleled tension in the country. All this was further exacerbated by the anti-clerical, anti-government Mujaheddin (nationalist freedom fighters), in and out of the country. They formed a pragmatic alliance with Iraq, which triggered the eventual assault on the Iranian city of Kermanshah by these same *Mujaheddin*.

... AND THE JEWS

The 20,- 25,000 Jews remaining in Iran have been deeply affected by the volatile atmosphere there. As an officially recognized minority, the Jewish community has been able to maintain its integrity during these difficult years, but the events of the last decade took an unimaginable toll on its stability.

There has been immense pressure from Islamic militants to indoctrinate Jewish children in the schools. As a result, Jewish schools in Iran have had to make creative changes to adapt to the structure and restrictions that the Islamic Revolution has imposed upon them. Moreover, teenage boys, as well as some girls, were and still are threatened with an indiscriminate conscription policy in order to provide the military with manpower. Once drafted, their minority status subjects them to painful prejudice. These various factors have influenced many parents to send their children away to schools in the West. This is a choice that is fraught with unusual risks, but it has had one long-term beneficial result—the emergence of a new, more learned element in Iran-



ian Jewry than that community has had in generations.

The rivalry between the various political forces also has been effecting the Jews in confusing ways. At first glance, the Jews in the large cities are from a cross-section of social classes—i.e. business, professional and service industries—and that should determine their allegiances to specific political blocs. But the local ayatollah allied with the respective merchant or bazaarist group may also be a radical Moslem in terms of education, and thus be an outspoken enemy of the educational environment most advantageous for a Jewish future. Moreover, many ayatollahs also favor the promulgation of Islamic religious law in all aspects of daily life, causing further unease among the Jews of Iran. . . . How secure can a Jew feel in such an environment?

POST-KHOMEINI TENSIONS

All of the tensions between rival forces, which have been kept beneath the surface during Khomeini's rule, are now coming to the fore in their fierce

competition to fill the power vacuum created by his death. A leading expert has indicated that this power vacuum may one day soon pit pro-Western, pro-Russian and pro-Third World ayatollahs against one another, especially since so many of them were educated either in the West or in Moscow. The more militant Moslem factions may become even more assertive, making conditions even more difficult for the Jews. On the other hand, ties with Moscow seem to be gaining strength, which is surely no source of tolerance toward minority religious groups. Exacerbating the uncertainty of the times is a formidable rumor mill, which feeds on the political power vacuum, and continually churns out terrifying scenarios for the Jews who live in Iran. One of the most effective antidotes to this rumor mill is frequently a telephone call to a Western country where confirmation or refutation can easily be had; often, however, phone lines are down. These contradictory elements keep the entire social and political infrastructure off balance. . . . Yet that balance is crucial to a productive Jewish life.

SHOULD PEACE PREVAIL . . .

We must also consider the possibility of further complications in the life of the Jews of Iran, should peace prevail. With the advent of peace (at present, only a cease-fire is in effect), hundreds of thousands of war-weary soldiers will return to the cities and demand employment, placing great strain on an economy already at the breaking point. The government will want to help these veterans return to a normal life, and minorities—especially Jews—may find that regional authorities will favor vete-

rans over civilians in general, and over minorities in particular. Unless they are highly skilled, some minority members may even be displaced altogether—putting additional hardships on the Iranian Jewish community.

There always is the possibility that war-weary Iran will experience a peaceful succession in the country's political leadership, which can bring stability to the Iranian Jewish community, making it a more hospitable home for them. In such event, young women seeking husbands will be facing increasing difficulties, since they far outnumber the remaining men. The flip side of this imbalance is being felt in the West where many young men are pursuing their studies, and few Iranian women have made their way.

The young Jewish women who have managed to come to the West are finding that the young men who have studied in American yeshivos now have much higher standards of observance than they do. It will fall

It will fall upon the yeshiva graduates in the States to assist in *kiruv* work at many levels to raise the *Yahadus*-consciousness of their brothers and sisters joining them here.

upon these yeshiva graduates to assist in *kiruv* catch-up work, to raise the *Yahadus*-consciousness of their brothers and sisters who were denied a full Jewish education and now join them here. Moreover, those organizations, institutions, and individuals that have been so deeply involved in helping Iranian emigrants adjust to Torah life in the West will still have their work cut out for them.

THE ZIONIST ELEMENT

"... A turning point came three years ago when 2000 Jews strolling in Teheran after Sabbath services were rounded up by revolutionary guards, blindfolded and taken in buses to Evin Prison—denounced as Zionists."

New York Times, September 17, 1987

Obviously the question of Israel places a great strain on Jews in a country that is openly hostile to the Zionist state. But this is not an unequivocal source of trouble, for the strain is common to Jews in all parts of the Middle and Near East, and some communities thrive nonetheless. Hopefully, revolution, war, and political instability will yield to necessity, and the pragmatic considerations that produced many productive alliances between Moslems and Jews in the past will again prevail. Hopefully, Jews will be able to keep existing institutions such as synagogues and *mikvaot* intact while improving the level of *chinuch*, so that a full, healthy Jewish life may in time reassert itself once again in the face of a difficult *Golus*. ■

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Hagaon Horav Yitzchok Yaakov Weiss

Niftar 11 Sivan/June 14

As we go to press, we record with a profound sense of loss the *petira* (passing) of Hagaon Horav Yitzchok Yaakov Weiss, זצ"ל the *Gaon Av Beis Din* (head of the rabbinical court) of the *Eida HaChareidis* in Jerusalem, formerly the head of the Manchester (England) *Beis Din*.

Born to a family of Munkaczer Chassidim in Dohina, Galicia, 87 years ago, Dayan Weiss received *semicha* (ordination) from, among others, Rabbi Yehuda Greenfield (*Maharshag*) and Rabbi Shmuel Engel (*Radomishler Rav*). He became widely recognized as a towering figure in the world of *psak halacha* (Torah law)—first as *Av Beis Din* of Grosswardein, Rumania, before World War II, and then as a member of a special *beis din* convened by the Satmar Rav, זצ"ל after the War to deal with *aguna* problems (people whose spouses were presumed dead in the war, and thus sought clarification of their halachic marital status). In 1949, he assumed the leadership of the Manchester *beis din*—a position that he maintained for twenty years. As a measure of his standing as a *poseik*, he was invited in 1951 to succeed the venerable Dayan Yechezkel Abramsky זצ"ל as head of the London *Beis Din*, when the latter retired to Jerusalem. Dayan Weiss, however, chose to stay in Manchester, reputedly because of



Dayan Weiss being accompanied by the late Dayan Golditch זצ"ל and יב"ח, Rabbi Stegal and members of the Kehilla when he left Manchester 19 years ago.

his dedication to the responsibilities he had assumed in Manchester. During that period, Dayan Weiss decisively raised the spiritual level in Manchester—specifically, in regard to *kashrus*, and (together יב"ח with the Manchester Rosh Hayeshiva, Rabbi Yehuda Siegal, and Rabbi Baruch Horowitz) the founding of the Manchester Kollel. In 1972 Dayan Weiss was called to head the *Eida Beis Din* in Jerusalem, a position that he held for the past seventeen years, where he achieved recognition as one of the outstanding *poskim* of our time.

When responding to *she'eilos* (halachic queries), he displayed an awe-inspiring command of the broadest range of both early and recent *poskim*. Yet, according to personal witness, he never responded to a *she'eila*—even if it were one that he had been asked numerous times in the past—without first pausing for a short interval. Often, he would refer to a sheet of paper on which he had jotted down a brief summary of responses to commonly asked questions. With *Kollel* fellows, he would take time to explain in detail the rationale behind his *psak* (decision), to train them in the decision-making process.

His written *teshuvos* (responsa), contained in the nine-volume set of the *Minchas Yitzchok* (with a tenth volume soon to be published), include many landmark decisions on the application of *halacha* to complex areas of modern technology.

The multitudes that accompanied his *aron* to its *makom kevura* (final resting place) bore eloquent testimony to the broad circle of those who venerated him, representing the full range of world Orthodoxy, regardless of political or ideological orientation. His presence as a leading Torah personality will be deeply missed; in his absence, his halachic decisions will continue to serve as an invaluable source of guidance to the Torah world.

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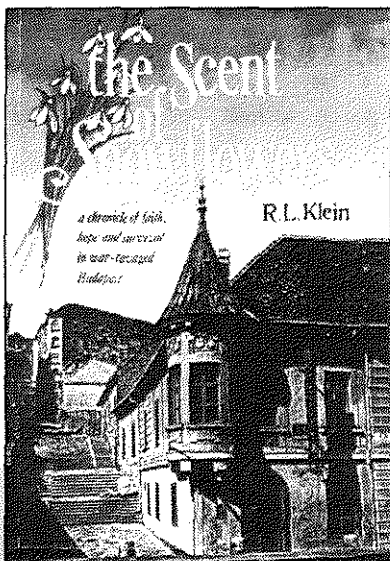
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Over My Shoulder, Emuna Shines Down

ONE SURVIVOR'S RESPONSE TO CHURBAN EUROPE

It is quite remarkable how the last *Churban* affected different people in different ways. To some survivors, it was "proof" that the Heavens are empty. That our fathers and forefathers were merely naive in believing that there is a G-d. Auschwitz had proven the old generation wrong. The very same *Churban* affected others (myself included) in the exact opposite manner. There is a Creator, there is a Master of the Universe, and Auschwitz proved it. Strange indeed!

It seems that an awareness of the inability of some people to cope with tragedy prompted a Chassidic *Rebbe* to comment that so little is recorded of the pogroms and massacres in Jewish history—we have no detailed reports on the Inquisition or on *Gzeiras Tach Vetat* (Chmelnitzki's pogroms of 1648)—because it was feared that the depressing

Rabbi Shapiro, a Baltimore resident, has written a number of articles for JO that evoke the Pre-War Europe of his childhood; many of these have been published in the *Judaiscope* anthologies, *The Torah Personality*, *The Torah World*, and *The Torah Profile*. His autobiographical, *Go, My Son*, published by Feldheim, is scheduled for release this summer.



details of suffering and death could drive a person to *apikorsus* (apostasy). If that were true in the past, then the recent *Churban*—its sheer size, the depth of the brutality, the indifference of the other nations to the total annihilation of the Jews—could drive a person to insanity . . . but also to *emuna*. Permit me to explain.

SEARCHING FOR JEWISH SURVIVORS

Iserved in the Soviet army during World War II, and scanning the press, I had seen hardly any reference to the mass murder of Jews. The first rumor I had heard to that effect was in Stalingrad. I knew that Reb Archik Baksht¹, the *Rav* of my hometown Lomza, was once *Rav* in Tzaritzin, later known as Stalingrad. So there must be a Jewish community there, I assumed. I searched the devastated city for Jews, to no avail. The Russians there told me that the Germans had rounded up all the Jews, and killed them in cold blood. I did not believe them.

The next shock I got was in Berditchev. The Russians used to call the city "*Yerazolima*" (Jerusalem) or "*Yevrayskaya Stolitza*" (The Jewish Capital), for the city of Reb Levi Yitzchok Berditchever had been 90% Jewish. The 10% non-Jews were officials, who served as the "*Shabbos Goyim*" for the rest

1. See "Reb Archik," JO Oct., '72

The recent Churban—its sheer size, the depth of the brutality, the indifference of the other nations—could drive a person to insanity. . . but also to *emuna*.

of the populace. On the way to the front, my troop train stopped at Berditchev for three hours, so I went off to search for Jews. I didn't find one. Only Russians and Ukrainians! I had remembered that Reb Levi Yitzchok's *shtiebel* was located on a hill, so I trudged up the hill, only to find total destruction, stones and bricks strewn about, except for one large square building. Perhaps it was the old *shtiebel*—the Bolsheviks had converted it into a factory—perhaps it was not. Exhausted, I sat down on one of the stones and began to cry. Those rumors about the murder of the Jews seemed to be true!

Sitting there, I recalled an episode from my youth, regarding a Reb Alter Katzanek.

In Lomza, the Rav—Reb Archik and, later, Reb Moshe Shatzkes—would sit at the right side of the aron hakodesh, while my father sat to the left. Two pews away was Reb Alter Katzanek, an elderly gray-bearded gentleman who spent his entire day learning Torah. He lived on the monthly check that his children sent him from America. He was

hard of hearing, hence he would go over to the bench in front of the bima for krias haTorah so as not to miss a word. We little boys carried on, running around as small boys would do. Once, as I passed him, he grabbed me, screamed "Shaygetz!" (heathen!) and gave me a potch (slap in the face).

After davenen, my father walked over to the old gentlemen and said, "Reb Alter, you are right about the children making noise, but you have no right to give Chaim a potch. He is my child. Don't ever do it again!"

My heart was bleeding. The terrible reality about the wiping out of all Jewish communities was undeniable. Yet, the only complaint to Heaven that I could utter was: "*Tatte In Himmel!*—Is that how You take care of Your children?"

People passing by must have thought that I had cracked up in battle. They simply stopped and shook their heads in sorrow.

I davened *Mincha*, and then stayed on to talk to the stones and bricks of Reb Levi Yitzchok's *Beis Hamidrash*. I was a sergeant in a

tank uniform, yet I cried bitterly, unashamed: "Father in Heaven, have You no mercy on Your children?" I felt the *tzaddik* Reb Levi Yitzchok behind me, backing me up in my petition. I was sure that by then he had already mobilized the entire *Pamalyo Shel Maalo* (Heavenly hosts), asking: "Where are the Jews of my Berditchev?" I was heartbroken, all alone in the world, and yet I felt closer than ever to my Creator. I had whom to cry to.

ON THE SHORES OF AMERICA

When I arrived in America, the first thing I did was visit my father's surviving friends and fellow alumni from Slobodka and Mir.

My first stop was at the East Side apartment of our Rav, Reb Moshe Shatzkes.² He was happy to see me and was visibly moved that at least one of my family had survived. As we sat down, I asked, "Does the Rav remember Reb Alter Katzanek?" And I repeated the episode. I did not have to finish my parallel with recent events for him to cry! I soon joined him, but neither of us uttered a word. His answer was silence, for there is no answer. He practiced the *mida* of Aaron *Hakohein* of "*Vayitdom Aaron*—and Aaron was silent" (before the Heavenly justice that took the lives of his two older sons).

The next visit was with Reb Yechiel Mordechai Gordon,³ the Lomzer *Rosh Hayeshiva*. I was amazed at his cheerfulness and his ready smile. He embraced me and kissed me, and, in the course of conversation, invited me to join his Kollel. Later, seated at his dining

2. See "How Not To Write a Yizkor Book." JO Apr. '80

3. See "Lomza," JO Jan., '76 and "Reb Yechiel M. Gordon" Mar.'74

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room table, I asked, "Does the *Rosh Yeshiva* remember Alter Katzanek?" I repeated the story—and again I didn't have to finish it; he began to weep aloud, and so did I. And not a word from him. Total silence is the best answer where there is no answer.

I went to see Reb Reuven Grozovski,⁴ my late father's *chavrusa* in Slobodka, and my own *Rosh Hayeshiva* in Kamenitz. I informed him about my joining the Lomzer Kollel, which pleased him. I then told him the Alter Katzanek episode, and filed my complaint. He looked up above his glasses to Heaven and said, "A *shtarkeh taane! B'emess shtarkeh taane*—Truly, a strong argument!"—and broke out crying!

My *Rosh Yeshiva* suggested that I visit Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky,⁵ explaining that "he knew your father in Slobodka." The same evening I went to see him. He greeted me with a warm "*Sholom Aleichem*," but when he heard that I was Alter Tiktiner's son, the welcome turned into an embrace and a kiss. He added, "I'm glad you came tonight, for I have a guest from Seattle, Washington, Reb Alter Poplak, your father's best friend from Yeshiva days."

(I had assumed that Seattle, Washington, was a Brooklyn neighborhood, and easily accessible. To this day I can't forgive myself for not taking advantage of the occasion to ask Rabbi Poplak more about my father.)

The two expressed joy at seeing me, and reminisced about my father, the *sefer* he wrote on *Nazir*, as well as his *Piskei Tosafos* on *Nazir*. I then filed my "Katzanek" complaint, and the two broke into tears. As usual, I joined them. . . . Tears and silence were their answer—*Vayidom Aaron*.

(As for the Kletzker *Rosh Hayeshiva*, Reb Aaron Kotler⁶—who devoted all his energies to saving lives and teaching Torah—his three volume *Mishnas Reb Aaron*, containing a total of 756 pages, with 238 *maamorim*, has not one *maa-*

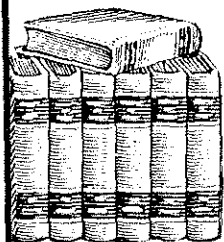
mar on the Holocaust. He too practiced "*Vayidom Aaron*." For that matter, I have never come across any comments from either Rabbi Moshe Feinstein or Rabbi Yaakov Ruderman זכרונם לברכה on *Churban Europe*.)

Then I went to see Reb Avraham Kalmanowitz,⁷ the *rav* of my second home-town, Tiktin (Tykocin in Polish), the *malach hagoel* (redeeming angel) of the Mirrer Yeshiva since 1914, and founder of the *Mirrer*

Yeshiva in Brooklyn. He was then sitting *shiva* for his father who had been *niftar* (passed away) in Jerusalem. The crowd left, and just he and I were there. He was sitting on a low stool, and I next to him. He placed his arm around me, and we talked about Tiktin. I told him that I remembered how he had arranged for his parents, sister, brother-in-law, and their two children to leave Russia during the Stalin era to join him in Tiktin—the miracle of it!

We talked about the yeshiva he

7. See JO March, '72; also, Dec. '78 **



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4. See "Kamenitz," JO May '78 and Oct. '80

5. See "Remembering Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky," JO, May, '86 *

6. See "Reb Aaron Kotler," JO May, '73.

had founded in Tiktin, how I and the rest of my entire class would come to his *beis-din-shtub* for tests. At that point, I interjected with my encounter with Katzanek and started to ask how, by contrast, our Father in Heaven had tolerated such a terrible *Churban*. He pressed me against his chest and tears began to roll down into his gray long beard. We cried together until someone entered to report to him on the condition of the *Rebbitzin* and the baby daughter recently born to them.

His response to my complaint was similar to that of other *Gedolim*. Silence!

THE SILENCE OF OTHERS

The Chassidic leader, the tzaddik *Reb Meir'l Premishlaner*, commented on the Yerushalmi-Sanhedrin: "Tzaddikim know that their Master is true, and do not flatter Him," to say that G-d abhors *chanifa* (flattery): When bad times come upon Klal Yisroel, He does not want the tzaddikim to justify the harsh decree. To the contrary, when it appears as though we are facing a dispute of Klal Yisroel v. Heaven, so to speak, the tzaddikim should always be on the side of Jewry. G-d neither needs nor desires *chanifa*, He does not require defense attorneys. And that is also how Rabbi Yitzchok

Volozhiner interprets the meaning of Rashi's comment: "G-d spoke sternly (*mishpat*) with Moshe, because he had been severe in speaking, saying, 'Why do you deal ill with Bnei Yisroel?' (*Shemos* 6,2). The word "*mishpat*" in Rashi implies that G-d recognized that when Moshe Rabbeinu stood up for Klal Yisroel and complained, "Why have You dealt ill . . ." he did it with *mishpat*—Moshe was justified!

To my knowledge, the various *gedolim* that I met never went on record attempting to deal with the *Churban*. The wound was too fresh, the pain too deep, their *Ahavas Yisroel* too great. They always sided with Klal Yisroel.

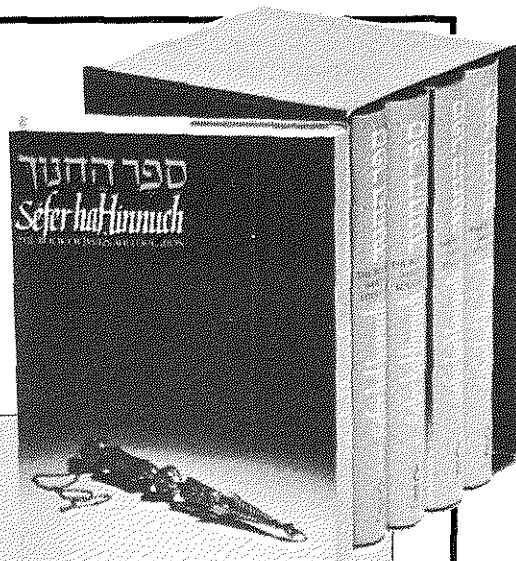
BEYOND THE REACH OF HUMAN COMPREHENSION

Moreover, there are certain questions that mortals are not equipped to answer. As *Chazal* tell us, "When the *chachamim* and the *nevim* were asked, 'Why was the Land destroyed?' they could not come up with an answer" (*Babba Metzia* 85a). Hence their silence.

Surely some day we will know the answers to all questions. As the *Dubner Maggid* explains the puzzling words in *Amos*: "Behold, the days come, said the L-rd, that the plowman shall meet the reaper" (9,11). Asks the *Maggid*: If we are talking about one farmer, how does one man meet himself? And even if we are talking about two farmers, how do they meet? Plowing takes place in spring, while harvest is in the fall!

Explains the *Dubner Maggid*, the Prophet is teaching us a lesson in understanding events in Jewish history. His parable: A city man took his first walk to the countryside. Seeing a farmer plowing a field, absolutely ruining a beautiful growth of grass, then taking good grain and throwing it away onto the plowed ground, the city fellow became puzzled and angry, asking many questions. Six months later, he took another walk, and discovered the farmer harvesting a beautiful crop. All his questions were answered.

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I had remembered that Reb Levi Yitzchok's *shtiebel* was located on a hill in Berditchev, so I trudged up the hill, only to find total destruction, stones and bricks strewn about, except for one large building . . .

When G-d plows up *Klal Yisroel*, so to speak, piling up the terrible *tzores* upon *tzores*, the suffering seems cruel and pointless. The answer will only be known in "harvest time." Later—only in the End of Days—all the questions will be answered.

DEALING WITH THE CHURBAN

I recently came across an essay by Rabbi Moshe Meiselman (Rosh Yeshiva Toras Moshe, in Jerusalem), published in a Torah journal, *Oraisa*, in which he instructs us not to postpone dealing with *Churban Europe*. He writes:

"Side by side with . . . my essay on the Holocaust is an adaptation of an essay on anti-Semitism by my great-great-great grandfather, the *Netziv of Volozhin*. . . Silence has never been viewed as the appropriate response to catastrophe."

The essay is 63 pages, and I could not put it away until I finished it. Have I become mellow? It's almost fifty years since the *Churban*. Have my wounds healed? *Cholila!* In fact, in a private conversation with the *Rosh HaYeshiva*, I told him, "I have never been able to accept the last *Churban!* I can't! I'd feel as if I'm betraying my dear ones. They are still standing before my eyes, in their purity, their *tzidkus*, and their *kedusha*. They are—with the rest of the Six Million—in the *Kodshei Kodoshim* of the *Shechina*. I did not have the *zechus* to be with them!"

Said the *Rosh Yeshiva*: "Look into the *Aruch Hashulchan-Orach Chaim* 1,10." I looked up the passage and found: "The *Smag* wrote (*Mitzva* 17), 'It is a positive command to accept G-d's judgment on all that occurs as just and to our ultimate benefit, as it says: *And you*

should take to your heart that as a father punishes his son, so does G-d punish you.' All that befalls us is because G-d is purifying us, not taking revenge on us."

My obligation to be *matzduk hadin*, then, does not really call for explaining our tragic losses. I must only accept that G-d is just in ways beyond my comprehension.

And then, there is a book—rather, a *sefer*—on my shelf for a number of years now, but I never had dared read it. Its title is *A Path Through The Ashes*.⁸ After I finished *Oraisa*, I finally had the courage to open the book and I found it a gold mine of

thought. All those *Roshei Yeshiva*—*Horav* Yitzchok Hutner זצ"ל (Chaim Berlin), *Horav* Mordechai Gifter (Telshe), *Horav* Yaakov Weinberg (Ner Israel) and many others dwell on the subject of the *Churban*. Between the lines, one can sense the difficulty these *Gedolim* had. On the one hand, their *Ahavas Yisroel* flowed; and on the other, they were compelled by their duty as teachers to instruct a new generation that

8. *A Path through the Ashes* is a collection of essays and stories on *Churban Europe*, collected from the pages of *The Jewish Observer*, published jointly by Mesorah Publications and Agudath Israel of America.



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There's no use denying it: during sleepless nights, or whenever I have a free moment to think, my mind returns to "my kedoshim".

must receive guidance in how to deal with the devastating losses of *Churban Europe*; guidance in how to accept G-d as just, even though we have no specific answers as to why the tragedies occurred. And the essays say as much. . . . Apparently, the *Rabbonim* and *Roshet Yeshiva* with whom I spoke had refrained from trying to reason with me in my despair. So they joined me in my tears. Our children, however, are different, and do require some words of guidance.

DIALOGUE WITH THE "KEDOSHIM"

There's no use denying it: during sleepless nights, or whenever I have a free moment to think, my mind returns to "my kedoshim" . . . especially during *davening* and in particular at

ducheneren. While I fulfill my *mitzva* as a *kohein* and bless the people present, and *Klal Yisroel* in general, the *kedoshim* are always with me. And as my sons and grandsons ascend the platform before the *aron hakodesh* to participate in the *Birchas Kohanim*, under the cover of my *tallis*, I speak to my *kedoshim*: "You had me sent away to survive. If the purpose was to supply a new generation of true *kohanim*, I can tell you—mission accomplished! If the purpose was to deliver a new generation of *bnai Torah* and *bnos Torah*, mission accomplished!"

Last Pesach, after having read the two *seforim*, my *nusach* was different: "Tatte!" I told my father. "The *Yode'a Machshavos* (Knower of thoughts) knows I cannot explain our tragic losses. How can I? But by the order of the *Aruch Hashulchan*, who gave you *semicha* at a young

age, I do accept the *din* as it affects me, and declare that G-d is just. My love for you is no less, and I'm sure that this is what you would want." ■

ADDENDA TO FOOTNOTES:

*Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky related to me that during the first World War, he was a refugee, and wound up in a village near Tiktin. The Jewish farmers, known as "yishuvniks," would hire a *melamed* to teach their children, pay him with room-and-board plus a few rubles for pocket money. Reb Yaakov took such a job. My *Zeide* from Tiktin, a *talmid chacham* and merchant, came to that village to see the local *poretz* (land owner) on business. As was his custom, he also visited the *cheder*. The first shock he got was that the new *melamed* did not wield the customary *konchtic* (whipping rod), but had it hanging on the wall! Then my *Zeide* discovered that the new *melamed* was an *illuy* (a genius) in Torah knowledge (not Reb Yaakov's words). He scolded the young *melamed*: "Why are you wasting your days up here? Your place is in a yeshiva! Go to Lomza!"

He gave him some cash and practically drove him out of the village.

(The other half of the episode I found out later, but not from Reb Yaakov.) When he arrived in Lomza, he discovered that the yeshiva did not accept new *talmidim*. Because of the war, the local Jewish community was impoverished and help from America was cut off. The Rosh Yeshiva, R'Yechiel Mordechai Gordon, had a difficult enough time feeding the 400 or 500 *talmidim*, without admitting additional students.

The next day, someone mentioned to the Rosh Yeshiva that an *illuy* from Minsk had been in town. The Rosh Yeshiva immediately sent out boys to search the surrounding villages for Reb Yaakov, and indeed he was found—again, as a *melamed* to children. He was invited to join the Yeshiva, where he learned for three years, emerging as an outstanding *talmid* there. In America, years later, when the *rebbe* met the *talmid*, the Rosh Yeshiva said, "Reb Yaakov, because of you I made a vow never to deny admittance to any one, no matter what the circumstances, for one can never know what type of *bachur* one is refusing!"

**People are amazed by the wide range of activities of Reb Avrohom Kalmanowitz, and his remarkable achievements, especially in view of his very limited English vocabulary. A classical story: He had a very important appointment, hence he took with him a young American rabbi. The latter discovered that the keys to his Talmud Torah were in his pocket, so he said to the *Rav*: "I'm very sorry, but I must go back to my *shul*, for the children will come and find all the classrooms locked, and I have the keys!"

The *Rav* pleaded with him, "Now you're going to leave me?"

The rabbi wouldn't yield and left. The *Rav* entered the office by himself, and accomplished his mission without the help of an interpreter. From then on, he went by himself. ■

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In the yeshiva world, infertility is an excruciatingly difficult condition to deal with. Non-Jews and irreligious Jews are not questioned when they remain childless for a number of years. It is assumed that they are planning careers and waiting until "the time is right" and their fortunes are adequate. Most of them do plan things this way.

But what about us? You know that is not our case. We've watched all our peers *Baruch Hashem* give birth in a year or so, sometimes even less. Many of you got married long after we did and already have two or more children. We are part of the growing community of "the infertile."

Often you have offered us the "*kvatership*" at your sons' *brisim*. What an honor! Such gratitude we

At times, the brutal insensitivity of some women seems to overshadow all the stories I have heard about *nashim tzidkaniyos*.

felt, such hopes we had that maybe this time the *zechus* of this *bris*, with the visit of *Eliyahu Hanavi*, would bring us good tidings. But it was not to be.

So why am I writing this? No, not just to thank you for your concern and *tefillos*. I am pleading on the behalf of the "childless poor", to those of you who are less sensitive to our pain.

I think you know what I'm talking about.

How often have we women gathered at a meeting or *tzeddaka* function and all the conversations would be about your babies' accomplishments? How many agonizing minutes did I have to spend holding back tears until one sensitive mother noticed my silence and tactfully changed the subject?

Not that I prefer the sudden and abrupt "Let's drop the subject" silence when mothers see me approaching. It's rather obvious and

hurts almost as much.

What about you, "Mrs. Pregnancy"? That's the nickname I gave you years ago, for though you'd only been through two pregnancies, I've never heard a conversation in which you did not mention them. No matter who is present, no matter how many, you are still forever telling us about how your "nausea the first time through was much worse than the second one . . . but my second one was harder because. . . ." Or worse yet, you call me up to complain about how ungainly you look in maternity clothes.

Countless times I have listened to pregnancy and motherhood complaints, with fury building up inside me. I must hold myself back from screaming, "*Baruch Hashem* you are tired and nauseous! *Baruch Hashem* your baby kept you up all night. Don't you realize what a *bracha* you have?"

But those are minor incidents compared to other experiences. . . . At times, the brutal insensitivity of some women seems to overshadow all the stories I have heard about *nashim tzidkaniyos*. Like the mother who said to my childless

friend after Pesach, "You just won't know what Pesach is until you have a child—*shepping nachas* as he asks the Four Questions. . . ." My poor friend cried for hours after this. What was the mother trying to do, rub it in?

I personally will never forget the mother who got married long after me and gave birth within a year. The tactless things she would say to me and my friend Akara II, the only two childless wives in our *shul/kolel/chevra*, were unbelievable.

We're already used to ordinary

boasting, but she'd bring the baby to *shul* and show him to us, with: "Have you seen my baby yet? Isn't he adorable? Come hold him." Yet even that was nothing compared to the last straw, the incident that compelled me to do something.

Akara II and I were at a *Bar Mitzva*, sitting together as we always do, so we can compare infertility treatments while everyone compares baby stories. This proud mother, who had been seated at another table, was on her way out of the room. But she went out of her

way to stop at our table, just to tell us (the only two women she knew at the table), "I've got to call my baby sitter to see how my little Dovid is."

The stinging pain I felt at that moment was enough to make me write this. The circumstances surrounding this were just too overpowering to ignore. What happened to the characteristics of *Am Yisroel—baishanus, rachmanus, and chessed*. . . modesty, compassion and generosity? It brought back memories of my single days when my *kallah* friends would talk about nothing else but their *chassanim*, and make the rest of us feel miserable. And how I vowed, and kept my promise, not to bring such pain to my single friends upon my engagement. It was difficult, minimizing the excitement and joy for the sake of their feelings. But it just took a little sensitivity. And I know that *Baruch Hashem* I succeeded because my single friends specifically told me so and thanked me. I am not trying to sing my praises, but rather to make you realize that it is possible. If I could do it, anyone can. We know you women are thrilled to be expecting and to be mothers, and we are happy for you. But a bit of sensitivity would be appreciated.

Luckily, the men have it easier because men don't talk about their children as much as women do, and have no "pregnancy experiences" to compare. Yet on Simchas Torah I still cried for my husband, feeling his anguish as fathers danced with their children on their shoulders. He too feels envy in *shul* as fathers hold their sons, read *Parsha* with them, and hold out their tiny fingers to kiss the Torah. So let us not forget the pain of childless men. They, too, yearn for fatherhood.

I beg of you to please think before you speak. I do not write this to instill guilt feelings but rather to open your eyes and ears to the hurt of infertile couples. May you be rewarded for your compassion with many healthy children to give you much *nachas*. And may your prayers and ours be answered, so that stories like this need never be written again. ■

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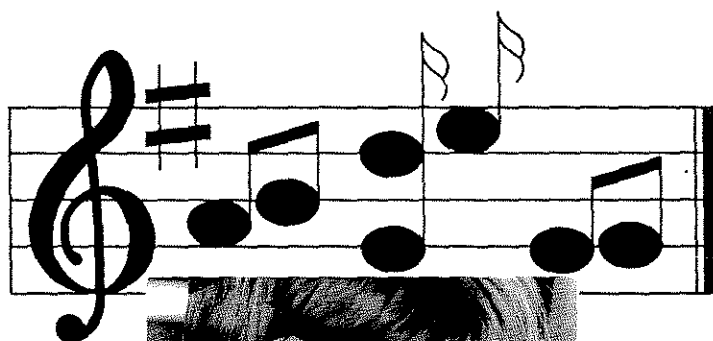
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And then I saw him. Alone. Distant. Sitting on a wooden camp bench in the back recesses of the noisy hall. At first glance, he seemed



oblivious to the whole scene. So sedate and serious. *Perhaps he's being disciplined. Or may he's homesick.* I approached him and asked if everything was OK. With an embarrassing shyness, he shrugged his shoulders, remaining silent.

"What's your name?"

Once again, silence.

"Would you like to talk outside?" I motioned, and we left together, finding places on a picnic table outside the hall. Turning once

again, I asked him his name. Silence. And then I realized. It wasn't the noise that prevented this young camper from hearing my words. He was deaf. Though taken aback by the sudden realization, I recovered to gaze into his bright, eager eyes. He must have noticed my discomfort, for he smiled. Can't a face tell a story?

I later learned that Yossi was born into a large, close-knit family in Brooklyn. When a year old, he contracted meningitis, which subsequently brought on total deafness. His education prior to our meeting was basically mainstream. Having mastered lip-reading, enabling him to communicate with great difficulty, he graduated from grade to grade in a modern yeshiva. He was very popular, for his winning smile couldn't help but attract friends. Yet the frustrations of his situation clearly had begun to take their toll on his attitude. Though gifted with a quick and bright mind, he was finding it increasingly difficult to comprehend the material taught in class.

David Wax learns in Kollel Nachlas Dovid of Mesivta Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn.

“When I was a little boy, my father told me that Hashem has His reasons for not letting me hear. And even though I’m deaf, I can still grow up to become a big talmid chacham.”

Audio Night Encounters

Yossi accepted my offer to meet during audio night activities, and we soon became close friends, convening a daily learning seder together. How does one respond to Yossi’s comment, made on a bunk porch, while in the distance, hundred of campers sing *Shabbos* songs, “Singing must be fun”? Can I possibly capture the pathos of his question, “How will I be a good father if I can’t hear my child cry?”

I suspected from our first meeting that Yossi was special, but one incident in particular, in the waning days of summer, dispelled any doubts. It was Grand Sing Nite, highlight event of summer camp life when campers don colorful uniforms and engage in a two-three

hour spectacular of singing, music and comedy. Certainly, Yossi’s inability to participate in an event of this magnitude opened the floodgates of his feelings of loneliness and isolation. Earlier that day, he had mentioned his concern to me, and I promised him that I would come up with an alternative. After having returned at 11:00 PM from an exciting visit to the Woodbourne Jail, we found ourselves outside the hall, the spectacular still in progress. Eyes gazing off into the distance, his face blank and expressionless, it was obvious that Yossi was reflecting on his situation and finding it difficult. I smiled, and he knew that I knew his thoughts. I asked him if he was angry. He replied—and I quote: “When I was a little boy, my father told me that *Hashem* has His rea-

sons for not letting me hear. And even though I’m deaf, I can still grow up to become a big *talmid chacham*.” Words spoken from the heart and soul of a ten-year-old boy.

II SOME YEARS LATER . . . YOSSI SPEAKS

Yossi suggested that perhaps if he could share some of his experiences and insights over the years with others, they too might be inspired to reach their full potential as human beings. Many of the following ideas reflect his own uphill struggles presented by his own unique situation, and his own personal triumphs of character, though certainly they contain valuable lessons for us all.

Acceptance

I am deaf and, barring miracles, will never hear. I will never experience of joys of wedding music, birds chirping, and many other sound-related pleasures, but is that reason for me not to be happy and positive about my life? My answer begins with the following *Chazal*: The *Gemora* relates the moving story of our great *Tanna* Nachum Ish Gamzu—a man who was blind in both eyes and had stumps for hands and feet. Because his entire body was covered with boils, his bedposts had to be placed in buckets of water to prevent ants from crawling on him. His house, though dilapidated and weakened, stood only in his honor, for as soon as his bed was removed, the house fell in. And why was he called *Ish Gamzu*? Whenever anything bad would happen to him, he would say “*Gam zu letova*—This, too, is for the good” (*Taanis* 21a).

If I can change things, I will try. And what I can’t change, I will accept. The words “blame” and “complain” have no place in my vocabulary. As long as we are blaming, we’re not accepting; and to the degree that we blame externals outside of ourselves, to that degree we are not accepting responsibility for ourselves. Isn’t complaining, in

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essence, a *Chillul Hashem*? For isn't one stating out loud: "I'm not happy with the lot *Hashem* has chosen for me"? For me, my deafness is not a cause for complaint. It's a challenge.

Choosing Happiness

These are thousands of books on the subject of how to find happiness. My outlook is simple. There is no way to happiness. Happiness itself is the way. Unfortunately, we are taught in society that, given certain trying and difficult conditions, it is acceptable, perhaps even assumed, to react in neurotic fashion. A good example (though I myself can't experience it, but have found the idea amusing) is the All-American traffic jam, that briarpatch of misery and neurosis. The decision to beep one's horn, even though they've been through this countless times before, never ceases to amaze me. Haven't they realized, the traffic doesn't care? Yet, they'll work themselves up into a frenzy. What we must realize is—we *do* have a choice: Patience.

My speech was incoherent at times to those who didn't know me, and my frustration at not being understood knew no bounds. I would get upset and choose to get angry at the listeners. Today—I try to make better choices. Life is comprised of a series of choices. I'll choose happiness.

Motivation, Teachers, and Labels

Every student needs a teacher. A good teacher—and that is a blessing—I have had. He taught us that each student is to be treated with the unique care and interest that a jeweler lavishes on each of his individual precious stones. A young mind is like a rough diamond. It must be gently handled and formed to bring out its unique beauty and light. He would coax and encourage each of us to bring out our own personal best. To illustrate that even amongst the poorest students lay dormant sparks of achievement and desire, which his goal was to locate and fan into a raging fire, he would

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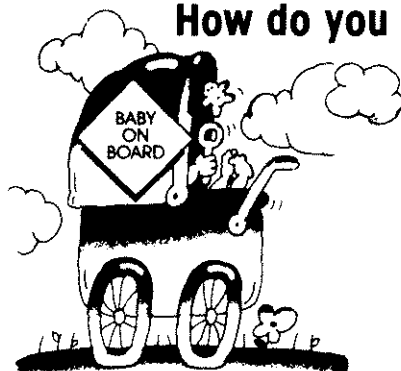
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*ANSWER: Materna

relate the following anecdote: "Take the seemingly laziest, unmotivated underachiever the world can offer. Perhaps the street urchin who idles his time away riding the D Train back and forth into Manhattan. Tie him up in chains and take him out to the harbor. Row 200 yards offshore and throw him overboard. I guarantee you will see the most motivated person around. So, too, in the classroom. Every child has strengths and weaknesses. The successful teacher analyzes the individual student, seeking out his unique qualities and talents, then focusing the child on his or her individual path to attain higher levels of achievement. Let our system offer Special Ed to one and all."

A boy in one of my teacher's classes was eight years old, withdrawn, performing poorly, inviting the teasing of his classmates. This only exacerbated his declining self-esteem and loss of confidence. My *rebbe* called him privately to his desk one day at recess. "Please take your pen and paper and number from 1-10."

Confused, the boy complied. Pulling a role of quarters out of his pocket, my *rebbe* asked him to write ten different things he was good at. Bewildered, he said, "What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. Please write down ten things that make you proud."

Twisting his fingers in rubricube fashion, he proclaimed proudly, "I can twist my fingers like no other boy in my class."

"Terrific, marvelous," my *rebbe* responded. "Write it down."

He did, and received a quarter. Amused and interested—27-items-and quarters later, he finished writing. Climbing trees and helping his younger sister with homework were just two more of this boy's feats. My *rebbe* had but one request. "You must take this list home, and each day before you leave for school, stand in front of a mirror and read this list out loud to yourself."

He did. And over the next few weeks, small but important improvements in class, and in general, began to take shape. Everyone has pluses—add them up. And the boy did just that.

On Behalf of My Silent Friends

Though I have painfully experienced the empty feelings of not being heard or noticed in the classroom, allow me to speak on behalf of those many others who might be too shy or introverted to draw the attention of our teachers. Please

hear our cry.

Please don't label me "deaf," for there is so much more to me than that. Those of us who are "handicapped" are also creatures of *Hashem* who love and want to be loved. Come over and share yourself with us. Don't be afraid. As a young child, going to the doctor's office was a nightmare. The other young children frightened by my incoherent speech assumed the worst. Their parents would have served them well by inquiring and then explaining my situation to them.

A discerning jeweler would never label or lump all his stones as one, for in the process, they would lose their individuality. So, too, with people.

I once saw a young child spill a glass of milk over the kitchen table. Mother: "You're such a clumsy, bad little girl!"

Once again, labels. Instead of a targeted, growth-oriented response, such as, "You're a wonderful little girl, but you now have acted in an irresponsible way," the mother has chosen to plant labels—"clumsy" and "bad"—into her child's head. When we label, we lose focus of the real issues at hand, as well as impress the person with harmful, debilitating attitudes about himself.

In closing, a short *mashal* is found in Rabbeinu Yonah: A *chacham* and an *am ha'aretz* walking on a road came upon the rotting, decaying carcass of a donkey. Commented the *am ha'aretz* to the *chacham*: "How this carcass smells!"

Replied the *chacham*: "How white its teeth are!"

It's not coincidental that the teeth are used as the example: small and difficult to locate—yet a positive factor. The *chacham* is illustrating to us the attitude and perspective one must apply throughout life.

True, I have not been given the gift of hearing. But I can walk and talk. I can laugh and cry. I can dream, learn, feel—and so much more! And more important, I can chose. Whenever a situation seems difficult and harsh, I stop and choose to search for the white teeth. ■

the beanstalk

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High in the Hills of Yerushalayim

Malky Brailofsky

High in the hills of Yerushalayim
Where the sky is ever a cloudless blue
And children dance in the sparkling sun
My Zaidy and Bubby chose to dwell
For reasons only they can tell
Leaving their children so far away.
Will we see you again? Who can say?

High in the hills of Yerushalayim
Where echoes of Torah fill the streets
And *kedusha* feels completely at home
My Zaidy wears his *tephillin* home from *shul*
The *sefer* in his hands is a willing tool
He turns its pages, caressing each one
His eyes shining like the brilliant sun
But he's white-haired, frail, and he trembles with age.
What more can he offer us at this stage?

High in the hills of Yerushalayim
Where woman go to the *shuk* to shop
And strollers fill the back of the bus
My Bubby sits at the window and stares out
Wishing to go and venture about
But her years forbid her to do so on her own.
Can old age be sweet when one feels so alone?

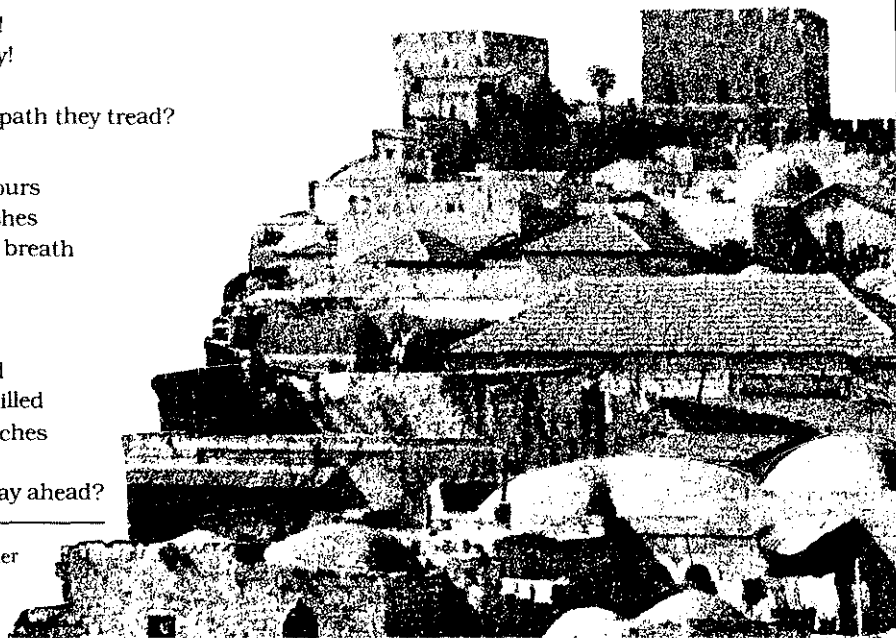
Deep in the darkness of Germany
Where Jewish life once grew and thrived
And our great *gedolim* learned and taught
My Zaidy was young! My Zaidy was strong!
His life was a harmony of Jewish song!
My Bubby was lively! My Bubby was gay!
She had too many tasks to do in one day!
The years of their life still lay ahead.
Will they shine with success as on life's path they tread?

Deep in the darkness of Germany
Where the Nazis destroyed all that was ours
And flames reduced Jewish homes to ashes
My Zaidy's family all breathed their last breath
Every one was led to his death
He alone lived to see Germany die.
He now had a goal, a dream to live by
He and his wife would continue to build
In spite of Hitler, who thought he had killed
They would plant a tall tree whose branches
would spread.
Who could count the generations that lay ahead?

High in the hills of Yerushalayim
Where a summer spent is a golden gift
And just walking the streets is a joy
My Zaidy and Bubby were taken by surprise
You should have seen the delight in their eyes
As my husband and I walked through their door.
Is this not what they have lived for?

Sitting in the sun of Yerushalayim
I stared at my Zaidy and wondered
I looked at my Bubby and shook my head
Could it be that the talk back home was true,
"You'll have to teach them your names anew
Their minds have dulled, their comprehension is weak
They won't understand the words you will speak."
I smiled at my Bubby and she smiled at me.
Was this all I had come to see?

Sitting in the sun of Yerushalayim
My Zaidy suddenly glanced at his watch
Then he rose to his full height
He said to us, his face aglow with bliss,
"In New Jersey, right now, is Yitzchok's son's Bris.
I was one lone *neshoma* many years past
When I planted a tree and made it fast
We are now one hundred and fourteen souls."
"And Zaidy," I said, "the tree still grows."
I left that day with an opened eye.
Hadn't Zaidy taught that the Jewish nation does not die?



Mrs. Brailofsky lives in Brooklyn, N.Y. This is her first appearance in these pages.

COMMUNICATING WITH RUSSIAN JEWS—IN RUSSIAN

Penetrating Private Iron Curtains



Russian Jews in Russia, Russian Jews in transit, Russian Jews in Israel, Russian Jews in America—waiting to be reached.

After generations of being separated from their Jewish brethren in Western countries, Jews in the Soviet Union are no longer separated by an insurmountable barrier. The Iron Curtain—which once succeeded in shutting out all but the most clandestinely-run religious influences from these Jews—might now be called the Iron Sieve, for all the holes that have penetrated it. A previous article reported on how Torah study is reaching Jews in Russia (JO, March '89), while the article that follows this one describes how Jewish music sung by Jewish children has found its way into the Soviet Union.

There are no Nielson ratings on the Voice of America, but word of mouth brings reports that Jew are out there listening.

But as much as the political climate is changing, most Soviet Jews continue to have private iron curtains, if you will, encasing their minds. True, it calls for a vast amount of courage to simply declare oneself Jewish in a society where it is less that appreciated, and can close many doors. Moreover, these Jews have been exposed to a relentless barrage of atheistic propaganda, which for three generations has not only made keeping Jewish laws just about impossible, but has heaped scorn and ridicule on religion, in general, and on any religious practices, in particular.

Not surprisingly, most of those Jews who have managed to leave the Soviet Union for Western countries still maintain their private iron curtains that ward off religious influences. In America, for example, Soviet Jews are totally unprepared for the life of almost unlimited choices and little structure that awaits them, and they tend to seek guidance wherever they can find it. In the New York area, one of the most popular resources is the Russian language daily newspaper, *Nova Ruska Slova* (New Russian Word), which is published by a Christian missionary group. Little Jewish consciousness can emerge from its pages!

TALKING IN A TORAH VOICE

Ways must be found to reach Russian Jews, wherever they are found, with words of *emuna* (belief), *bitachon* (faith), and an invitation to study Torah and perform *mitzvos*. For close to twenty years now, valiant attempts are being made in Western lands—with the RIRF programs in *Eretz Yisroel*, various types of outreach in the refugee transit centers in Italy as well as in American communities, and through formal education, such as special accommodations in conventional yeshivos as well as in such schools as the Be'er Hagola Institutes and Sinai (High School) Academy in Brooklyn.

These attempts at penetrating these private iron curtains have been successful in reaching only limited numbers. The key to winning the trust of the Russian Jew is by addressing his needs as he recognizes them to be, and to go on from there. Not too many existing programs do so. Perhaps one of the most remarkably successful attempts at talking to Russian Jews in Russian—both in the USSR and elsewhere—has been the Torah messages that are being broadcast regularly on Voice of America by Rabbi Aryeh Katzin, founder and dean of Sinai Academy.

Rabbi Katzin—a former member of the Torah underground in Mos-

cow, more recently a member of the Kollel of Yeshiva Atteret Yisroel in Jerusalem—has been preparing the 10-15 minute Torah thought for the daily 45 minute Jewish-content segment of VOA for over two years. (Every week, a new program is prepared, to be broadcast daily, Monday through Friday.) His pilot tape was so impressive that the US State Department accorded the usual year-long security check necessary for overseas broadcasters to less than a week, so Katzin would not miss a single broadcast.

IS ANYONE OUT THERE LISTENING?

An estimated 20 million Soviet citizens tune in to the Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts, and undoubtedly a high proportion of Jewish listeners are involved when the Jewish Life segment is being aired. There are no Nielson ratings on the VOA, but word of mouth brings reports that there are Jews out there listening.

For instance the Nechamkes—a computer specialist, his wife and fourteen-year-old son—who finally received their exit visas and left Moscow for New York. After spending Pesach with fellow former-Muscovite *baalei teshuva* in Monsey, they brought their son, Moshe, to Brooklyn to enroll him in Sinai Academy.

In his interview with the parents, Rabbi Katzin, stressed—as usual—that they should not choose yeshiva over public school because of the yeshiva's science program or its drug-free environment. "Your choice must involve a commitment," he cautioned, "so why don't you think it over for a day or two, and then come back?"

"We've already thought it over for almost two years," replied Nechamkes. "When we heard your broadcast on Voice of America in September '87, we decided on Sinai."

Or Zvi Lubanski, who presented himself at Sinai, with yarmulka on his head, and *tzitzis* dangling over his belt: "I heard your words of Torah when I was in Minsk. I also want to be a scholar of Talmud."

The Russian-language Torah content of the VOA broadcasts would seem to be an ideal ice-breaker for Soviet Jews in America, and indeed the messages have been made available on an on-going basis by telephone through the facilities of Dial-a-Daf and Dial-a-Shiur, making the short capsules of Jewish thought and inspiration beamed to Russia available to Russian Jews in the New York area, as well. Thus Jews in Kiev and Leningrad along with their brethren in Brighton Beach listened as one on the eve of Shavous as the Voice expounded on the story of Ruth:

How age-old tensions between kindness and selfishness, exemplified by Avrohom and Sodom, were played out again, with a reversal of roles. This time, the seed of Avrohom—Elimelech—abandoned his people during a time of famine, while a young woman with roots in Sodom—Ruth of Moab—left the comfort of her home to accompany the widow Naomi to Judea . . . to become the mother of royalty, the forebear of Moshiach. From darkness comes light, from a land of oppression comes a ray of hope, and from beneath the shadow of atheistic domination, spiritual greatness can emerge.

It seems that this time, the voice of Torah actually succeeds in penetrating the small iron curtains that have persisted in shutting out its message for the better part of three generations. ■

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COMMUNICATING WITH RUSSIAN JEWS—WITH MUSIC

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"I AM HERE TO MEET MY ROOTS"

Inside the 2,500-seat Russiya Concert Hall in Moscow, patient ticket holders murmured to one another, glancing at their watches. In front of the brightly lit cultural center, a crowd of disappointed Soviet Jews lingered; they had hoped for last-minute tickets. Across the road, the brick walls and famous spires of Red Square glowed softly in lamplight.

A few minutes after 10 p.m. on *Motzaei Shabbos*/April 1/25 Adar II, thirteen members of the London School of Jewish Song quickly took their places at the row of microphones on stage and the show was on. "Yerushalayim, harim saviv la, v'Hashem saviv l'amo," they sang.

Next came "Mizmor L'David," then "Ashira L'Hashem." The crowd applauded each number enthusiastically. "Ladies and gentlemen, it is wonderful to be with you in Moscow

Saralie Faivelson, Health editor at *McCall's* magazine, accompanied the London School of Jewish Song to Moscow and Kiev. She has visited Russia twice before, under the auspices of Agudath Israel's Va'ad L'Hatzolas Nidchei Yisroel.



Russian children dancing on stage.

tonight," exclaimed Yigal Calek, the 44-year old director of the London School of Jewish Song. The crowd roared back. Then came "Anim Zemiros" and other favorites.

As the evening wore on, joy reverberated in the huge concert hall. Soviet Jews stood, cheered, crowded the aisles. They sent their children up on stage to present flowers to the choir members. The children stayed and danced.

"Until now, I had no contact with my religion," said Alec Borodofsky, 39, a molecular biologist, as the concert hall cleared for intermission. "My parents were afraid. But I want to be a real Jew. My people has a great history and tradition. I want to belong to it, not just because I have it stamped on my passport." He motioned to his eight-year-old son, Marc. "I want to give my children a taste of their traditions."

Many of the Soviet Jews in the audience heard Hebrew for the first time that night. Fifteen-year-old Michael Schifman was one of them. "I am here to meet my roots," he said.

The concert ended on an exhilarating, joyous note. The choir repeated what was to become their theme song, "*Shir L'Hashem*," translated into Russian. "*Shir, shir,*



Illustrating how Shabbos is observed—on Moscow's most prestigious stage.

Yemu ya pahyu, pahkah ya zhivu (To Him I sing, as long as I live)." Calek taught it to the audience, they loved it. As 2,500 Soviet Jews stood singing and clapping, Calek led the choir dancing through the cheering audience.

That scene repeated itself five more times, during the remaining



Many of the Soviet Jews in the audience, tears sliding down their cheeks, heard Hebrew for the first time that night.

three concerts in Moscow and the two in Kiev. Mostly assimilated Soviet Jews crowded concert halls to hear, often for the first time, of *Shabbos*, the prophets and *Hashem's* love for His people.

"EXACTLY WHAT I HAD IN MIND"

That is exactly what Agudath Israel's Va'ad L'Hatzolas Nidchei Yisroel member Mendy Goldberg had in mind when he first thought of bringing Jewish music to the Soviet Union two years ago. "I saw music as a way to reach out to assimilated Soviet Jews, those who wouldn't know what to do with a *Gemora shiur*," says the soft-spoken travel agent. The Va'ad is well-known for its 180 (thus far) *shilichim* (emissaries) who have given *shiurim* in Russia for the last eight years. "I wanted to get these people interested in *Yiddishkeit* and stimulate them to search further. I also wanted to give them a sense of pride in being Jewish. Anti-semitism is strong in Russia, and I felt concerts like these would lift the people's spirits."

Goldberg had to wait two years to realize his dream. At a November '88 meeting, Va'ad chairman Mordechai Neustadt appointed Goldberg and Monsey accountant Moshe Levitin to approach the Soviet Ministry of Culture for permission to arrange the concerts. Glasnost had arrived and permission was granted. Months of feverish preparations began.

In Moscow, when news of the concerts was spread by newspapers, posters and radio announcements, the four scheduled concerts sold out immediately. Two more were added. The Americans, including Goldberg, Levitin, Gilat Schneider (a Va'ad

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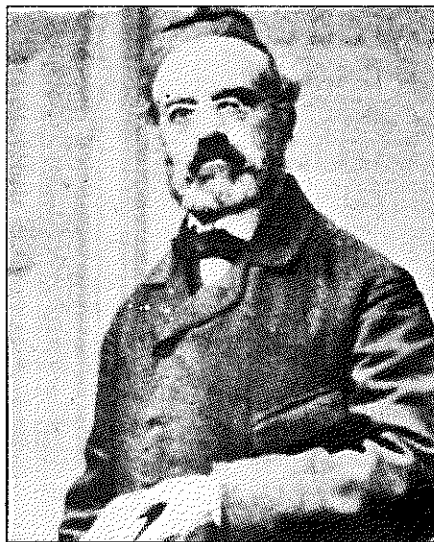
Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Torah Im Derech Eretz As A Way of Life

AN EDITORIAL COMMENT

The *Jewish Observer* has received an unusually large number of letters in response to the article "Torah Im Derech Eretz," by Leo Levi (Dec, '88). Most of them disagreed with the author, and the J.O. was even reproached for printing the article. It was obvious from the responses that there has been a great deal of misunderstanding as to what the article meant to say; therefore, there is a need for clarification. We would like to explain first what the article really said, and then to deal with some of the specific points raised by our correspondents.

Many readers viewed the article as an attack on, and a belittling of, *kollelim*. While some passages, when read out of context, may give that unfortunate impression, an attentive reading of what the article as a whole was saying would make it clear to the reader that these passages were not talking about *kollelim* in general, but about whether *all* Jews should, for their *entire* life, devote themselves to the fulltime learning of Torah, to the exclusion of all other activities.

The author started out from the very obvious fact that *Torah Im Derech Eretz*, as identified with Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, refers to an educational system which projects a combination of Torah (as the main subject of study) and general knowledge (as auxiliary



studies)—and this system was and is the subject of controversy. While many *Gedolim* acknowledged that it made a great contribution to saving Jewry in Germany, they considered it only a *horo'as sha'a*, not to be set up as an ideal.

The rejection of this Hirschian educational system *could* lead to the idea that we should reject all dealings with the world as far as at all possible. It is to the examination of *this* idea that the author devoted his article. He wanted to show that, unlike the *Torah Im Derech Eretz* educational system, involvement in the world is not controversial but is actually very basic to Judaism.

However, by calling this "involvement in the world" also by the name of *Torah Im Derech Eretz*, the author appears to have confused the readers and thus opened the door

to many of the misunderstandings, because these readers automatically identified this label with Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's educational system—whereas, in reality, the author's contention was that "involvement in the world" (*unlike* Rabbi S.R.Hirsch's educational system) was not a novel approach but a fundamental and universally accepted Torah teaching.

Whether this assertion is correct or not will be discussed later; but it should be stressed again that it in no way denied (a) the primacy of Torah study (and the concomitant duty of every Jew to keep up his Torah study throughout his life); (b) the importance for everybody to devote adequate time at the outset of his way through life to intensive Torah study (which, in our days, almost inevitably implies *kollel* study); and (c) the urgency of providing for those who devote their entire life to obtaining excellence in Torah studies and becoming the leaders and teachers of the *klal*.

It is in reference to those who do *not* belong to this last category that there may come a time to go out into the world and combine continued Torah learning with activities which contribute to *yishuvo shel olam*, the welfare of society, and which—if carried on according to the teachings of the Torah—are invested by the Torah with a positive value. The author pointed out that the Torah

does not set up asceticism or poverty or celibacy as values in themselves, and that, instead, man was given the tools to mold the world according to the will of G-d and thereby to help make this the kind of world that G-d wants. The physical universe was created to provide for man the opportunity to serve G-d and do *mitzvos*—and when it is used in this manner, it becomes itself sanctified.

In this connection, the author quoted several statements of *Chazal* in praise of deeds: "learning leads to action" . . . "to work and to guard it" (in the case of Adam) . . . the dialogue between Moshe Rabbeinu and the angels, etc. Respondents argued that in each case only *mitzva* deeds were meant; but this criticism missed the whole point that the author was making: we were created with physical, material, social and other needs, and if we deal with them *l'shem Shomaym* and in accordance with the Torah's directives, *all* our actions become acts of serving G-d. Man himself becomes purified and sanctified—and so does the world.

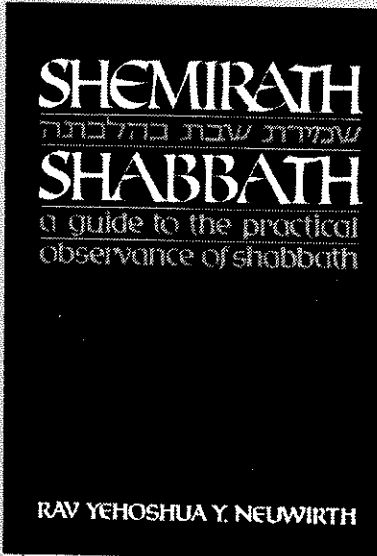
Whether the *yeitzer hora* is sublimated by such doing of *mitzvos* or only by Torah study is the subject of differences of opinion. It is, however, clear in any case that involvement in the world carries dangers, and the warnings about these dangers are, therefore, not surprising—but, in themselves, they do not contradict the basic obligation not to flee from any physical, material or communal involvement.

Approached in this way, the author's thesis is not contradicted by the various sources adduced by respondents that stress that newlyweds should learn exclusively for a period of time; by the warnings to those in work or business that there is danger in pursuing these enterprises too eagerly; nor by the emphasis of *Chazal* that Torah in its fullest form can only be found with those who maximally devote themselves to it—they did not say that everybody can and may stay forever in the *Beis Hamidrash*, irrespective of his intellectual, emotional, social and economic circumstances. Nor is



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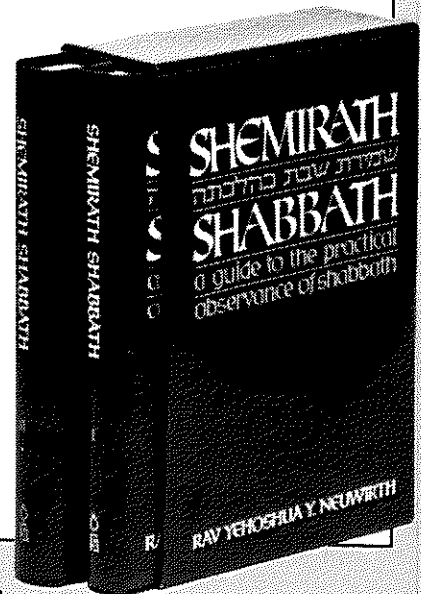
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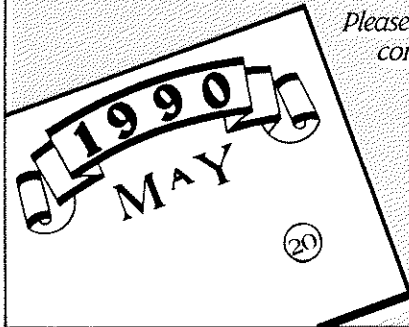
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the author's thesis disproven by the limitations on general studies stressed by *Chazal*—the article did not discuss at all Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's educational program, with its acceptance of general studies on a broader scale; the author merely tried to show that a general knowledge of various practical areas, and even of a number of sciences, is essential for living in this world and applying *halacha* in practice.

The author's remarks about a *horo'as sha'a*, in response to the contemporary situation, thus referred to the emphasis that *everybody* should stay forever "in learning" if he can only do so.

It is true that the author's position is not *universally* accepted. His view, that involvement in the world on the basis of Torah is the ideal, is founded on the teaching of Rabbi Yishmael (see in this connection *Malbim*, beginning of *Chukas*), and on the interpretation of *limud Torah lishma* as "learning for the purpose of application in action"—"action" meaning living according to Torah (this interpretation, stressed by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, can actually be found in earlier sources, such as the *Reishis Chochma*). However, Rabbi Chayim Volozhiner held differently—that *limud lishma* means "learning for the purpose of knowing" (the interpretation of the *Rosh*), and that Rabbi Yishmael's approval of worldly activities is only for cases of absolute necessity; to be minimized as far as possible. Worldly activities, according to this opinion, are not a *mitzva* but a *bede'eved* to be strictly minimized. This is a controversy which, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky held, runs through the whole of Jewish history. In actual practice, all times and places have seen the emergence of Jewish communities which under the guidance of the "Tribe of Levi"—the *Rabbonim*, *Roshei Yeshiva* and *Talmidei Chachamim*—developed a flourishing and all-encompassing Torah society, based on the activities of its *baalei battim*. ■

*The Editorial Board
of The Jewish Observer*



BOOKS



BOOKS ON MARRIAGE

THE RIVER, THE KETTLE AND THE BIRD, a Torah Guide to Successful Marriage, by *Aharon Feldman* (Feldheim Pub, 1987, \$12.95)

AIZER K'NEGDO, The Jewish Woman's Guide to Happiness in Marriage, by *Sara Chava Radcliffe* (Targum/Feldheim, 1988, \$14.95)

BAYIS NEEMAN B'YISRAEL, Practical Steps to Success in Marriage, by *Dr. Meir Wikler* (Feldheim, 1988, \$12.95 h.c. \$9.95 s.c.)

FULFILLMENT IN MARRIAGE, By *Rabbi Shmuel D. Eisenblatt*, Translated by *N. L. Nahmoud*, Vol I for men, Vol. II for women (distributed by Feldheim, 1988, \$31.90)

THE SECRET OF JEWISH FEMININITY, Insights Into the Practice of *Taharas Hamishpachah*, by *Tehilla Abramov*, rendered into English by *Malka Touger* (Targum/Feldheim, 1988, \$12.95)

Books are written and published when they meet a perceived need. Thus the appearance of a number of books on happiness in marriage is yet another indicator that even in Torah observant circles marital problems are increasing—a fact illustrated by the growing incidence

of divorces in Orthodox families. A number of factors are at work.

Rabbi Dessler (*Michtav M'Eliyahu I*), discussing married happiness, describes it as a by-product of "giving," the result of the satisfaction found in helping one's partner; conversely, when marriage is seen in terms of "what do I get out

of it," happiness takes flight. Yet, in the contemporary world, self-gratification is a dominant goal, and this has greatly affected the Torah community also. Moreover, whereas in older days the stress in a less-than-perfect marriage would be placed on improving it, or at least tolerating it, today there is a much greater acceptance of divorce.

There are, of course, some marriages that should be dissolved—but *Rabbotim* and professionals are agreed that in many more cases the problems and conflicts could be solved. This is the common denominator of these books: each in its own way draws on Torah sources to point out what a Torah marriage should be like, and what methods and strategies are available to create such a marriage.

Dr. Wikler's book is clearly designed for premarital as well as marital guidance. In a practical and down-to-earth manner, he takes the reader along the whole road from preparation for marriage and what to expect of it through dating, courtship and engagement anxiety, to the adjustments demanded of a young couple, and where and when to get help if this should prove necessary.

The author wisely seeks to involve parents and educators in the task of preparing young people for marriage, and they all will find this slim volume very helpful.

Rabbi Feldman's book grew out of a class for newly married men, and eschews the common platitudes about what a Jewish home and family should be like, in favor of a deeper and inspiring analysis of how such homes are created. The first requirement is to learn how to get along with one's spouse, and this entails a constant effort to improve one's character. But Rabbi Feldman does not pontificate nor does he plod. He speaks the reader's language and states his points—and advice—clearly and succinctly as well as beautifully. Thus, his chapter on "fantasy and reality in married life," which focuses on the fact that nobody is perfect, leads to concrete suggestions how to relate to, and

deal with, the problems that result from this fact, the futility of anger and the growth of true love.

While Rabbi Feldman's work is addressed primarily to men, Mrs. Radcliffe speaks to women—what kind of help are they supposed to provide for their husband, and what, in turn, are the husband's obligations? Obviously, marriage is a two-way street, and must be a cooperative endeavor. The author stresses the importance of mutual respect, of the development of trust, of affection and ultimately of a deeper and truly intimate relationship. The means to these goals is good communication—and that is where so many marriages fail. Hence Mrs. Radcliffe outlines practical, simple and easily learnable techniques and strategies for enhancing a marriage and dealing with obstacles that may arise. She presents dialogues indicating right and wrong ways for a

wife to proceed (however, she stresses that the same rules apply to men, who can equally benefit from her insights and methods). This book is truly brilliant in the down-to-earth way in which it tackles its subject.

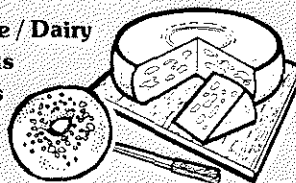
Rabbi Eisenblatt, too, provides detailed advice and, where needed, actual sample dialogues to illustrate his points. However, they are set in the framework of a more elaborate treatment of the nature and purpose of marriage, to which the first part of both the volume for men and that for women is devoted. In the second part, he discusses problems due to the different natures of men and women and deals with effective communication. Of particular interest are the exercises appended to each volume; they are designed to help the reader absorb and apply the ideas presented in the book and to aid him and her to become better marriage partners. Mrs. Nahmoud's translation does full justice to a work that must have been difficult to translate but which deserves many readers in this country.

The Secret of Jewish Femininity at first glance does not seem to belong to this group of books as it is devoted to the laws of family purity. Yet this is not a dry halachic text; the laws are treated in the framework of a full discussion of what these divinely ordained laws do for a marriage—how they help the marriage partners to develop a relationship upon which family and home can be built. The author, during a lengthy stay in South Africa, discovered that even many Jews not committed to Torah could appreciate what *Taharas Hamishpacha* could give them, and in due course come to accept Torah. Out of her experiences came the creation of a Jewish Marriage Education organization in *Eretz Yisroel*, whose trained counsellors reach out to all segments of the community. Mrs. Abramov's book is based on her Hebrew training manual; enlivened by many case histories, it makes its own magnificent contribution to the strengthening of Jewish marriage through Torah.

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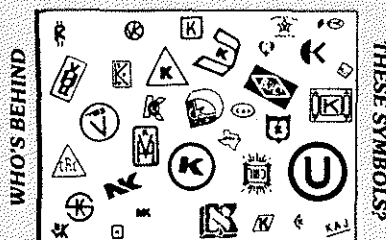


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PERSONAL GROWTH

THE ETHICAL PERSONALITY, by *Rabbi Zechariah Fendel* (Hashkafa Publications, N.Y. 1986, \$13.95)

GROWTH THROUGH TORAH, by *Rabbi Zelig Plitskin* (Aish Hatorah Publications, Jerusalem, 1988, h.c. \$15.95, s.c. \$11.95)

LIFELINES, by *Avi Shulman* (distributed by Feldheim, 1988, h.c. \$12.95, s.c. \$8.95)

PATHWAYS TO PEACE OF MIND, by *Rabbi Eliyahu Porat Teherani* (Bnei Brak, 1988, \$12.95)

APPRECIATING PEOPLE (Including Yourself), by *Miriam Adahan* (Feldheim, 1988, \$14.95)

LIVING EACH DAY, by *Rabbi Avraham J. Twerski M.D.* (Mesorah Publications, 1988, h.c. \$13.95, s.c. \$10.95)

The Torah's injunction, "Love Your Neighbor like Yourself," conveys to us a most significant message: establishing the proper positive relationship to others (whether neighbors, friends or family) depends upon our first of all coming to an understanding of (and with) our own selves. We have to accept ourselves, appreciate ourselves as "*Tzelleim Elokim*," and proceed from there to grow and improve ourselves—only as part of that process can we develop the right relationships with those around us. All the books listed here are, in different ways, dedicated to this objective of self-perfection.

Lifelines presents techniques for nurturing personal growth, based on the proposition that a human being, like a tree, can be made to grow into magnificence—or into a stunted dwarf. People tend to think that this depends on circumstances beyond their control; in reality, however, a person's future is dependent on his attitude to these circumstances. They can be seen as spurs for advancement—or as excuses for failure. How can we change defeatist attitudes? Step by practical step, the author analyzes famil-

iar situations and shows how to react to them; marginal summaries and key points at the end of each chapter concretely drive home the lesson to be learnt and the pitfalls to be avoided. In conclusion, the last chapter provides thought-provoking quotations from our Sages on the topics discerned. Here is truly a master teacher who shows us how to change our life, encourages us and inspires us to persevere.

Rabbi Plitskin seeks to help us grow through a different approach.

For every *Parsha* of the year, he has culled from the *Chumash* practical messages that help us gain new insights and grow in all the different aspects of our life. Each of the messages is based on a thought of (or a story about) one of our Sages, from the earliest times to our days. An excellent index enables the reader to find where any particular topics of concern to him is discussed—from how to react to negative criticism to how to use negative tendencies positively. Concisely and clearly presented, each entry is a pearl, of special value in adorning the weekly *Shabbos* table.

Living Each Day carries this approach into each day. It is a guide book—an almanac in the original Arab sense of the word—which provides a page for each day of the year—half of it taken up by a brief discussion of a passage from the *Siddur*, and the other half dedicated to either a passage from *Tanach* or a statement of our Sages. Needless to say, the author has drawn on his wide experience in psychological and psychiatric practice to focus on topics of particular value and concern to a person seeking to cope with the vagaries of life and to grow in one's personal stature.

Rabbi Teherani's work is translated and adapted from the original work **Alufeinu Mesubolim**, to serve as a guide to overcoming anger and acquiring self-control. The vast

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destructive power of anger and rage explains the statement of our Sages that he who gets enraged is like one who serves idols. But why do we get angry? How can we learn to restrain our anger? These are the questions tackled in this book. The author discusses the importance of seeing the good in others while learning to accept their criticism, and the role of faith in coping with circumstances that could upset us. Each chapter is illustrated by stories from the lives of our Sages, and its salient points are summarized at the end. Beautifully written, this is a moving and inspiring book.

The self-perfection that is the key to meeting all aspects of our life with equanimity is the theme of **The Ethical Personality**. Torah ethics teaches us to improve our character traits and to refine our ethical sensitivities. Truth, humility, contentment, and gratitude are qualities that are critical to self-improvement, and are discussed in full, with each chapter followed by a collection of ethical-Mussar narratives, stories

of our *gedolim*. A plethora of relevant quotations from classical Torah literature is offered in every chapter, and copious footnotes provide further sources. The last two chapters contain the Hebrew text and translation of Rabbi Israel Salanter's Mussar Epistle and of the letter of the *Ramban*, both famous statements of Torah ethics. This is a scholarly work which, at the same time, offers valuable insights and guidance to every reader.

Yet another approach is followed by Mrs. Adahan. We all know the statement of our Sages that people are as different from each other in their thinking as in their appearance. Developing proper relationships with, and appreciation of others requires that we seek to understand their individual personalities. Drawing on the work of Keirse and Bates, the author outlines a number of basic character types and describes their main traits, in the hope that this will help us to understand ourselves as well as others, and to learn to deal with

our traits in a realistic and effective way. This book will be of value to anybody interested in understanding others; but it will be of particular value to those engaged in professional educational and counselling work.

FURTHER VOLUMES IN EXISTING SERIES

We have had the opportunity in the past to welcome the initial volumes of major literary enterprises and to express our hope that they will be brought to a successful conclusion. With great satisfaction, this reviewer notes the appearance of a number of volumes that continue previously begun works.

Feldheim Publishers have released the fifth and final volume of a critical edition of the **Sefer Hachinuch** prepared, translated, and annotated by *Charles Wengrov* (1989, \$18.95). While adhering to the high standards set by the earlier volumes, the author also treats us to an elaborate preface re-examining the question of the authorship of this classic and bolstering his contention that Rabbi Pinchas of Barcelona composed it.

Mesorah Publications makes the publication of yet another volume in the Artscroll Mishnah Series, **Menachos**, translated and with commentary by *Rabbi Matis Roberts*, edited by *Rabbi Naftoli Kempler* and *Rabbi Yechezkel Danziger* (1989, \$19.95 h.c., \$15.95 s.c.). This volume, with which this series passes the half-way mark, follows the same pattern as its predecessors; thus it, too, features an introduction to the *Mesechta* clarifying the basic rules of *menachos*; appendices are devoted to *techeles* and *chodosh*.

Vayikra I, a new translation and commentary, by *Rabbi Nosson Scherman* and *Rabbi Hersh Goldwurm* (Mesorah Publ., 1989, \$19.95 h.c., \$15.95 s.c.) follows the publication of Artscroll *Bereishis*, but with a major difference. While *Bereishis* was a monumental six-volume undertaking (now reprinted in two large volumes) with an extraordi-

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nary wealth of material, the publishers rightly perceived the need for a less comprehensive, handy edition of the *Chumash* with a commentary drawn from the same classic Torah sources. The present volume, which covers the first half of *Vayikra*, was designed with this in mind. A lucid and very readable translation is accompanied by a commentary that is compact but clearly explains the complex subject matter of these *Sidros* and also offers many insights into the lessons that can be derived from it. The comprehensive overview by Rabbi Scherman deals with the meaning of the sanctuary, sacrifices, and a masterful appendix by *Rabbis Y. Danziger and H. Goldwurm* presents a summary of the laws of *korbanos*, complete with a set of charts and a table of biblical measurements. A truly remarkable amount of information and ideas has been included in this most valuable volume. At the same time this reviewer hopes he will not be considered ungrateful for looking forward to the day when Mesorah Publications will also produce an edition of *Vayikra* on the same scale as *Bereishis*.

A Story a Day originally appeared in Hebrew, and is now offered to us in English by Mesorah Publications Youth Series. We previously reviewed the two first volumes; now volumes III and IV (1988, \$12.95 h.c., \$9.95 s.c.) provide daily stories for our youngsters for the month and from *Shvat* through *Iyar*—drawn from old and new sources, with illustrative drawings and photographs. They are sure to both fascinate and inspire the readers.

Moznaim Publishers are pushing ahead with the publication in English of the entire *Me'am Lo'ez* series. The latest volume to appear is **Shir Hashirim** (1988, \$16.95). The Hebrew commentary was written by Rabbi Shmuel Yerushalmi, following the pattern of the original *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez*, which was composed in Ladino many generations ago and covered only Torah and part of *Nach. Dr. Zvi Faier* prepared the English translation and adaptation and succeeded in presenting the reader with a work that

will familiarize him with how our Rabbis and sages understood this sacred work, and with the profound ideas to be derived from it.


Another Moznaim project previously noted is the publication of the Rambam's Mishnah Torah in English. A recent volume contains **Hilchos Melachim**, translated and annotated by *Rabbi Eliyahu Touger* (1987, \$16.00). The commentary provides a succinct explanation of the *Rambam's* words, drawing attention, whenever necessary, to different opinions and textual versions. It is not easy to present complex halachic material in Eng-

lish, and the author has done well (though the translation of *mamzer* as "illegitimate child," p.12, could confuse readers). The index shows the wide range of topics covered.

RE-ISSUED WORKS

Lev Eliyahu, a collection of *Mussar* talks by *Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian*, translated by *Rabbi B.D. Klein*, with an introduction, *Recollections of the Author*.

The Sanctity of the Synagogue, the case of a *Mechitza*, revised and expanded third edition, by *Jeanne Litwin*. ■



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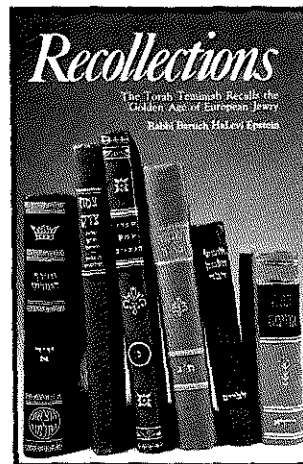
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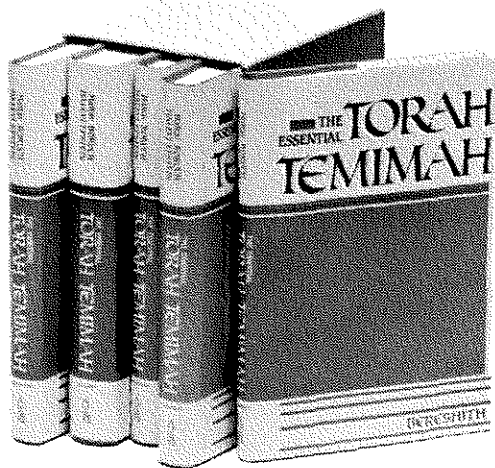
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Second Looks At The JEWISH • SCENE

A clinical psychologist puts his chevra on the couch, analyzing why his shul is so lacking in the dignity and tranquility essential for serious tefilla.

ODYSSEY OF A FAILED EXPERIMENT

Much has been written regarding the problem of talking in *shul*. Most of these articles decry the phenomenon, and appeal to us to take heed of the warnings of Chazal regarding talking during *davening*. Taking these ideas to heart, some people attempt to restore order in their *shuls*, in line with every Jew's obligation to be *mochi'ach* (admonish) one's fellow. (See *Orach Chaim Hilchos Tefilla*, 124,7.) Objective observations makes it difficult to escape the sad conclusion that these admonitions have had little impact on people's behavior.

This article seeks to gain an understanding of the strong resistance to change exhibited in this regard, to help us perfect our approach to *tochacha*, that it might be more effective.

"I FIRST BECAME COGNIZANT . . ."

I first became acutely cognizant of this problem when it was brought up at a meeting by a fellow board member of our *shul*. There was a clear consensus that the "shmoozing" situation had be-

come intolerable. Many visitors to our *shul* expressed both shock and dismay regarding this situation to their hosts. After much discussion, the board came up with the standard "solutions" (e.g. the *Rav* should address the problem in his *drasha*, signs should be posted, a special *gabbai* should be appointed, etc.).

As a scientist trained in objective observation, I was unable to share in the optimism that these measures would bring results. I remind-

ed my colleagues how previous attempts along these lines, both in our *shul* and elsewhere, have had no lasting effects.

After dampening everyone's enthusiasm, I was challenged to "come up with a better idea." Throwing caution to the wind, I pointed out that, based on my observations, if we, the five members of the board, would refrain from talking or even being involved in a conversation, we would eliminate approximately 80% of the problem. I backed this up with a detailed description of the talking habits of our *shul* members i.e. who speaks to whom at which parts of *davening*, etc. (While my observational tasks at times interfered with my *davening*, they also inhibited my own talking and so may have partially effected the validity of this "study".)

The reaction among the board members was quite varied. Some resented turning the spotlight from changing the behavior of *others* onto becoming aware of our own behavior. Others continued seeking the reassurance of the old methods, even if they did not work, while others yet felt that the whole issue was getting too complex and we should just drop it.

The reaction of some *shul* members was particularly interesting. They expressed amazement

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The author of the above study requested anonymity to spare the members of his *chevra*.

that the issue was even brought up. They didn't think there was much talking going on in *shul*. This viewpoint was not only contrary to the observations of the overwhelming majority of the members, but these members were often themselves deeply involved in the shmoozing.

In addition to turning the spotlight onto our own behavior, I suggested that we try to understand *why* we resist the exhortations of our *gedolim* to refrain from shmoozing and what psychological defenses we employ to avoid taking their words to heart.

"PEOPLE TALK BECAUSE . . ."

From the onset it was clear that a potential shmoozer must have the motivation to speak and overcome internal inhibitions and external impediments.

Among the contributory factors we identified were:

1. People talk because they don't *daven*. It seems that *davening* has become a dying art. Sitting in a room for over two hours with nothing to do can get quite boring.
2. Insufficient introspection into one's own behavior and inadequate sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others. The same people who *shmooze* while someone is speaking at a dinner will not be sensitive to the *chazan's* feelings, or to the fact

that they are disturbing their neighbors.

3. The individual (neurotic) "socialization" needs of some people are so powerful, that they cannot mobilize sufficient internal inhibiting forces to stop themselves from shmoozing.

4. The *external* forces that were once sufficient to restrain compulsive shmoozers, no longer exist. It is no longer considered polite to ask someone to stop talking during *davening*.

5. The severe warnings contained in the usual posters are too threatening for most people to assimilate. Instead they either ignore them or laugh them off.

As a result of the above considerations the board agreed upon the following measures:

1. The board members themselves would make a special effort to *daven* out loud so that there would at least be an "atmosphere" of *davening* in *shul*. (Many of those coming to *shul* on *Shabbos* morning did not even *consider* starting to *daven* before the *chazan* reached "Nishmas.")
2. During *Kriyas HaTorah* (when it had become almost impossible to hear the *baal koreh*), the *gabbai* would *consistently* stop the *laining* as soon as someone started to talk and would not let the *laining* proceed until that person stopped.
3. Our efforts to enforce a "no talking" policy would emphasize *menschlichkeit* rather than *frumkeit*. Those who want to *daven* would insist on their right to do so without disruption (similar to recent attempts in some cities to "reclaim the streets from the criminals").

"AFTER IMPRESSIVE INITIAL IMPROVEMENTS . . ."

Our efforts along these lines resulted in impressive initial improvements. Unfortunately, over the past few months the situation has slowly reverted to its previous sorry state. This has given me the opportunity for more intense

study of the resistance we were inducing.

The *compulsive speakers* became desperate when their usual shmoozing partners indicated that they would rather *daven*. They searched desperately for a "fix," at times ending up in the other side of the *Beis Midrash* before they found someone to speak to. Sometimes they were even stuck *shmoozing* with each other. . . . The ones who used *denial* as a defense insisted, and most often believed, that they do not speak or even respond to the talkers. . . . The "polite" talkers pointed out that it shows a lack of *midos* not to respond to someone's questions or comments. . . . Others took this idea a step further, and accused us (in all seriousness) of undermining the social fabric of our community by interfering with socialization during *davening*. As the *shul* members' resistance intensified, they became resentful of the *gabboim's* efforts to reduce *shmoozing*. The *gabboim*, in turn, felt uncomfortable enforcing a non-popular edict, and so scaled back their efforts.

In retrospect, it should have been clear that directly challenging people's needs and defenses would only serve to create a counter-force (like pressing on a spring, to use Rav Dessler's analogy). It would seem that only an *indirect* approach, which enhances attitudes and feelings incompatible with talking during *davening*, would have a chance of affecting long term changes. These attitudes were once more common than they are today. For example, striving for spiritual growth was once common to both *gedolim* and "simple" people. It was not considered indicative of a lack of self-worth or a sign of excessive "frumkeit."

Likewise, upholding *community* standards irrespective of individual levels of piety was not perceived as a sign of hypocrisy. When attitudes such as these become commonplace, the compulsion to *shmooze* will recede and *davening* (or at least common courtesy) will be "in style" again. ■

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When There Is A Need for Distinctions

Four years ago, when Rabbi Louis Bernstein, president of the (Orthodox) Rabbinical Council of America, and Rabbi Alexander M. Shapiro, president of the (Conservative) Rabbinical Assembly, exchanged platforms at each others' conventions, *The Jewish Observer* published an article under the above title, beginning with the comments of Rabbi Meir Shapiro, famed *Rav* of Lublin, on his return from his first trip to America. "In America," he said, "our brethren know how to make 'Kiddush' but they don't know how to make 'Havdallah.' They are quick to lend things sanctity, but do not differentiate between sacred and profane."

Recent events have continued to demonstrate that there are still groups that emphasize positive concepts such as *achdus*/unity and *Ahavas Yisroel* without differentiating between "sacred and profane, light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, between the Seventh Day and the six days of Creation."* For instance, on June 13, when Rabbi Joel H. Zaiman was inducted as president of the Synagogue Council of America, the installation ceremony was graced by a "special address by Dr. Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University," according to the invitation. The participation of the Orthodox RCA and UOJCA in the Synagogue Council of America, together with

*from the *Havdallah* ceremony, separating the Sabbath from the rest of the week.

Conservative and Reform rabbinical and congregational groups, in spite of the 1956 *psak* of the leading *Roshei Yeshiva* against such membership, has always been a source of pain and contention with other Orthodox groups. Their rationale has been that they are only presenting a united front to the non-Jewish world (*k'lapei chutz*), and hope to contain the Council in regard to any excesses the others might otherwise commit; they do *not* mean to confer legitimacy on the other religious movements. But Rabbi Zaiman is a Conservative rabbi, ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary, heads Baltimore's Conservative Congregation Chizuk Emuna, and founded the local Solomon Schechter Day

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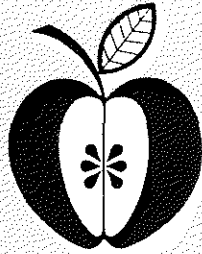
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School, which meets in his synagogue building. How is the general public to perceive Orthodox participation in Zaiman's installation as SCA president, regardless of what was said at the gathering, if not as a celebration of commonality, and an endorsement of the new office holder?—Is it not "Kiddush," where "Havdallah" is the order of the day?

And then, an "International Symposium on the Sabbath" co-sponsored by the Center for Judaic Studies and the General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists at Denver University, May 24-26, featured Rabbi Walter Wurzburger, well-known "Centrist Orthodox" leader (former editor of *Tradition*), in a symposium of "renowned scholars from Jewish, Protestant, Catholic and Seventh Day Adventists traditions for a discussion of the significance of the Sabbath."

Now, Rabbi Wurzburger may have chosen to ignore the Talmud's harsh view of "the Gentile that keeps Sabbath" (*Sanhedrin* 58b) for reasons of his own. But did he really gear himself to achieve a "great increase [in] our understanding of the Sabbath as a pan-religious phenomenon" as a result of this interdenominational symposium? (as per Dr. Stanley M. Wagner, director of Center for Jewish Studies, quoted in *Intermountain Jewish News*, May 19, '89.) Isn't "Havdallah" meant to separate "between Israel and the nations" in their understanding of "the Seventh Day and the six days of Creation"?

And finally, in a gesture that any self-respecting Jew—Orthodox or otherwise—would find totally unacceptable, a "Salute to Jerusalem" with the city's Mayor, Teddy Kollek, as featured speaker, in New York City's Cathedral of St. John the Divine, was scheduled for Saturday, May 27th, beginning (irony of ironies!) with a "Havdallah Service" led by Reform Rabbi Bruce Cole at 8:05 P.M. . . . 10 minutes before sunset. If Kollek chooses to ignore his Jewishness and celebrate Jerusalem's special nature in a cathedral, must he also drag our sacred rituals there along with him?

Havdallah, indeed! ■

PS.

A Third Look at the Fifth Question of Pesach

I enjoyed reading the reply by "Bas Yehuda" ("Answering the Fifth Question," April, '89) to my article of last year concerning Pesach cleaning (March, '88). I did indeed find "encouraging" her reminder that the *zechus* of the many hours of arduous work we spend in searching for *chometz* protects us all through the year. I do, however, feel that Bas Yehuda has misunderstood and misinterpreted my own article rather badly and would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight.

First and most important, there is nothing in my article that contradicts this message of encouragement which Bas Yehuda conveys. I think I made it clear that I was not in any way advocating *chas v'shalom* that we do not give as much attention and time as is necessary to eliminate all the *chometz* from our homes, that we should cut corners instead of cleaning them. Moreover, Bas Yehuda wholly misses the point of the anecdote in which I told of a friend forced to condense her Pesach cleaning into two frantic weeks. As is clear from the context of my article, I was in no way saying that *le'chatchila* we should plan to prepare for Pesach in such a short time. Such advice would be ludicrous and would contradict the point of my article, which was attempting to make women's lives

easier and not more frenetic. I told that story simply to illustrate as graphically as possible that a distinction can be made between Pesach cleaning and spring cleaning.

And one year later, I still stand by my contention that such a distinction can and often should be made. To be honest, when I first read the article by Bas Yehuda some three weeks before Pesach, I was quite impressed with the idea that the dust-and-dirt and let's rearrange the linen closet part of cleaning for Pesach could be uplifted as part of the *mitzva* of preparing for the *chag*. I still believe that it is a nice ideal, but now, a week after Pesach, I have once again seen the human toll which too much scrubbing for too many hours can take. No amount of inspiration can put more than twenty-four hours into a day, and no amount of idealism can put energy for a *seder* into a woman who has been staying up until three in the morning for weeks so that her house can shine from basement to attic. I certainly can appreciate that the *chag* may be enhanced if the house is gleaming, with windows washed and carpets shampooed and all the drawers arranged like well-ordered filing cabinets. But too many of the women to whom I spoke before Pesach—most of them mothers of small children who are not fortunate enough to have their extended family close by and without the financial resources to hire outside help—seemed to me to be

more drained than the rags they used to wash their walls and considerably more dishevelled than their own closets. Is Bas Yehuda fearful that *these* women might echo the complaints of the wicked son of the *Haggada*? I must say, I found that particular suggestion repugnant rather than in any way "encouraging."

Bas Yehuda does end by saying that she offers encouragement, while I offer sympathy to women who are overworked at Pesach time. Frankly, when I reread my article I found no trace of such sympathy or of the "self-pity" which she finds there. Rather, what I offered the readers—and what, judging by the positive reactions I received from many readers last year, they were happy to receive—were some practical guidelines, true-to-life advice about when they might need to cut out some of the extraneous work and how they could best go about doing so. I did not, as Bas Yehuda says, suggest that it is wrong for a woman to work up a "wholesome perspiration" cleaning an attic for Pesach; I did, however, say, and will say again, that if a woman is spending most of her precious free time in January and February doing cleaning that has nothing to do with removing *chometz*, instead of spending time with her children, it might very well be time for her to rearrange her priorities instead of her closets. ■

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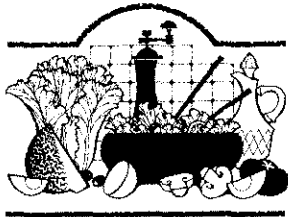
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Mrs. Zitter, who lives in Rochester, N.Y., also wrote, "The Out-of-Towners: A Personal Narrative", which appeared in JO, Oct. '85.

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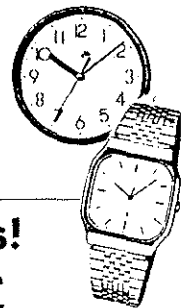
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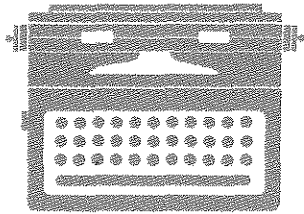
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Letters to the Editor

"DON'T USE WITHOUT CONSULTING A RAV"—ALWAYS!

To the Editor:

As a longtime student of technical *halacha*, I was gratified that Dr. Udell brought to the attention of the public some of the technical problems found in a modern hotel (JO, May '89). Regarding elevators, he quotes an engineer that different elevator systems function differently and thus suggests not to use an elevator on *Shabbos* "without knowing the internal engineering of the particular elevator and obtaining an *halachic* decision from a *Rav*." My studies of various technical *halachic* problems have taught me that this rule holds true for all technical *halachic* problems. Unfortunately, the author did not apply this rule in the other "Suggestions."

For instance, in the section about electronic door locks, he mentions how he followed his gentile roommate into the room. The implication here and in the "Suggestions" that follow is that the entire problem is the use of the electronic key to unlock the door from the hall to get into the room. However, in at least one particular lock that I examined, this is not the case. In this lock there was an electronic switch attached to the knob and the thumbturn of the deadbolt. Turning either one would send a signal to the computer built into the lock and the computer would react according to its program. For instance, if the lock's computer would sense that the deadbolt is being locked, it would not allow the key card to unlock the door. This particular type of lock is being used by the Hilton chain and I was surprised to hear of a convention of *frumme Yidden* that took

place in a hotel equipped with this type of lock.

The same problem of different systems functioning differently applies to the sections on automatic door openers and European monitors. Some systems use the electric eye sensors described by the author in the section on elevators. These have a light shining on a light cell. When someone walks through the light path and blocks the light ray, a signal is sent to open the door. The door is held open for a pre-set amount of time even after the person has passed the light path. Thus, the suggested "tricky assignment" to "wait until someone else enters and then quickly walk in just behind them" does not take into account the fact that the second person will again block the light path and send the signal to keep the door open. This problem of the second person tripping the sensor

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again, or keeping the sensor tripped, applies to other automatic door systems as well.

In another vein, I was surprised to see in the "Suggestions" some things which are not *halacha psuka* and which I would have left to the decision of *Rav* in each instance. Included in this category was the *hetter* of *eino miskaven* in the case of a *psik reisha* regarding walking in view of a video camera and talking in a room where a microphone and recording equipment is in operation. Another question I would ask a *Rav* is whether there is a problem of *shemo yarbeh* in the case of drinking coffee when most of the guests are gentiles. One

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more question I would ask is in the case of walking through a doorway with an automatic door that was opened by the person just in front of him, if that person was a Jew. Is this considered *neheneh mim-leches Shabbos*? Another concern is regarding registration. What if the

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person writing down the participants name is a Jew? I would ask a *Rav* if I could be the direct cause of this Jew's writing on *Shabbos*.

A few minor improvements: Meat and the like stored in the hotel's refrigerator should be double sealed, not just double wrapped. Rather than not conducting business with vendors on *Shabbos*, one should not even talk to them.

As a general point, may I suggest that the editorial board take up the issue if it would be wise to limit the discussion of *halachic* issues to alerting the public to the problems and advising them to seek *halachic* guidance from a *Rav* who is well versed in technical *halacha*.

Hoping that you will continue to remove stumbling blocks from the path of *Yidden*, I remain,

AVRAHOM CHAIM YOUNG
Brooklyn, N.Y.

DR. UDELL REPLIES:

In response to Avraham Chaim Young's well researched letter, the following comments are in order.

The purpose of my article was not to present a detailed *halachic* treatise. That mission is reserved for a different author, time and publication. The goal was to make the

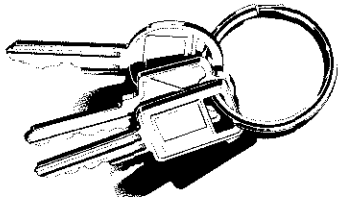
prospective tourist and convention attendee aware of the broad gamut of problems, precisely so that he or she can know what to look for, and then call his or her *Rav* well before *Erev Shabbos*.

A smile came to my face when Mr. Young cited a new type of electronic lock at a Hilton. With constantly changing technology in super-sophisticated hotel chains, it was not possible to cover every situation. The editor of *The Jewish Observer* will attest to the fact that a week before publication, I contacted him with additional information. My family can testify that seven days after the article went to press, I came across more *halachic* technology problems and threw my hands up in despair and exclaimed: "The article is already obsolete!"

As to solutions offered, once again the purpose was not to act as a *halachic* authority but to represent the opinions of several respected *Rabbeim* on each issue. And yes—there are differing opinions when it comes to specific applications of Jewish Law. This, however, will rapidly change upon the arrival of the *Moshiach, bimheirah beyameinu*. So, keep praying!

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ABBA COHEN NAMED TO AGUDATH ISRAEL D.C. POST



WASHINGTON, D.C. — Abba Cohen, a rabbinical *musmach* and an attorney with a background in both international relations and Jewish communal affairs, has been named the new director of the Agudath Israel of America Washington Office.

Cohen replaces Rabbi Nesanel Kasnett, who launched the Agudath Israel office as the first full-time Orthodox Jewish bureau in the nation's capital last year, and is returning to private pursuits.

A native of Washington, Cohen attended yeshivos in the local area, and pursued advanced Talmudic studies at Ner Israel Yeshiva in Baltimore. At Ner Israel, he received *semicha* from its revered late rosh hayeshiva, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman. A graduate of Johns Hopkins University, Cohen received his masters degree in International Political Economy at the prestigious Columbia University School of International Affairs in New York, and earned his law degree from the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C., where he was a member of the Georgetown Immigration Law Journal.

Cohen brings to his position

valuable experience as a former assistant director of the Department of Middle Eastern Affairs of the Anti-Defamation League, where he worked on behalf of endangered Jewish communities overseas and also served in the bureau for Latin American affairs. His legal experience includes a brief stint at the U.S. Court of International Trade in New York City, and two years experience with the Washington, D.C., law firm of Miller, Cassidy, Larroca & Lewin, where he worked closely with prominent constitutional attorney Nathan Lewin on several legal issues touching on the rights and interests of Orthodox Jews.

In announcing the new appointment, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, national president of Agudath Israel of America, commented as follows: "Agudath Israel's Washington Office, under the directorship of Nesanel Kasnett, has already in the span of one short year, shattered many of the stereotypes that so many persons in positions of prominence feel about Orthodox Jews. We all owe Rabbi Kasnett a debt of gratitude for his pioneering work in Washington, D.C.

"At the same time, we are fortunate indeed, as is the entire Jewish community, that an individual of the experience, talent, and caliber of Abba Cohen will now be representing us day-in and day-out in the seat of American governmental power. The structure we are creating is being built upon the foundation laid by Agudath Israel over the course of the last half century in its *shtadlonus* activities in Washington and is supported by the talents of Agudath Israel's staff at our national headquarters. With Abba Cohen at the helm of our Washington Office this structure promises to be a magnificent edifice of achievement and strength."

Ruchama Seidman Fund, Ph.D.

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MONUMENTS



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אריה שכתר
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Jewish history may be lying around in your basement. Don't let it be lost to the world.

The Orthodox Jewish Archives, which was struck by a damaging fire last year, has completed renovation of its physical facilities, and has embarked on a worldwide search to rebuild and expand its holdings.

The destruction of archival material in the blaze was, fortunately, not as extensive as originally thought. Through advanced restoration techniques, many items written off as hopelessly damaged were able to be saved. But the effort cannot stop with salvage and recovery. It is time for a greater undertaking.

**Thousands of documents and photos are languishing in trunks, attics
and forgotten drawers in private homes and basements.**

**Now is the time to retrieve this precious material—
before it becomes dust instead of history.**

Your help—the public's help—is needed in this effort. Do *you* have any relevant old photos, documents, or records?

THE CATEGORIES OF ITEMS REQUESTED:

- Documentation of Orthodox Jewish rescue work during the Holocaust.
- Photos depicting life in the shtetl, the Orthodox communities of the cities, the yeshiva world, and Chassidic centers of Europe before the Holocaust.
- Documents, records, letters, journals and newspapers that portray Torah life in Europe as it was, and cast light on the issues and problems facing Jews at the time.
- Documents, records, correspondence, newspaper clippings, journals, memorabilia, and photos depicting Orthodox life in the U.S. from colonial times to the present.
- Documents and photos pertaining to the development of yeshivos throughout the country.
- Documents and photos pertaining to Orthodox activism in the social service and civic action fields.
- Photos of Gedolei Yisroel past and present.
- Sets of Orthodox journals and periodicals.
- Documents and photos relating to the religious Yishuv in Eretz Yisroel, its institutions and struggles for Jewish life.
- Documents and photos pertaining to world-wide Agudath Israel history, all Knessios Gedolos, and the development of the American Agudah movement since 1922.

(If you are hesitant to part with cherished items, arrangements can be made to reproduce certain kinds of documents and photos, leaving the original in your possession.)

The previous Archives facility, gutted by a fire from within, was modeled according to accepted archival procedures. The new Orthodox Jewish Archives, now rebuilt, has been safeguarded with maximum state-of-the-art protection above and beyond standard archival design.

**AS A COMMUNITY, WE MUST PRESERVE THIS LEGACY THAT WILL
OTHERWISE BE LOST TO FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

If you have any items in the above categories in your possession, or know where they can be obtained, please write or phone:

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