

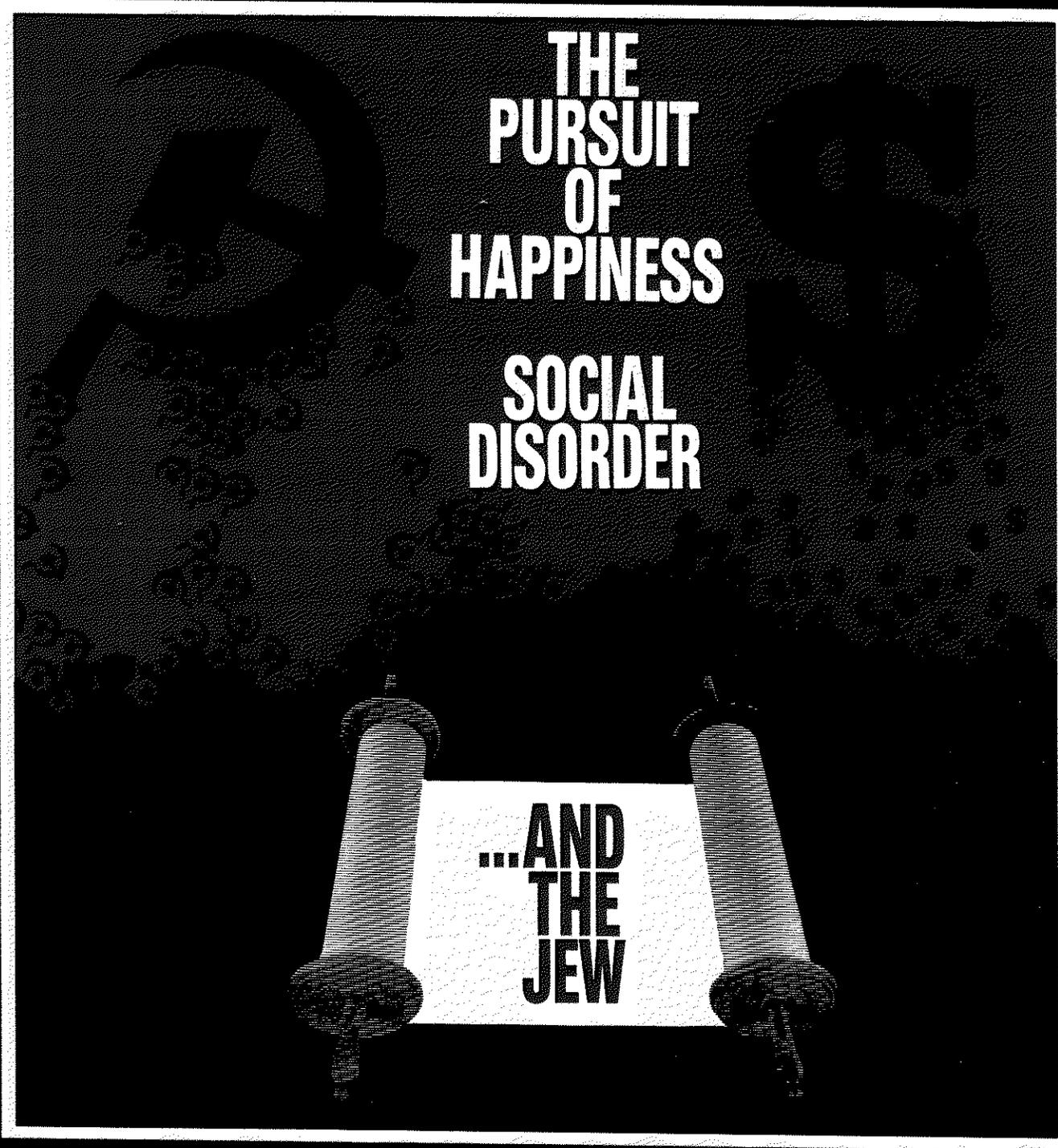
**THE JEWISH**

CHESHVAN 5750/NOVEMBER 1989

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VOLUME XXII/NUMBER 8

# **OBSERVER**



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PURSUIT  
OF  
HAPPINESS**

**SOCIAL  
DISORDER**

**...AND  
THE  
JEW**

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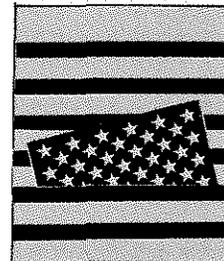
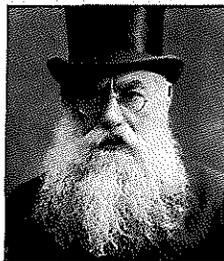
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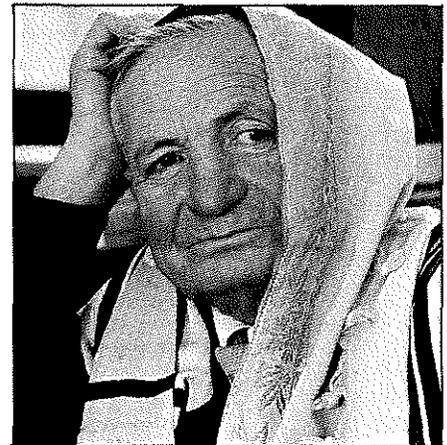
# THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS,



## SOCIAL DECAY



## ... AND THE JEW



### COSMIC CHANGES IN THE WORLD ORDER

Events of historic proportion seem to be taking place, and we should be taking note. Judging by the current trend of events, the long-standing effects of the Russian Revolution—surely one of the seminal events of the twentieth century—are on the verge of collapse. The all-embracing, all-knowing solution to world problems that Leninism represented can no longer be touted as the definitive answer to man's restless

Rabbi Aaron Brafman is Menahel of Yeshiva Derech Ayson, Far Rockaway, N.Y. His "The Yeltzer Hora Re-examined" was featured in JO, September, 1985.

striving—not in the USSR, and not in the satellite countries, from Poland and Estonia to North Vietnam. Just a few months ago, Communist China was on the brink of convulsive change, with millions of citizens threatening to reject the achievements of forty years of the People's Republic. And now, at this writing, we are witness to East Germany being rocked by demand for radical change.

How tragic it is when we think of the millions of Jews who forsook Torah and replaced it with the religion of Communism! How many Jews sacrificed their lives for this atheistic religion, only to have their grandchildren repudiate their legacy and denounce it as an empty dream! This is but one example of what the *Navi Yirmiyahu* means

when he cries out in the name of G-d: "*Ki shtayim raos assa ami...* Two evils My nation has perpetrated against Me: They have abandoned Me, a source of living waters, to dig for themselves broken cisterns that will not hold water" (*Yirmiyahu* 2,13). And one thing has become apparent: Communism does not hold water.

Before we can unconditionally celebrate the massive rejection of the communist system, let us look at what the same human forces which have fueled this revolt against Communism have done to American society. Rather than gloat over the triumph of the American-capitalistic system, we must sadly examine the end-result of our free-enterprise approach, for it too is failing. We are currently

witness to the internal decay of this country's inner ethical core, without which no society can survive. A growing lack of satisfaction with life has led to the scourge of drugs and the tremendous increase in violence and crime in our cities. Moreover, a staggering number and range of cases of fraud and corruption have recently come to light—in government and banking circles, in Pentagon offices and staid brokerage firms, from car rental companies to baby food manufacturers. As one writer put it in regard to the latter, "Fraud was never so tempting or remorseless, thanks to the proliferation of electronic money, and fast, faceless financial transactions. In the past, the primary safeguard against such theft had been trust, but in the go-go 80's that ethical obstacle blew away like an old cobweb."

The underlying source of dissatisfaction with both of these systems is a universal tendency that is inherent to the human condition. Indeed, besides witnessing a failure of the economic system in both societies, the human being has been suffering a steady loss of dignity: in Russia, by the grinding power of a totalitarian police state, and in America, by a perverted understanding and unguided application of the word "freedom"—and this conception of freedom is now spreading to the Soviet Union.

In this present climate, what passes for individual human dignity does not reflect man as having been created in the image of G-d. People have extended what they consider their inherent rights to the point where they can indulge without moral restraint, and the next human being is merely a stave on someone else's ladder. This new vision of man is an utterly demeaning one for he is reduced to a selfish, competitive animal, lacking in any trace of nobility.

#### OF GREED AND CORRUPTION

**L**oss of human dignity is very closely tied to preoccupation with the pursuit of wealth and a hedonistic lifestyle, for when

a person becomes obsessed with his possessions and pleasures, he tends to become blind to the feelings of others; in fact, he can be corrupted and even destructive, in the view of *Chazal* (Rabbis of the Talmud) and *Rishonim* (early commentators). For example, the Talmud *Yerushalmi* adds "greed" to *Bavli's* well-known diagnosis of the cause for the *Churban* of the Second *Beis Hamikdash*:

In the time of the Second *Beis Hamikdash*, the people were known to have been laboring in Torah, and to be meticulous in *mitzva* observance and tithes; they possessed

parents to indulge in his taste for meat and wine. He writes:

The reasons are two-fold: for making light of his father and mother, and their authority; and for being gluttonous and drunk, transgressing the commands, "You shall be holy" and "You shall serve Him, and cleave to Him"—which I have explained to mean that we are enjoined to know G-d in all our dealings . . . A glutton and drunkard will not learn the ways of G-d.

In its discussion of this errant youth, the Torah is addressing everyone: We are all expected to strive to draw close to G-d; and to develop a pattern of life based on

## How tragic it is when we think of the millions of Jews who forsook Torah and replaced it with the religion of Communism!

every positive character trait—except that they loved money and hated one another without cause (*Yerushalmi, Yoma 4,6*).

That is to say, the two are inter-related: obsession with amassing wealth spawns baseless hatred and a corruption of the spiritual essence of all interpersonal dealings. In every encounter with others, the person is calculating, *what can I get out of this?*

The drive for personal gain and pleasure at the expense of others is so pervasive that it charges the very air we breathe—literally and figuratively—for like it or not, we are living in the very midst of this corrosive atmosphere. This is not a minor issue, for *Chazal* put great stress on human dignity:

Whoever gains recognition through the downfall of his fellow man forfeits his share in the World-to-Come (*Yerushalmi*).

One should rather throw himself into a fiery furnace than shame his fellow in public (*Avoda Zora*).

The *Ramban* makes a similar point in explaining the reason for the Torah's harsh punishment for the *ben sorer u'moreh*—a thirteen-year old who steals from his

spiritual growth, one should avoid putting a major focus on sensual indulgences and material excesses. To do so leads to inner corruption and even violence.

#### AS FOR OUR GENERATION . . .

**O**ne might wonder what bearing this discussion has on Orthodox Jewry in Western countries. But then, it would be naive to pretend that we are so insulated from our surrounding society that we are not swept along with the prevailing *Zeitgeist*. Tragically, there is no shortage of examples pointing to the degree to which conspicuous consumption, greed, envy, and corruption have crept into the most sheltered enclaves and life-styles of our community.

In our limited vision, we often lack the clarity of perception to realize where present-day trends are leading, but our great visionaries are capable of fathoming their implications. For those who view events from the pure perspective of Torah can see through all theories and rationalizations that are proffered to justify an underlying bankruptcy. Thus the *Chazon Ish*, commenting on the general increase in

promiscuity and immorality, writes: "That which the world calls love, the Torah describes as an *issur kareis* (an act that severs one's soul from its source of life)." This observation of forty years ago is so obvious today that in a recent book about the AIDS epidemic, the author writes: "Love, one of the sweetest words in the language, now suggests a cause of death." (Quoted in *Time Magazine*, July 18, '88 pg 68.)

We need not search too far to discover the causes for the debasement of man in contemporary society. When *Chazal* say that "envy, lust and glory seeking remove a person from the world" (*Avos IV, 28*), the implication is that life loses its purpose when any of these three elements becomes dominant in a person. By the same token, communities and entire societies can crumble from the inner decay of "envy, lust, and glory seeking." The wanton violence that has plagued the inner enclaves of America's great cities is in great measure a spin off of the drug culture—surely a product of pleasure-seeking, and the drive for profiteering and controlling others. For that matter, international rivalries are also to a great extent expressions of conflicting spheres of influence and glory-seeking.

Unbridled pleasure seeking is not admired in our society, nor is status seeking. On the other hand, people generally do look up to the man who has amassed a fortune, and we tend to measure a person's worth by his income. Our concern here, then, is with greed, not only because it fuels the other vices, but because—unlike them—it is so rampant today that it has almost been turned into a virtue. It is the worm that eats away at the core of the human being and destroys his world—leading as it does to envy. Moreover, greed translates into a deep discontent with one's share in life, and it fuels the fires of strife and dissension. Yet arousing perceived needs is a basic underpinning of capitalism, it is the underlying source of its strength, and the force

behind constant economic growth.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, in his recently published *drashos* (*Doreish Moshe, Drush 12*), offers an analysis of a cryptic passage from the *Gemora*, which delineates the denouement of such trends:

Rabbi Yosi said: "Woe unto the creatures for they see, and know not what they see; they stand, and know not where they stand" (*Chagiga 12b*).

---

***This new vision of man is an utterly demeaning one for he is reduced to a selfish, competitive animal, lacking in any trace of nobility.***

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In his explanation of the *Gemora*, Reb Moshe comments:

People are forever seeking for ways of creating a world of peace and contentment, one free of fear. Many ideologies and philosophies have been fashioned towards this end. Yet, despite all these attempts, the world is still full of strife, oppression of the poor, and lack of justice (perhaps to a greater degree than in the past). Rabbi Yosi is teaching us the reason for this: "Woe to the world"—meaning the reason for the woe that mankind experiences—is their misconstruing the foundations upon which the world really stands. They err in determining which life-goals to pursue to create a stable world.

Perhaps the solution to this may be found in another *drasha* of Reb Moshe (*Drasha 20*). It is an important statement that may be the key to setting up parameters into which all of us can aspire to live. Reb Moshe writes:

It is well known that a Jew must recognize that the purpose of his life—and what he should consider truly living—is to devote time to Torah study and the performance of *mitzvos*. . . . Whoever recognizes this has made Torah and spirituality the primary focus of his existence; all else becomes secondary. This is the [true] meaning of *Shammai's* declaration in *Pirkei Avos* (1,15) when he says, "*Asei Toras'cha k'vah*—Make Torah a fixed feature [of your life]," to which is added: ". . . and your work a variable." This does not refer to the amount of time one spends on either pursuit, for there are people who must work hard all week and can only learn on *Shabbos*, but since that is the time when they consider themselves to be truly living, Torah is primary in their lives. The opposite may also occur; someone might well be spending more time learning than the first fellow, but since he places greater emphasis on his material pursuits and pleasures, his Torah is not considered *k'vah*—primary."

This can be the beginning of a solution that might be workable for everyone. Its effectiveness depends wholly on us and our attitude. Change begins by putting more emphasis on the spiritual aspects of our lives, primarily on learning Torah. Although this might seem like a difficult task, it is within everyone's reach, regardless of the amount of time he finds available. As the Torah says, "This matter is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it" (*Devarim 30,14*—see *Ramban ad loc*). The emphasis and the focus in each individual's situation should be the same, and that is to regard the precious segment of time that one devotes to Torah study or other Torah pursuits as his primary, self-defining activity. If we can develop this type of attitude, then the unhealthy excesses of prevalent life styles will slowly begin to recede and lose significance, and we will not feel the desire, the need, or the importance of spending valuable time or money for what we *know* to be trivial. Perhaps we may thus develop a *modus vivendi* of living

in affluent times, benefitting from our bounty and yet not succumbing to its traps.

In other words, it is generally assumed that enhancing the physical and material aspects of existence is the key to the Good Life. Accordingly, each of the currently popular philosophies posits an ideology and proposes a system to help one and all achieve material abundance and unbridled fulfillment of one's desires. But this ultimately leads to more strife, since material acquisitions must arouse envy in others, inevitably leading to conflict. For each person views the other as either an object of envy or an obstacle impeding his own fulfillment. All such theories for human self-enhancement are merely rhetoric, while strife—both personal and global—will continue to flourish. Peace and harmony can only emerge if spiritual goals, untainted by ulterior motives or vested interests, and service of G-d become central to life. It is for this reason that Jewish people bless their children that they grow up to become *tzaddikim* and *talmidei chachamim*, rather than wealthy, powerful leaders. . . . When a child is born, we wish the parents that they raise the infant "to Torah, *chupah* and *maasim tovim*." Not that he become wealthy or powerful. Such achievements should be irrelevant to one's ultimate goals.

#### IS THERE ANY SOLUTION?

**A**fter all the articles have been written, and all the myths have been exploded, one question still remains—*Can anything be done?* Is there any possibility of slowing down the headlong rush towards acquiring and experiencing more and more? Is such a shift in attitude to be expected—or even to be asked—of people in today's affluent society?

Part of the problem is that in the current economic climate, just keeping pace with the steady rise in the cost of housing, food, and tuition makes ever more demands of all of us. And the need to increase

*After all the articles have been written, and all the myths have been exploded, one question still remains—Can anything be done?*

our earnings leads to a greater involvement in financial dealings—thinking about money and working more for additional money, which increases our spending power beyond the threshold of basic need...and spend we do.

In addition, the amount of time people put in at work has very little relationship with what they earn. It may take significantly less time and effort in certain fields to earn a greater amount than many more hours invested in other fields.

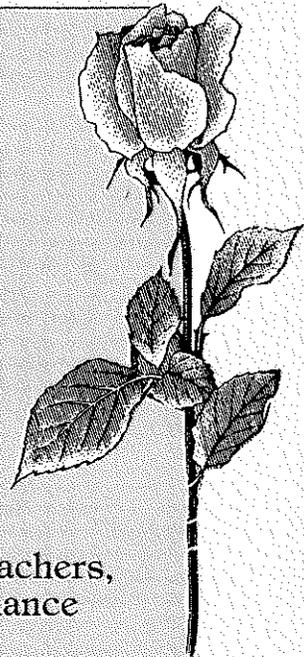
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Rabbi  
Zalman Yaakov

Friederman זצ"ל

# A CHAMPION OF TORAH IN AMERICA AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

On February 8, 1914, Rabbi Aaron Wolkin, Rav of St. Petersburg, and Rabbi Meyer Hildesheimer of Berlin arrived in Boston and were greeted by thousands of supporters and well-wishers: Their purpose was to strengthen Torah study and observance, and in the process to establish what is now known as the Agudath Israel of America.

One of the primary architects of that now historic visit was Rabbi Zalman Yaakov Friederman, a

**Dr. Wikler**, a psychotherapist and family counselor in private practice and former Professor at the Wurzeiler School of Social Work, lives in Brooklyn, New York. The material presented here was gleaned from library research, Rabbi Friederman's writings and the personal recollections of contemporaries, passed on to their children. The author expresses his gratitude to his relatives who helped in the preparation of this article, and to Grand Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz שליט"א (the Bostoner Rebbe, Boston and Har Nof) and the late Grand Rabbi Moshe Horowitz זצ"ל (the Bostoner Rebbe, New York) for sharing their recollections of Rabbi Friederman.

European-born Rav who devoted his life to defending Torah causes in the United States against the ravages of the 19th and early 20th century assimilation. Although it is 54 years since Rabbi Friederman's passing, the battles he waged at the turn of the century are surprisingly current and all too familiar.

## FROM VILNA TO BOSTON

**B**orn in Merets, a town near Vilna, in the 1850's (the exact year of his birth is unknown), Zalman Yaakov Friederman left home when he was twelve to study with Rabbi Moshe Doneshevsky, the *Av Beis Din* (head of the rabbinical court) of Slobodka. By the age of twenty, he received his first *semicha* (ordination) in Bialystok, with more to follow: from Rabbi Alexander Moshe Lapidus (Rasein), Rabbi Lipa

Shereshevski (Neshivitz) and Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Spektor, the revered Kovno Rav. His *semicha* from these outstanding figures came as a result of *shimush* (apprenticeship). As such, he literally moved into the homes of these well-known halachic authorities, not only to study with them, but to witness their rabbinic judgments in all areas of *halacha*, receiving first-hand practical training in addition to the Torah studies.

In 1889, Rabbi Friederman married Devora Lipschutz, the daughter of Rabbi Yaakov Halevi Lipschutz, the personal secretary of Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Spektor. As a result of his exposure to the *Gedolim* (Torah giants) of his time, Rabbi Friederman was sought out by other *Rabbonim* throughout his lifetime to help resolve difficult questions in *gittin*, *chalitza*, and other complex, sensitive areas of

*halacha*. When Rabbi Friederman came to America, he took with him the special *chalitza* shoe, which he used for the *chalitzos* he later performed in Boston.

For close to forty-three years, his study became a focal point for halachic inquiry and personal guidance in America; Rabbi Friederman would sit with his eyes closed, his head bent forward, as he concentrated on the words of his petitioners. These included *rabbonim* and *shochtim* seeking his counsel on how to deal with *baale battim* (lay leaders), businessmen in need of his adjudication in monetary disputes, and representatives of destitute European communities seeking financial aid.

Throughout his life Rabbi Friederman maintained ties with the *Gedolim* in Europe and *Eretz Yisroel*, carrying on a correspondence with the *Chofetz Chaim*, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin, and Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. Rabbi Friederman's *seforim* were graced with *haskomos* (letters of approbation) from Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Rabinowitz (son of Reb Yitzchok Elchonon) of Kovno, Rabbi Eliezer Gordon (Telshe), Rabbi Moshe Noneshevsky (*Rav* of Slobodka), Rabbi Eliezer Rabinowitz (Minsk), Rabbi Eliyahu Klotskin (Lublin), Rabbi Avraham Dov Ber Shapiro (Kovno), and Rabbi Meir Shapiro (Lubliner *Rav*).

In his *haskoma* (approbation) to Rabbi Friederman's *sefer Shoshanas Yaakov*, Rabbi Meir Shapiro wrote, in 1927:

In Boston . . . the renowned *Rav Hagaon* Zalman Yaakov Friederman showed me his *Shoshanas Yaakov*, [which] I found to be full of Hashem's Blessing, awe-inspiring words sweet to the ear enflaming the heart with Torah. His earlier *seforim* demonstrate that he employs his writing to do battle on behalf of our faith. . . . May Hashem be with him and may this *sefer* become a precious rose in the garden of Israel.

Signed this first day (of the week of the *Sedra*) *Ki Sisa*, *Gittin* 31, 5667 in Boston.

Meir Shapiro

## COMING TO AMERICA

**R**abbi Friederman arrived in America in 1893, when in his mid-thirties, to assume the position of *Rav* of the prestigious Forsythe Street Synagogue in New York City. During the three years that he was in New York, he worked diligently in support of the Talmud Torah on East Broadway, and developed a personal relationship with Rabbi Yaakov Yosef, Chief Rabbi of New York, whose warm *haskoma* graced Rabbi Friederman's first *sefer*, *Emes V'Emunah*, published in 1895.

That same year, Rabbi Friederman moved to Boston to serve as the *Rav* of the *Agudas Hakehillos* of Greater Boston. His eloquent sermons, delivered in Yiddish, drew enormous crowds; with no holds barred, he chastised his congregants with such impact that by the time he finished speaking, there was never a dry eye on either side of the

*mehitza*. These sermons, later published in four volumes, reveal the breadth of Rabbi Friederman's knowledge of *Tanach*, *Gemora* and *Midrash*. But even more, they reveal his personal anguish over the weakening of Torah values in America.

Although no acknowledgements of her contributions appear in any of these *seforim*, Devora Friederman gave her husband much more than moral support. In addition to being unusually well versed in *Tanach*, Rebbetzin Friederman was also a polished Hebrew writer. In order to lighten the burden of her husband's communal responsibilities, she edited and proof-read all her husband's manuscripts prior to publication, even though she had received no formal Jewish education.

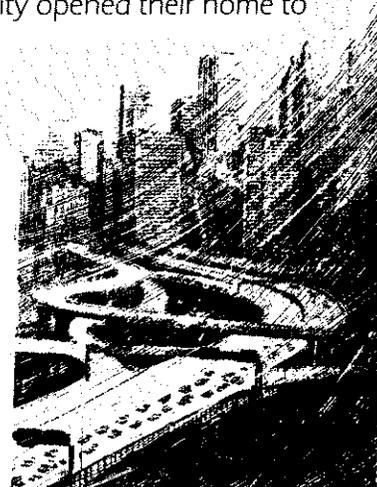
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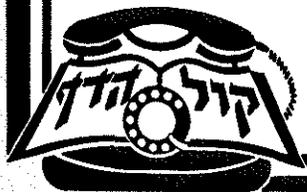
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monthly in Poltova, Russia, by Elyahu Akiva Rabinowitz, *Hapelles* featured articles on Torah thought, as well as current events. Rabbi Friederman was a frequent contributor to *Hapelles*, as well as to the better-known *Hamodia*.

In one particular article, entitled, "*Takonas Chachomim*" (*Hapelles* 1903), Rabbi Friederman described the state of Jewish affairs in America in great detail. While the article was written for a European Jewish audience almost a century ago, it sheds light on a phase of American Jewish history that may be equally relevant for us today, as per the following excerpts (translated by the author):

"This country is blessed with everything. . . No one goes hungry or thirsty, naked or barefoot. . . This is also a country where there is no Torah and no *tefilla* (prayer), no *Shabbos* and no *Yom Tov*, no *kashrus* and no family purity, no unity and no peace, no Torah education and no modesty. . . Freedom on the one hand, and temptations on the other, and secular studies above both—these three factors have joined together to destroy Judaism."

Rabbi Friederman went on to explain how, in an effort to stem the tides of assimilation and weakening of Torah values, a conference of American *Rabbonim* was convened in New York City. The conference lasted five days, resulting in the creation of the Agudas Harabonim of America. Using the list of by-laws of the newly created Agudas Harabonim as background, Rabbi Friederman painted the picture of Jewish life in America at that time.

Regarding the state of *Rabbonus* in America, he writes:

"Membership in the Agudas Harabonim will be limited to those with *semicha* from the *Gedolim* in Europe. . . Until now, the American Rabbinate was like a city without walls. Whoever chose to assume the title 'Rav' did so with impunity. . . Who can even count the problems this has created in areas like marriage and divorce!"

He was especially distraught over the level of *chinuch* (Torah education) in America:

"I do not exaggerate when saying that scarcely fifty out of a hundred children can recognize an *Alef* or a *Beis*, and of those fifty, thirty have little more than glanced at them quickly. And what hope do we have for the twenty percent who

have attended Jewish schools? They spend the major part of the day at their secular studies . . . and only come to *cheder* in the evening, for a few minutes, when they are already drained from their school day.

"What brought this condition about? The American atmosphere [which] contaminates the heart and confuses the mind. . . In Europe, even the poorest of the poor would mortgage himself and sell his clothing to pay tuition for his children to receive a proper Jewish education. . . Parents here say: *Why should I spend so much money for an education that he will never use? Let him better learn a trade so that he will later be able to support himself.*" (Emphasis added.)

As Rabbi Friederman points out, the situation regarding *kashrus* was no better:

"Even those few who are concerned about the *hechsheirim* do not know enough to check for seals on individual products, but rather look for the name of the *Rav* in the store window. Shrewd storekeepers buy a little merchandise with a *hechsher* to obtain a *Rav's* certificate of *kashrus*, which they display prominently. . . After their reputation as a kosher store has become established, they stock non-kosher items as well.

"Withdrawing the original certificate will not help (because) . . . 1. After people become accustomed to shopping in a store, they cannot imagine that non-kosher items are sold there. . . 2. The newspaper publishers will not accept the *Rav's* disclaimer for fear of antagonizing their major advertisers, the storekeepers. . . 3. The storekeeper will simply spread the word that the *Rav* withdrew his certification because he raised his fee and the storekeeper could not afford the increase. . . 4. Some storekeepers are even more shrewd and will replace the *Rav's* certificate with one signed by a layman. This layman will be called '*Harav Hagoan*' on the certificate, and no one will bother to investigate whether the signator is really a *Rav* or even alive!"

Regarding the observance of *Shabbos*, Rabbi Friederman reported:

"They work here on *Shabbos* just like on a weekday. . . As a matter of course, an *aveil* during *Shiva* will ask a *Rav* if he is permitted to work on the *Shabbos* of *Shiva*. Since Friday was the third day, and he has already gotten up from sitting *Shiva* (according to the '*American Shulchan Aruch*' . . .)

"Even those who do go to *shul* on *Shabbos*, *daven vasikin* (at dawn), and immediately after the second *Kedusha*,

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fold up their *taleisim* and run off to work. Similarly, self-employed storekeepers may *daven* at the second *minyán* on *Shabbos*, and be honored with *Shlishi* (the prestigious third *aliya*), yet they are not ashamed to go to their businesses after *shul*."

In spite of the efforts of the Agudas Harabonim, explained Rabbi Friederman, no substantial improvements were made.

"The spirit of freedom, public school education, and business pursuits merge to destroy Jewish life. Whoever comes to live in this land does so to indulge in worldly pleasures."

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The Jewish Observer

The *Rabbonim* shared the blame, according to Rabbi Friederman:

"If one *Rav* wants to accomplish any worthwhile objective, another *Rav* will examine the first *Rav*'s actions to determine if it will detract in any way from his own income or honor. . . . One *Rav* lights the flame of a *mitzva* and another comes along and extinguishes it."

**AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP**

**O**viously, Rabbi Friederman was not of one mind with most of Boston's *Rabbonim*. Although his daily activities brought him in constant contact with the rabbinic leaders of Boston, he did not become an intimate friend with any of them. "But a man cannot survive without a close *chaver*" (*Ta'anis* 23a), and Rabbi Friederman was no exception. As soon as the *Bostoner Rebbe*, Grand Rabbi Pinchos Dovid HaLevi Horowitz, זצ"ל, came to America from *Eretz Yisroel* in 1914, he and Rabbi

encounter with *Bostoner Rebbe* saying, "He's a real *talmid chacham*, I cannot understand why he has to be a *Chassidische Rebbe*!"

Together, Rabbi Friederman and the *Bostoner Rebbe* tried to establish what would have been the first yeshiva day school in America. The *Bostoner Rebbe* had an after-public school "yeshiva" with an enrollment of 300 boys. But each year, the enrollment dwindled, due to the forces described by Rabbi Friederman in the article in *Hapelles*.

The *Bostoner Rebbe* proposed engaging secular studies teachers, to bring Torah and secular education together under one roof, similar to today's Hebrew Day Schools, *yeshivos ketanos* and *mesivtos*. The idea was revolutionary at the time, and was opposed by all the *Rabbonim* of Boston—except Rabbi Friederman. These *Rabbonim*—whose afternoon schools would have been threatened by such a school—argued that the proposed plan would endow secular education

**An unlikely team, the Litvische Rav and the Chassidische Rebbe had widely disparate backgrounds, but their common purpose by far outweighed their differences.**

Friederman became more than friends and colleagues; they were virtual partners in a campaign to strengthen *Yiddishkeit* in America. It was, of course, an unlikely team, for the *Litvische* (Lithuanian) *Rav* and the *Chassidische Rebbe* came from widely disparate backgrounds, but their common purpose by far outweighed their differences.

Seventy-five years ago, Litvaks and Chassidim were separated by geographic distance in Europe, and too often by bitter animosity, prejudice and misunderstandings as well. Most of the Litvaks of that period, for example, equated *Chassidus* with *am haratzus* (ignorance). One of the great *Litvische Rabbonim* in America left his first

with a religious sanction. Even with Rabbi Friederman's support, the project could not succeed without the broader-based support of the Rabbinic leaders of Boston. So the student body of 300 eventually deteriorated to the point where only a handful of unmotivated boys remained, under parental pressure.

**"DIN TORAH" ON ICE**

**B**efore the advent of modern refrigeration, cold-cuts were the only meat that could remain unspoiled for more than a few days. So it is understandable that the main kosher sausage manufacturer in Boston operated one of the

**In breathless spurts the *mashgiach* reported his discovery. The *Rav hamachshir* (certifying Rabbi) waited until the *mashgiach* finished, and then told him, "You didn't see anything."**

largest businesses in New England. Of course, its products were all certified kosher by one of the most well-known *Rabbonim* in Boston, to whom all of the on-site *mashgichim* (*Kashrus* inspectors) were personally accountable.

After a particularly hard day's work at the enormous sausage plant, one of the *mashgichim* mistakenly left his coat there. He returned to the plant later that night—as the *mashgiach*, he had his own set of keys—and was surprised to see a huge truck being unloaded at that late hour. No deliveries were expected... that he knew of. The *mashgiach* inspected the

meat as it was being unloaded, and found that it carried the seal of a non-Jewish butcher, embellished with a large cross!

Deeply upset, the *mashgiach* rushed over to the home of the prominent rabbi who certified the *kashrus* of the plant. In breathless spurts, the *mashgiach* reported his discovery. The *Rav hamachshir* (certifying Rabbi) waited until the *mashgiach* finished, and then told him, "You didn't see anything." The *mashgiach* thought that he wasn't clear, so he repeated the entire story. The *Rav hamachshir* gave the same response.

The thought of hundreds of thou-

sands of unsuspecting kosher consumers eating *treif* (non-kosher) meat so agitated the *mashgiach* that he could not sleep. In the middle of the night, he came banging on the door of the Bostoner *Rebbe*.

After apologizing profusely, the *mashgiach* related the events of the evening. The Bostoner *Rebbe* assured him that he would investigate the matter personally and even take the *Rav hamachshir* to a *din Torah* (rabbinic trial) if necessary.

But that was easier said than done. The *Rav hamachshir* refused to discuss the matter with the Bostoner *Rebbe*. Then the *Rebbe* could not find another *Rav* in all of Boston who was willing to sit on a *beis din* (court) to hear his claim, except Rabbi Zalman Yaakov Friederman. With no possibility of a Boston-based *beis din*, they finally agreed to call a delegation of *rabbonim* from New York City from the newly formed Agudas Harabbonim.

When the delegation arrived, one *Rav* was overheard to have made a disparaging remark regarding sit-



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ting on a *din Torah* involving a *Chassidische Rebbe*. This *Rav* then noticed a blind, elderly Jew mumbling to himself. He leaned over to hear what the old man was saying and was shocked to hear him reviewing halachic commentary by heart! He then learned that this elderly Jew was the *Bostoner Rebbe*, whom he had thought too uneducated for participating in a *Din Torah*.

The hearing began in the morning. The *Bostoner Rebbe* and Rabbi Friederman gave their opening arguments, and the *Rav hamachshir* gave his. The tribunal then announced that the hearing was recessed for lunch and would reconvene in the afternoon.

"Take me to the railroad station," the *Bostoner Rebbe* told his oldest son, Moshe (the late New York *Bostoner Rebbe* זצ"ל).

"But *Tatte*," the young Moshe Horowitz protested, "how can you walk out in the middle of the *din Torah*?"

His father insisted, so the young Reb Moshe helped his elderly father out of the courtroom into a taxi. Reb Moshe understood his father's reasoning when he entered the train station. There they found the Agudas Harabonim delegation waiting for the train back to New York. The *Bostoner Rebbe* had sensed that this was one *din Torah* that would never be concluded. The New York *Rabbonim* could not possibly adjudicate the case in favor of the *Rav hamachshir*, for obvious reasons. Nor could they break ranks to adjudicate against their fellow members of the Agudas Harabonim. So they all simply went home.

icate the case in favor of the *Rav hamachshir*, for obvious reasons. Nor could they break ranks to adjudicate against their fellow members of the Agudas Harabonim. So they all simply went home.

Rabbi Friederman and the *Bostoner Rebbe*, however, remained undaunted. They met with the sausage manufacturer and finally managed to extract a promise from him to correct his fraudulent practices. Lacking the means to enforce the agreement, Rabbi Friederman and the *Rebbe* were unable to prevent the manufacturer from renegeing on his promises. Within the year, however, this deception was finally stopped as Heaven intervened, and the entire sausage plant burned to the ground.

### A LIGHTER MOMENT

**R**abbi Friederman and the *Bostoner Rebbe* had a close association on a personal level, as well. Each year before Pesach, for example, the *Bostoner Rebbe* gave Rabbi Friederman hand-made *shmura matzos*, baked in the *Rebbe's* own *matza* oven. One year, when Rabbi Friederman called on the *Bostoner Rebbe* to receive this annual gift, the *Rebbe* chuckled, "You know, these are very expensive *matzos* this year!" The *Rebbe* went on to explain that a small fire had broken out in his *shul* the morning

## TWO EMINENT RABBIS ARRIVE

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Rabbi Dr. Nathan



Rabbi Dr. Silberstein

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after the *matza* baking. The *Rebbe* quickly called the *shamos* (caretaker) to extinguish the fire.

"But, *Rebbe*," the *shamos* pleaded, "the *shul* is insured for \$10,000. If we let the fire burn, all the *Rebbe's* financial problems will be solved!"

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America later, in 1893, Moshe Ephraim came with him and went to live with other relatives in Worcester, Mass., but the two continued to maintain close contact.

During the summer of 1912, Rabbi Friederman was vacationing with his wife at a seaside resort popular amongst the religious Jews of New England. In the same house where the Friedermans were renting an apartment, a single girl was staying with her cousins: Zlote Pessa, the daughter of Meir Eliyahu and Sara Rochel Rosenberg of Burlington, Vermont. When Rabbi Friederman met the twenty-year-old Zlote Pessa on *Shabbos* afternoon, he asked her, "What are you doing sitting around with the old folks on such a beautiful day? Don't you have any friends here your own age?"

"I do," answered the Rosenbergs' daughter, "but they have all gone to the movies. They paid for their tickets before *Shabbos*. They wanted me to come along, but I just don't feel that it is the right thing to do. I decided to stay home."

"A girl with such *mesiras nefesh* (self-sacrifice) in the face of social pressure," Rabbi Friederman mused, "would make a perfect *shidduch* (match) for my nephew!"

After the summer, a meeting was arranged, and a few meetings later, the couple became engaged, and were married in February, 1913.

(The author can attest to the accuracy of the dialogue quoted above because, as the grandson of Moshe Ephraim and Zlote Pessa Strogoff, he has heard this story retold many times.)

## THE ERETZ YISROEL CONNECTION

Throughout his life, Rabbi Friederman maintained a strong connection with *Eretz Yisroel*. In addition to the spiritual and emotional bonds that all sensitive Jews feel toward *Eretz Yisroel*, Rabbi Friederman also worked tirelessly to raise funds on behalf of *Knesses Yisroel*, Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes, the major *tzeddaka* fund supporting the *Yishuv* in the four major cities, Yerushalayim, Tzefas, Teveria, and Chevron.

In his close contact with the leadership of *Eretz Yisroel*, Rabbi Friederman was very involved, for example, with Rabbi Avraham Yitzchok HaKohein Kook זצ"ל (1865-1935), the first Chief Rabbi of what was then called Palestine.

In the 1920's, Rabbi Kook came to New York City to undergo major surgery. Before agreeing to the surgery, however, he dispatched a personal messenger to Boston, to ask Rabbi Friederman for *mechila* (forgiveness). Of course, Rabbi Friederman granted the request, without ever revealing to anyone the reason for it. . . . The operation was successful.

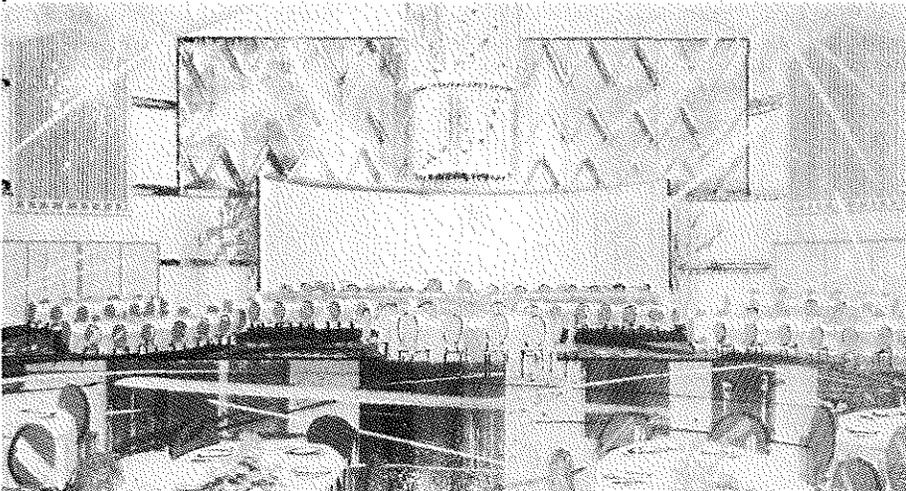
Whatever differences may have come between these two *Rabbonim* during their lives, no animosity remained. In fact, Rabbi Friederman is buried within *daled amos* (four cubits) of Rabbi Kook's grave on Har Hazeisim (the Mount of Olives) in Yerushalayim. In spite of the massive desecration perpetrated by the Jordanians in the cemetery on Har Hazeisim during 1948-1967, both graves were left intact.

## THE FINAL DAYS

In 1934, the Bostoner *Rebbe* and his family returned to their home in Yerushalayim. The following year, the Bostoner *Rebbe* came back to America alone, for what was originally planned as a temporary trip. It was then that Rabbi Friederman decided to visit *Eretz Yisroel*.

Before Rabbi Friederman and his wife left Boston in 1935, a huge banquet was given in honor of their

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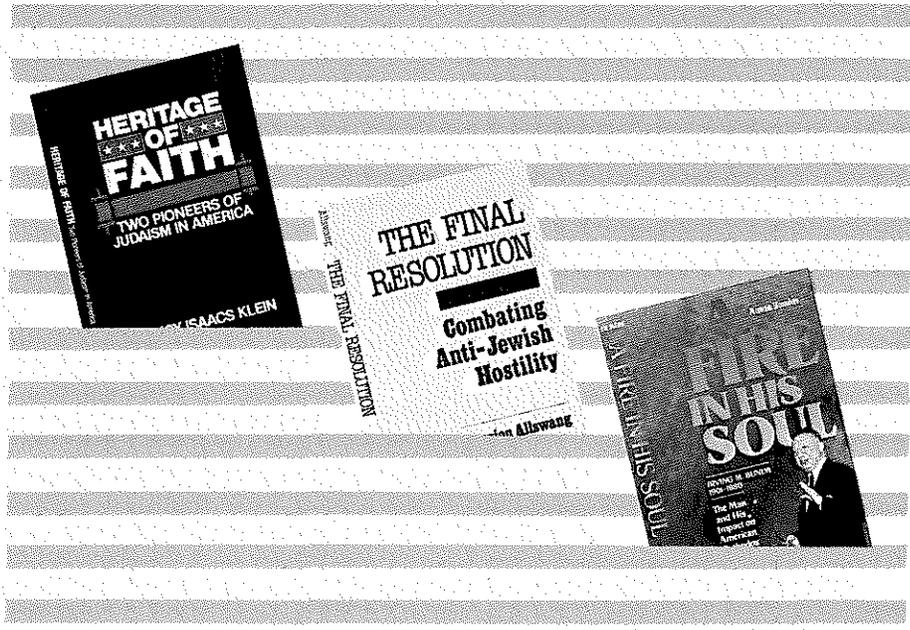
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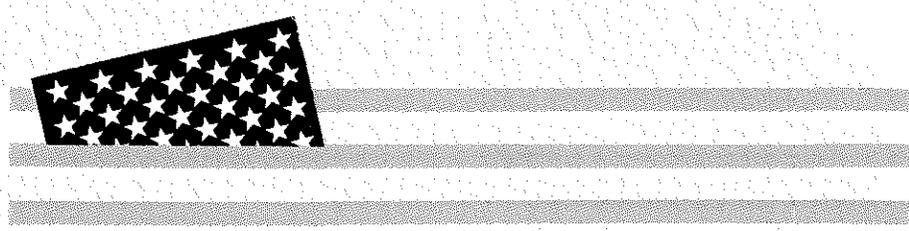
**H**ERITAGE OF FAITH, by Nancy Isaacs Klein (Ktav Publ. House, Hoboken, 1987, \$15) describes the life and work of two pioneers, the author's grandfather, Rabbi Philipp (Hillel) Klein, and her father, Dr. Moses L. Isaacs. We read here of valiant efforts to establish Torah life in New York, of the successes, failures, and compromises that, together, in large measure shaped the face of the American Torah community until the Orthodox immigration of the Twenties and Thirties. Rabbi Klein, married to a granddaughter of Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, not only succeeded in holding his congregation to strict halachic standards, but was deeply involved in efforts to upgrade *Kashrus* standards, in the founding of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis and Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, and in the work of Yeshiva Etz Chayim (which in due course became Yeshiva Rabbi Yitzchak Elchonon); at the time of his death, in 1926, he was president of the fledgling Agudath Israel of America. Yet, at an earlier stage, he felt the need to join with such diverse figures as Dr. Judah Magnes to create the "Kehillah of New York" (the forerunner of what became the Jewish Welfare Federation)—and in his personal life he had to accept a daughter-in-law's refusal to cover her hair (the author makes a point of stressing that none of the daughters, daughters-in-law, and granddaughters in her father's family ever wore a *sheitel*; strangely, and quite wrongly, she quotes in justification Rabbi S. R. Hirsch—who was famous for his refusal to countenance uncovered hair!).

The enormous pressure exerted by the environment and its effect on the observant Jew are vividly illustrated by the author's account of her father's family—American-born, loyally committed to Torah observance despite all the difficulties—yet at the same time immersed in the intellectual and academic atmosphere of the age. Dr. Isaacs, initially connected with Columbia Univer-

## The Development of American Torah Jewry

A Review Article

**T**here is no lack of books on American Jewry—yet the history of Torah Jewry in this country has not received the attention it deserves. Lately, however, a number of biographies have appeared, and when they are read in the proper historical sequence, there emerges a truly fascinating picture of the gradual and painful process by which a Torah presence developed in the United States.



sity, in due course became Dean of Yeshiva College. His published writings stress the importance of sticking to one's ancestral faith and not letting it be overridden by the changing theories of speculative science. Yet they also reveal the process of acculturation—his appreciation of the values of Western culture are not accompanied by the emphasis on the primacy of intensive Torah study stressed by Rabbi S. R. Hirsch in formulating "Torah Im Derech Eretz." Thus Dr. Isaacs, not surprisingly, disapproved of the rise of Day Schools and the parochialism he felt they represented.

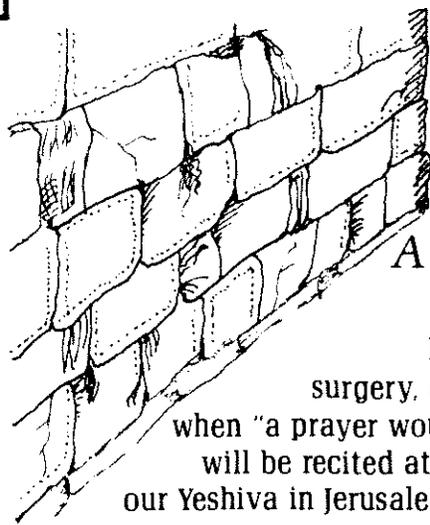
#### THE FIRST AMERICAN-BORN ORTHODOX RABBI

**Y**et the process of implanting Torah and Torah values in this country continued apace—and this is very interestingly illustrated in another biography,

**THE MAVERICK RABBI**, by Aaron I. Reichel (Downing Publishers, 2nd ed., 1986, \$7.50, sc), the story of Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein and his Institutional Synagogue, written by his grandson. Rabbi Goldstein was the first American-born Orthodox rabbi ordained in this country. His beginnings could not be described as promising. While he came from a family with a deep commitment to *Yiddishkeit* (at the age of 18 his mother married a widower with six children, simply because he was *frum*) and his parents always employed private teachers to give their children a solid Jewish education, he did not find his place in Yeshiva Etz Chayim and enrolled in the Jewish Theological Seminary which, at that time, provided the closest available semblance of traditional rabbinic training. However, he was not satisfied with the curriculum offered, and privately studied for *semicha*—developing at that time a lasting closeness to

Rabbi Henkin נ"י. Nor was he satisfied with the winds of heresy blowing at J.T.S. (this was the time when Rabbi Dr. Drachman was dismissed because of his strict Orthodoxy), and with remarkable tenacity he publicly challenged faculty members such as Dr. Mordechai Kaplan over their unacceptable views.

Rabbi Goldstein, from the beginning of his career, was moved by the urge to further Torah knowledge and observance. He clearly realized that to achieve this goal it was not enough to *transfer* Torah from Europe—it had to be *transplanted*: it had to be presented to the American Jew in a manner that would ensure his positive response. Out of this conviction grew his concept of the "Institutional Synagogue," an institution combining synagogue, Hebrew school and multifaceted programs to serve all needs of the community—religious, educational, social and even recreational. The goal was "not to socialize religion but to religionize social life." This was a difficult undertaking, and in the beginning the Institutional Synagogue made some concessions (operetta evenings and even dances, though Rabbi Goldstein personally disapproved of them). But there was a constant emphasis on Jewish education; Rabbi Goldstein's own classes gave birth to his series of books, such as his *Bible Comments for Home Reading*. It was his appreciation of Torah, pure and unadulterated, that made him give his fullest support to the *Gedolei Yisroel* who came here and reestablished European *yeshivos* on American soil. He backed up their *hatzalah* efforts (e.g. using his friendship with Cong. Sol Bloom, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which dated back to the early days of the Institutional Synagogue). He followed them in working for Agudath Israel of America, most notably as chairman of a number of efforts to support religious needs in *Eretz Yisroel*. Most remarkably, though he was, for many years, a signal force not only in the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations and the Rabbinical Council of America, but in the Syna-



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gogue Council of America, he demonstratively resigned from it in response to the famous *psak din* of the *Gedolim* forbidding membership in it, and issued a public statement regarding the sanctity of following a *psak din*. As the author points out, "toward the end of Rabbi Goldstein's career . . . he was clearly moving to the right." It was to his great credit that he was able to recognize Torah authority and leadership and, as a result, was not bypassed by the renaissance of Torah in America, as other notable figures were.

### LAY LEADER OF TORAH SOVEREIGNTY

**T**his latest stage in the development of American Torah Jewry comes to life in a remarkable book about a remarkable man: **A FIRE IN HIS SOUL** (Feldheim Publ., 1989, \$16.95 hardcover, \$12.95 paperback), Amos Bunim's biography of his father, Irving Bunim. By background and personality, Irving Bunim was not only profoundly committed to Torah but able and determined to do great things in its service. Placed by Providence at a historical moment in Jewish history, the destruction of European Jewry and the arrival on these shores of Rabbi Aaron Kotler and other *Gedolei Yisroel* able to escape, Irving Bunim had the vision to make himself their tool, and indispensable helper, in their great historical endeavors—the work of *hatzalah* and the building of Torah in America. In the first part of this excellent biography, the author vividly describes the difficulties of growing up in pre-World War America when even so many *frum* parents sent their children proudly into the professions, with little hope that they would remain loyal Jews, and Torah learning was hardly attainable and little respected. Irving Bunim and his friends threw themselves into the creation of the Young Israel movement, to draw young people close to *mitzva* observance and inspire them with Torah values. He was one of those who

insisted that all Young Israel synagogues take a *Rav*, an idea simple and logical to us but initially not at all taken for granted. He pushed their educational efforts: ultimately the *shiurim* which he himself gave, throughout his lifetime, on *Pirkei Avos*, an ideal vehicle for conveying Torah ideas, were put on paper in

his classical work, *Ethics From Sinai*.

It was his understanding of the importance of Torah as the basis of Jewish life that made him attach himself to Rabbi Aaron Kotler when the Rosh Yeshiva arrived in America and, to his last day, be totally involved in much of the latter's



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Irving Bunim and his son, Amos, at Chinnuch Atzmai Siyyum Hasefer, 1963.

extraordinary work for *Klal Yisroel*—the heartbreaking and inspiring work of the *Vaad Hatzolah*; the creation of the Lakewood Yeshiva and the setting of altogether new and revolutionary goals for Torah Jewry and Torah learning; the furtherance of Torah Umesorah and, in *Eretz Yisroel*, *Chinnuch Atzmai*, to name just the central concerns of the time.

In describing his father's life, the author thus inevitably writes a history of American Torah Jewry and its maturing; and this work becomes an indispensable textbook for anybody who wants to study this

subject. There are few personalities and events in the Jewish life of the last fifty years that are not treated in this book, and it is studded with unforgettable vignettes and Torah thoughts of the *gedolim* of the time. Detailed sources are given for the events recounted, so that the reader can form his own evaluation (this reviewer had some difficulty with an incident, on p. 343, that according to Gershon Jacobson involved Irving Bunim but is generally attributed to Dayan Grunfeld of England).

#### BIOGRAPHY AS A HISTORY TEXT

**A**s the reader will be caught up in this fascinating work, it is important for him to keep in mind the difference between historical biography and straightforward history. In the latter case, personalities and events are given attention in exact proportion to their historic role, whereas a biography, however all-encompassing, treats them primarily insofar as they relate to the hero of the book. The perspective is different. Thus in this book, for instance, the problems and efforts in the area of *hatzalah*

are recorded in relation to the *Vaad Hatzalah*—and, as a result, the otherwise uninformed reader will not be able to appreciate the work done by Agudath Israel during and after the war (the battle over sending packages to Poland, referred to on p.104, actually involved Agudath Israel rather than the Vaad Hatzalah). Rabbi Aaron Kotler, of course, occupied in actual life the same central and dominant role that he holds in this book. However, Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz's role and vision in the establishment of Torah *chinuch* in America was much more fundamental than the reader might think; and some outstanding personalities who played a key role, such as Rabbi Reuven Grozovsky, head of the *Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah* during crucial years, and Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Bloch, Telsher Rosh Yeshiva, barely appear at all, since Irving Bunim apparently had less direct contact with them. Of course, this is not a reflection on a book that focusses specifically on him and his impact on American Orthodox Jewry.

So many issues and topics are touched on in this work that it is not really possible to do justice to them in a brief review. Generally, the author's assessment of personalities and happenings is very much on target (his appraisal of the apathy of the Jewish establishment in the face of the European disaster is well documented, succinct and devastating). However, the author is rather uncritical in his attitude toward Vladimir Jabotinsky—and his Revisionist Group. There is also one major point that deserves clarification. The author discusses the *psak* of the *Gedolei Torah* that it is forbidden to be a member of such mixed groups as the N.Y. Board of Rabbis and the Synagogue Council of America (referred to earlier in this review) and the opposition to it on part of the Rabbinical Council of America. He writes: "The issue might have ended in a vehement struggle [within the RCA] had it not been for Rabbi [Joseph B.] Soloveitchik's decision to remove the question from halachic consideration. It appears that, due to his great

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respect for Rabbi Kotler's authority, Rabbi Soloveitchik would not openly contravene his ruling" (p. 232). And he continues: "While Rabbi Kotler's objection to joining such groups has become more accepted since the *psak* was issued, it continues to have detractors among Orthodox Rabbis." This is surely a remarkable understatement. The fateful decision of Rabbi Soloveitchik, as head of RCA's *Halacha* Commission, not to throw his weight behind the *psak* of the *Gedolim* did not do anything for Rabbi Kotler's authority, but, on the contrary, made it possible for the RCA and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations to disregard the *psak*. This, more than any other factor, helped formalize today's deep split between what is called "Modern Orthodoxy" (or "Centrism") and "Traditionalist Orthodoxy"—a truly tragic development which affects all aspects of Jewish life in this country and *Eretz Yisroel*. Irving Bunim himself, so deeply a part of the Yeshiva world, must have been greatly saddened by a development which so seriously interfered with the realization of his great vision of a *Klal Yisroel* led and guided by our *Gedolim*. Yet he could be proud of what was achieved and take deep satisfaction in the flourishing of the *yeshivos* across the length and breadth of the continent and their impact on Jewish life in America. Very fittingly, the Mesivta of Yeshiva Rabbi Jacob Joseph, for which he labored all his life, now carries his name.

#### THE BAAL TESHUVA MOVEMENT

**T**he flowering of Torah life is closely related to the rise of the *baal teshuva* movement which has brought home to the wider Jewish world what Torah has to contribute for our time. The importance of this development is reflected in the growing literature on the subject. A recent volume, **RETURNING TO TRADITION, THE CONTEMPORARY REVIVAL OF ORTHODOX JUDAISM**, by M. Herbert Danzger (Yale University Press, 1989, \$29.95 h.c.), seeks to assess this phenomenon in a scholarly

manner. Unfortunately the book is marred by oversimplifications and outright mistakes, major and minor. The author touches on many subjects on which he is simply not adequately informed. Thus, to give a few examples, in discussing *mechitza*, he refers to "the Second Temple . . . where men worshipped in one courtyard and women in another"; he writes of secular studies at the Yeshiva of Rabbi S.R. Hirsch in Europe, unaware that the Frankfurt Yeshiva was founded after his death and did *not* provide such studies; he calls the American Talmud Torah as historically only providing "access to the community of prayer," not to that of study, again unaware that many of these schools, in and outside New York, started out providing intensive Jewish education; he calls Yeshiva University

High School for Girls, founded in 1948, the first girls' yeshiva, whereas Rebbetzin Kaplan founded her Beth Jacob High School in 1944; particularly ludicrous is the author's statement that "social dancing was permitted in some Orthodox German Jewish schools between the wars and some Rabbis have argued that halachically it is not forbidden"—while there was dancing in some German Orthodox circles *before* the First World War and in the immediate post war years, it was fought by the rabbis, never penetrated into the schools, and was never given a green light by any halachic authority.

The author's own original research and interviewing are not to blame; the trouble is due to the sources on which he relied (for the difference between Chassidim and

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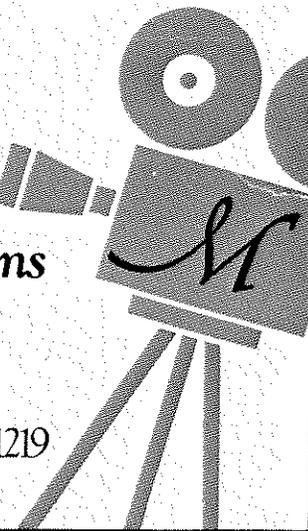
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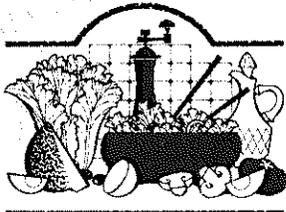
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modern Orthodox Jews he refers the readers to Potok's *The Chosen!*). Many of them grace university bookshelves but are patently uninformed and out of sympathy with traditional Orthodoxy. Thus the author reiterates the old canard that the *Aruch Hashulchan* declared it unnecessary for married women to cover their hair (he only permitted the recitation of blessings in the presence of women not covering their hair), and the claim, found in Modern Orthodox publications, that *Daas Hatorah* is a twentieth century invention (it is clearly spelled out in Talmudic sources). In categorizing Orthodox Jews, he uses the old cliché of the cold rationalist *Mitnaged* (in contrast to *Chassidim*) without ever touching on the impact of the *Mussar* movement on the yeshivos and the non-*Chassidic* world.

In all fairness, it must be stated that the author does come up with a number of interesting observations—but, on the other hand, his work would be of limited value even if there were no errors or oversimplifications in it. The social scientist can analyze, quantify, and tabulate; he can put forward reasonable interpretations and comparisons of, say, the *Teshuva* Movement with, *lehavdil*, evangelical revivalism; but, by the rules by which he works, his studies must of necessity miss the crucial essence of his subject—the Divine spark, the *pintele Yid*, the work of Divine Providence, that shape the spiritual existence of *Klal Yisroel*, in contrast to the realities of man-made religion. Thus, while there are useful insights and issues raised in this work (e.g. should potential *baalei teshuva* be given the "shock treatment" or be slowly introduced to the world of Torah?), its basic significance lies in the fact of the recognition given to the revival of Torah Judaism.

### WITHER, AMERICAN JEWRY?

**T**he "triumphalism" of a resurgent Orthodoxy is reflected in a small collection of essays

by Rabbi Eliyahu Safran, **CRISIS AND HOPE** (Esh Publications, Teaneck, 1986, \$5.95 p.b.). Written from the vantage point of a Pittsburgh pulpit, it addresses itself to the American Jewish community at large, and—delineating the obvious bankruptcy of Reform and Conservatism—it challenges their adherents to restore Jewish unity by returning to traditional Judaism. The author quotes Charles Liebman, the noted sociologist, as stressing that "the most important [cause of Orthodoxy's current influence] is

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ESTABLISH TORAH LIFE  
IN NEW YORK, OF THE  
SUCCESSSES, FAILURES,  
AND COMPROMISES  
THAT, TOGETHER, IN  
LARGE MEASURE  
SHAPED THE FACE OF  
THE AMERICAN TORAH  
COMMUNITY.

the sense of many non-Orthodox Jews that Orthodoxy is the voice of Jewish authenticity." Hence the hysterical efforts of Conservative and Reform leaders to gain recognition in the State of Israel as well as in this country, even as their movements emerge more and more as houses of cards. Their fatuity is glaringly illustrated, for instance, by the latest collection of Contemporary American Reform Responsa, published by Walter Jacob in 1987. It gives a remarkable and devastating insight into the practices of the Reform movement and its ludicrous efforts to legitimate them by using Talmudic and Rabbinic sources—e.g. to "establish" that "traditional mourning customs should be observed for a non-Jewish spouse" or that "it would be perfectly appropriate to conduct a slightly modified Jewish service for the non-Jewish spouse" (it must be noted that not all responsa are permissive; #25 makes it clear that one should not contribute to organizations inimical to Reform Judaism).

**SACRED SURVIVAL CHRONICLES THE RISE OF  
"THE CIVIL RELIGION OF AMERICAN JEWS"—A  
RELIGION WHICH FINDS ITS HIGHEST EXPRESSION  
NOT IN THE AFFIRMATION THAT "G-D IS ONE"  
BUT THAT "WE ARE ONE."**

**A NEW CIVIL RELIGION**

**T**he bankruptcy, spiritual and even organizational, of Reform and Conservatism is quite obvious—and an interesting study by an academic observer of the Jewish scene, *Jonathan S. Woocher*, professor at Brandeis University, makes the point that the American Jewish community at large has turned in a different direction. His book, **SACRED SURVIVAL**, chronicles the rise of "the civil religion of American Jews"—a religion which finds its highest expression not in the affirmation that "G-d is One" but that "we are one". It is a religion that is not centered in home and synagogue but in welfare federations and community agencies. Its goal is collective survival, and its driving beliefs are "From Holocaust to Rebirth," centered on the Holocaust and the State of Israel, and the "Uniqueness of American Jewry," chosen for a mission of helping their brethren and the world at large. Its rituals are fundraising events, study missions, and presentations.

The author sees in this "civil religion" a genuine religious movement, as opposed to secularism. But even if there can be found in it an imprisoned spark of that longing for a higher meaning in life which G-d implanted in our hearts, it is

obviously just another dead-end street for those trying to escape from the imperatives of the Torah. Ultimately they cannot sidestep a confrontation with Divine truth. Secularism, whether in its pure materialistic form or sanctified by pseudo-religious rituals, is a failure—and this is the true lesson of what Professor Woocher calls "the revitalization of American Orthodoxy" and the rise of the *Teshuva* movement.

**ACKNOWLEDGING THE  
SPIRITUAL**

**W**e mentioned before that secular scholarship refuses—is unable—to acknowledge metaphysical and supernatural factors; but it is also true that, as a result, it is increasingly unable to come to grips with the real world we live in. Two recent books illuminate this fact, albeit in very different ways. **BEYOND THE SECULAR MIND**, by *Paul Eidelberg* (Greenwood Press, 1989, \$39.95) notes that the twentieth century, the century of triumphant secularism, is also the bloodiest in human history. The author analyzes the inner contradictions and dilemmas of modern science and philosophy and formulates "a Judaic response to the problems of modernity": the need to acknowledge the supreme

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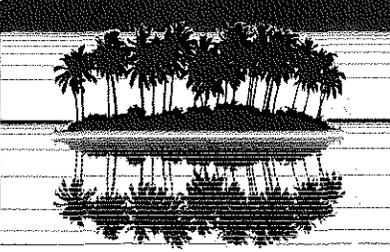
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rationality of the Torah and to find in it the answers that a narrow human rationality cannot provide.

Professor Eidelberg's writing is hardly for the ordinary reader unschooled in philosophy.

On the other hand, **THE FINAL RESOLUTION**, by Dr. Benzion Allswang (Feldheim, 1989, \$14.95 h.c.), is very readable and down-to-earth. Its primary subject is an analysis of Antisemitism (which he, more correctly, calls Anti-Jewish hostility) and how to overcome it. The author points out that the answer can only be found in Torah, whereas the various theories developed by modern ideologies have proven insufficient. This forces him to come to grips with the need to establish the validity of the Torah as a guide in scholarly research, which is so vehemently decried by secular scholarship. Hence, Dr. Allswang deals with such issues as Biblical Criticism and the historicity of the Biblical record (for instance dealing with the Ipuwer papyrus in relation to the exodus from Egypt), the remarkable results of computer analysis of the biblical text, and the relation of science to biblical teachings (in particular analyzing the claims of evolutionists). He traces the history of the Jewish people, abnormal and incomprehensible by ordinary secular standards, and observes how precisely the Torah predicts its course, and in particular, the hostility of the nations toward the Jew. This hostility can be shown to be directly related to the failure of the Jew to live up to what the Torah demands of him. Hence all efforts to overcome this hostility by toning down Jewish distinctiveness is self-defeating. The failure of Reform and Conservatism is documented by the author through the means of an interesting statistical survey conducted in the

Chicago area, and he concludes that a truly objective study of the subject inevitably shows that only a return to Torah teachings can bring peace to the Jews and, indeed, to mankind as a whole. This reviewer would like to think that the author's argumentation will convince every reader—

but unfortunately "a man's mind is swayed by his desires" and he is unable, or unwilling, to accept arguments that might discomfort him. However, for all those who sense the emptiness and frustrations of the secular world, and seek to emancipate themselves from cliches of popular science and unbelief, this book will be a great source of information and insight. It is truly a major and unique contribution to a wider understanding of what Torah says to the contemporary Jew. ■

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# PRIVATE ENTERPRISE:

## A LOOK AT CHESSED ACTIVITIES IN JERUSALEM

**H**ave you ever found yourself asking: "Isn't there somebody who helps with... looks after... takes care of... some vital community need?"

If the answer was no, did you ever consider that "somebody" could be you?

A glance at a few of Jerusalem's many *chessed* projects show that dedicated individuals, acting either alone or as catalysts for others, have accomplished a great deal. With clear goals, careful planning, and devotion to a cause, these backyard *chessed* groups have succeeded and grown, exceeding anything their founders imagined.

### THE BRIDE WORE JOY

**A** case in point is **Tzniut V'Chen, Mifal Ezer Lekallot**, founded by Rabbi Tzvi and Chaya Malov. As a teacher in Jerusalem's Bais Yaakov Vocational School, Mrs. Malov's relationship

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**Ruth Steinberg**, born in America, lives in Jerusalem where her husband studies in a *Kollel*. Her article on Schwester Selma was featured in JO, June '85.



with her students extended beyond the classroom. As she counselled engaged students and helped them prepare for their weddings, she discovered that some were going to the *chupa* with a bare cupboard. Rounds of shopping and the beautiful gifts received by their more fortunate friends are not the lot of *kallos* from poor families, or orphans, or *ba'alos teshuva* whose families break contact with them. Rabbi and Mrs. Malov were determined to see that girls like these be provided with at least a basic trousseau.

Through a series of ads in the religious newspapers, the Malovs obtained (and when necessary, purchased) great quantities of clo-

thing, linens, dishes and much more. Poor *kallos* were provided with a decent wardrobe and household goods which they otherwise could not have hoped for. The scope of the project grew beyond Mrs. Malov's students and the family living room. *Kallos* who had heard of the Malovs' project began arriving from all over *Eretz Yisroel*, including widows, divorcees, and converts to Judaism starting their lives anew. Collection points were established in various Jerusalem neighborhoods, for contributions of money and goods. There are now fifteen such *tachanot* in Jerusalem, Bnei Brak, Tel Aviv, Ashdod and Chatzor. Periodic notices in the religious press alerted the public to particularly urgent causes, with gratifying results. About three years ago, money was raised to purchase a warehouse for storage and distribution. It now serves five, six *kallos* weekly, or more than 200 a year.

The Malovs are currently in New York, but their project, which a volunteer has named *Tzniut V'Chen*, in honor of Rabbi Tzvi and Chaya, continues unabated. The procedure is simple but efficient. An interested *kalla* must present a

signed letter with an official seal from a seminary or a recognized *rav*, describing her family's situation and recommending her to *Tzniut V'Chen*. An appointment is then made to meet Chava, *Tzniut V'Chen's* chief volunteer at the warehouse. The atmosphere there is warm and friendly, reminiscent of a private sale, as the girls, together with their mothers or other companions, browse through the racks and shelves. For a modest registration fee, the *kalla* is entitled to the following: a free choice from the racks of used-but-excellent clothing for complete winter and summer wardrobes; towels, tablecloth and *challa* cover; housewares and other small articles; and when available, a set of linen and a coat. The value of this trousseau far exceeds the registration cost—which is waived for orphans, who also have first priority on special items.

*Tzniut V'Chen* receives inventory from stores and factories, and of course, from anonymous individuals at the various *tachanot*. Thus Chava will never know who it was that donated the half-a-dozen *challa* covers, the coffee set, or the irons she so gladly distributed. The rest is purchased through private contributions. The quiet joy and good feeling imparted to every *kalla* at the warehouse must be seen to be fully appreciated. For many girls, *Tzniut V'Chen* has meant the difference between a wedding postponed indefinitely, and one happily celebrated.

**"IT'S A BOY!  
COULD YOU LEND US . . . ?"**

**"M**azel tov, my wife just had a boy. Could you lend me \$200 for the *bris*?"

Chanie had a better idea. Instead of a loan, to be repaid, she offered to prepare the *bris* herself. She and several friends divided up the cooking and baking, Yosef bought coldcuts, and the result was a beautiful *seudas mitzva*. Chanie did not know it, but this *bris* was the kickoff

For many girls, *Tzniut V'Chen* has meant the difference between a wedding postponed indefinitely, and one happily celebrated.

for **Simchat Rachel, Gemach Lebritot al shem Rachel Marcus (Halperin)**. Chanie became intrigued by the idea of helping people with neither money to spare on catering, nor a backup team of relatives to

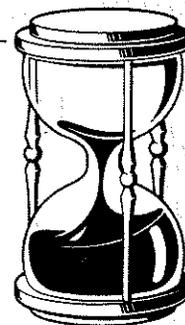
help with a *bris* or *pidyon haben*. More than any other *seudas mitzva*, these must be put together on short notice, when the mother herself cannot help out. But the idea did not take off until a tragedy jolted it into the realm of action.

Rochel Marcus Halperin was only twenty-four at the time of her sudden, tragic passing. Those who knew her were deeply touched by her warmth, her love of *chessed*, and her tremendous joy in living. Chanie, who had been her youth group leader, wanted to mark the end of *shloshim* (thirty day mourning period) with a memorial fund that would be in keeping with Rochel's joyous, loving spirit. She suggested her *bris* idea to several friends, all

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of whom thought it too cumbersome and improbable to work. But two hundred invitations went out for a *kinus* on the *shloshim*, and when the idea was presented there, the response was promising. During a break in the program, Chanie mingled with the crowd to test the idea further.

"Some were ready to volunteer," she recalls, "but others really went crazy over the idea."

The "crazy ones," as she fondly calls them, who were prepared to help twice monthly, became the first *merakzot*, or neighborhood heads, out of whose homes the *bris'n* are prepared. The others, divided by neighborhood, became the first corps of volunteers. Several *roshei yeshiva* and local *chessed* groups were informed of the new project. The first *bris* candidate arrived within a week, and Simchat Rachel became a reality. The next week there were two requests for *bris'n*, then three. The calls kept coming and Simchat Rachel began growing.

In less than two and a half years, Simchat Rachel has a network of twenty *merakzot* and some 800 volunteers handling seven or eight

Often the guests at such a *bris* will be so impressed that they become volunteers themselves; the very success of the project lays the groundwork for further activity.

*bris'n* weekly, often several in a single day. The secret of the system's success is its well-defined allocation of labor. Everyone involved has one specific job: thus the burden is not too great on any one individual, but the sum total is enormous. Here is how it works for a typical *bris* with sixty guests:

Chanie receives a request for a *bris*. She relays the information to the appropriate *marakezet*, and arranges for delivery of cold cuts, paperware and other accessories to her home. The *merakezet* calls fifteen women from her list of neighborhood volunteers, and each brings her one specified home-made dish, from which the *merakezet* prepares the complete *bris* package, to be picked up by the father the

night before the *bris*. The *merakezet* is called upon twice monthly, while a regular volunteer contributes only once a month; a list of neighborhood volunteers is large enough to allow for alternating. The system works every time.

The parents pay a small sum to cover part of the expenses. The food is donated by the volunteers, and the rest of the price difference is covered by private contributions. Not only would it cost the parents a great deal more to purchase it all on their own, but with Simchat Rachel, the father is also saved the tremendous bother of single-handedly planning, shopping, and organizing, at a time when he is faced with other expenses and has his hands full.

Who is eligible for a *bris* by Simchat Rachel? Whoever can pay \$400 for a caterer, or has family who will help prepare, is asked not to use the service; there is no shortage of people who meet the criteria. After more than three hundred *bris'n*, Chanie can usually tell by a caller's reaction to her description of the menu if he needs them or not. Simchat Rachel is most commonly used by *baalei teshuva* and new *olim*, particularly from the Soviet Union. Often the guests at such a *bris* will be so impressed that they become volunteers themselves; the very success of the project lays the groundwork for further activity.

**WHEN BABY MAKES THREE, SIX, OR NINE . . .**

**I**nitial setbacks are not indications of failure, as in the case of **Tohar Rachel Chessed Organization**, in memory of Rachel Weiss and her children Nesanel, Refael and

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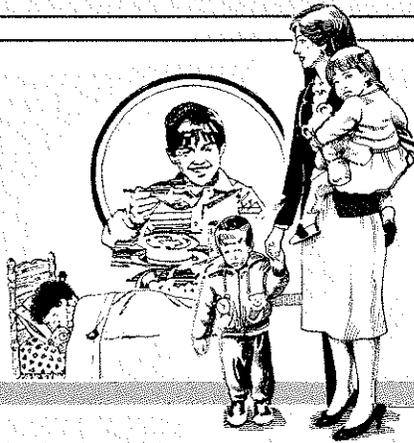
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Efraim עי"ה. Several years ago, a number of women in Jerusalem's Ramot 03 neighborhood undertook to provide cooked food for new mothers. Due to organizational problems, the program was short-lived. The idea was shelved but not forgotten.

Last Elul, Rachel Weiss, one of the women who had been active in Ramot 03's *ezer yoldot* (aid for new



**TOHAR RACHAEL**  
CHESED ORGANIZATION

טהר רחל  
ארגון חסד ועזר לילדות

תהר - רחל

mothers), moved to Teveria where her husband joined the local *kollel*. When the *kollel* women got together, Rochel suggested the idea of an *ezer yoldot* as a unifying force in their new community.

Tragically, Rachel Weiss did not live to see her plan to fruition. Less than three months later, she and her three small sons were killed in a terrorist attack on a Jerusalem-bound bus. Two days later, two of her friends from Ramot decided to bring Rachel's idea to life. On the day following the *shiva*, a *kinus* (assembly) of 500 women was held. Plans for the new group were announced and a second *kinus* was called for Chanuka. 1,500 women attended the Chanuka meeting, which raised 25,000 IS as the organization's financial base. Leaflets describing the new project were distributed throughout the neighborhood. By Rosh Chodesh Teves, the first new mother was referred and Tohar Rachel went into action.

Tohar Rachel's system is based on a five-member board composed of the original two founders and three other neighbors, twenty *merakzot* (area heads), and a team of hired and volunteer workers. Since it is a neighborhood organization, the *merakzot* quickly hear of new mothers to whom they offer their services. The mother has a choice of options: 1) a week of catered meals for the family, 2) twelve hours of cleaning help, 3) at least three afternoons of babysitting, including supper,

showers, and bedtime for the children, 4) help in paying for a stay at the Mother and Baby Convalescent Home, 5) help in purchasing such items as disposable diapers and formula, 6) a combination of the above, worked out by the mother and the board.

In special cases, the board allows for longer periods of help. The catered meals were chosen as more efficient than collected homemade food. The cleaning women are paid workers, but the babysitters are local teenage volunteers. The initial twenty babysitters were recently appointed group heads, each in charge of assigning three girls for every weekly shift, and a party was held to attract additional volunteers.

The mother can avail herself of these services anytime during the first month after birth, and can continue them afterwards on a paying basis, if she wishes. Expectant mothers confined to bed are also served by Tohar Rachel. They are also offered the continued use of Tohar Rachel workers at a reduced price for as long as they need them. Anyone who has tried to obtain reliable household help during a family crisis can appreciate what a *chesed* this truly is! Tohar Rachel also sponsors a series of *shiurim* for women throughout the neighborhood, to encourage the sense of unity fostered by their organization.

Every aspect of Tohar Rachel's functioning is subject to close rab-

binical guidance and strict accounting. Other neighborhoods, even as far away as Haifa, have expressed interest in forming their own chapters of Tohar Rachel.

Who is eligible? Any new mother in Ramot 03 and 04 regardless of family size and income.

"We are not a *tzeddaka* fund," the board insists, "we are a *chesed* group, women helping other women." A comfortable first-time mother and a struggling mother of ten are served by Tohar Rachel; there is no stigma involved in accepting help.

The budget is covered by private contributions and fundraising events. In its first two and a half months of existence, Tohar Rachel helped seventy new mothers get back on their feet. With G-d's help, they look forward to many, many more.

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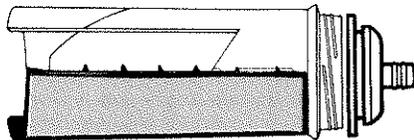
**A MILK BANK  
FOR ALLERGIC BABIES**

**A** community's most vital needs may often be neglected. Consider the **Bank Chalav Aim**.

The "Cohens" of Jerusalem had lost three children, and were fighting a day-by-day, hour-by-hour battle for the life of their fourth. The Cohen children were very delicate and highly allergic. Their sensitive digestive systems rejected not only standard formula like Materna or Similac, but even special non-allergic ones like Isomil, Nutramagen, or Progestamin. They could only tolerate mother's milk, and Mrs. Cohen could not nurse.

"Devora," a neighbor, looked on as the Cohens went literally from door to door, collecting tiny amounts of milk to feed their baby—10 cc from one woman, perhaps 20 cc from another. As Mrs. Cohen became desperate, she began knocking on

strange doors hoping to find a new mother. The baby cried through the night, hungry for food his parents could not provide, but poor Mrs. Cohen could only cry along with him. The nightmare played itself out every single day, before every feeding—new babies eat at least six times a day. The Cohens were on the verge of a breakdown.



Devora was shocked. Surely the Cohens were not the only ones. Was there no other way to obtain milk for babies like theirs? She soon discovered that, indeed, there was not; not through Kupat Cholim (comprehensive health insurance), or the hospitals, or the local government-run baby clinics. Any parent in a similar predicament was on his own, and the results were often tragic. Devora learned that there were mothers' milk banks in several European countries and the United States. Watching the Cohens' agony spurred Devora and several other women to try to form the first such bank in *Eretz Yisroel*. Their inquiries on the subject led them to Professor Frier of Shaare Zedek Hospital, an expert on children's nutrition and author of a voluminous study on mother's milk. He graciously shared his vast knowledge and explained the measures of sterility and deep freezing necessary. The next step was to approach the Ministry of Health, which gave the project its blessing. They also received endorsements from several prominent *rabbanim*. Devora and her friends then wrote letters to every pediatrician listed in the Golden (classified) Pages, announcing the milk bank's founding and approval of the Ministry of Health. The first baby to use the service, a tiny three-week-old patient at Bikur Cholim Hospital named Yisroel, was referred almost immediately.

Some desperate mothers had begun to halve the amount of milk powder in every bottle. This may cut down on expenses, but it also cuts down on the baby.

A small ad was placed in the *Hamodia* daily, calling on mothers to contribute milk for a case of *pikuach nefesh*, mortal danger, which Yisroel certainly was. He could digest nothing but mother's milk and was severely dehydrated. His parents and the hospital staff had despaired of saving him, but the fresh milk, contributed by women who would never know Yisroel or his parents, saved his life. Today he is a healthy, blossoming child.

In less than two years, the Bank Chalav Aim has served close to thirty children who suffer from kidney, heart or intestinal trouble, hereditary disorders, or severe allergies. After suffering dangerous weight loss, dehydration, and ultimately, hospitalization, the baby is fed through a nose tube, but continues to reject the various formulae. Until the formation of the milk bank, there were no cures for children who could not obtain mother's milk privately. After a year or so, the children graduate to other foods and live normal, healthy lives; until then, the milk bank is literally their lifeline.

From Jerusalem, the bank spread to Bnei Brak, then to Rehovot, Kfar Chassidim, Ashdod, Haifa, and most recently, Netivot—wherever there is a child who needs their help. A network of donors is solicited through the religious press. Milk is deep-frozen and then delivered to a local collection point (there are

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thirty-two in Jerusalem alone) or picked up by a volunteer driver, deposited in the main freezer, or in donated space in private freezers.

While Bank Chalav Aim is the only one of its kind in *Eretz Yisroel*, and its services are used by hospitals and pediatricians throughout the country, it receives not one penny from any official source. The volunteers are forced to raise the entire operating expenses through private contribution. Although the milk—the bank's main resource—is contributed free, the bank requires some basic equipment to function. In addition to freezers and insulated boxes, at least three thousand sterile storage cups are used monthly. Most importantly, simple hand operated equipment wears out fairly quickly, due to the constant boiling essential to maintain sterility. Electric equipment at four times the price would greatly improve the organization's daily operation... if resources would allow.

The milk bank has no office other than the space donated by a real estate agent at 23 Malachi Street in Geula. Everyone involved in the founding and running of the bank—the management, local heads, drivers, and of course the donors—work on an entirely volunteer basis. In addition, these people are also all *frum*. The beneficiaries, quite often, are not. The question of a recipient's level of observance is non-existent for Bank Chalav Aim. The staff remembers how one totally secular father picked up milk for his child on *Erev Yom Kippur*. He broke down in tears as he told them, "You have earned your *Olam Haba* with what you have done for this one child alone."

#### HELPING A NEIGHBOR— TIMES 800

**Y***ad Eliezer* began almost by accident, with one woman's simple desire to help a neighbor, and is now a *chessed* empire of 2,500 volunteers in an ever-growing range of projects.

Ten years ago, Hadassa Weisel of Kiryat Sanz became friendly with



the "Levys," a neighborhood family. Mrs. Levy and her four children all suffered from different forms of heart trouble, and in general seemed very weak. Mrs. Weisel took them to a doctor. The prescription: three nutritious meals daily; they were all suffering from malnutrition. Two of the Weisels' daughters, armed with grocery baskets, were sent to knock on doors in the neighborhood to "collect food for a poor family," filling the baskets with a variety of food-stuffs. At first the Levys refused the food, but Mrs. Weisel insisted it was *pikuach nefesh* and they gave in, soon asking if another family could receive similar packages. Through the Levys, the Weisels had stumbled on a most effective way of helping poor families make it through the month. The list of people receiving food from the Weisels grew quite rapidly and the girls enlisted friends to help collect. In no time, it was more than they could handle, so Mrs. Weisel asked the principal of Bais Yaakov of Givat Shaul to allow one class a month to collect food in Givat Shaul, which was then brought to the Weisels, crowding their two-and-a-half room apartment. Mrs. Weisel stopped cars in the street to transport the baskets, and drafted neighborhood youngsters to deliver them. After three and a half years and 365 families, the project moved to a nearby ware-

house. It came to be known as *Yad Eliezer* in memory of Mrs. Weisel's father, who passed away after the birth of the project. Today there are eight *Yad Eliezer* warehouses, and 800 families receive monthly baskets of donated and purchased food; 150 receive the food in the form of twice-monthly grocery cards for bread and dairy products.

#### MORE TO COME

**M**ore was yet to come. In their contact with poor families, the Weisels noticed that many lacked basic furniture and appliances. Nine years ago, a newspaper ad asked for used but good furniture to be distributed by *Yad Eliezer*. Central heating is a relatively new feature in Jerusalem, absent from older buildings, so heaters and thousand of blankets were distributed. A donated van transports furniture, refrigerators and more... With the food project, and then the booming furniture distribution, it seemed they had reached their limit; but not yet. Says Mrs. Weisel: "Whenever I think we can extend ourselves no further... the *Ribbono Shel Olam* sends us the idea for a new project. And He sends along the means to carry it out too."

For example: About four years ago, Mrs. Weisel spoke to a young friend,

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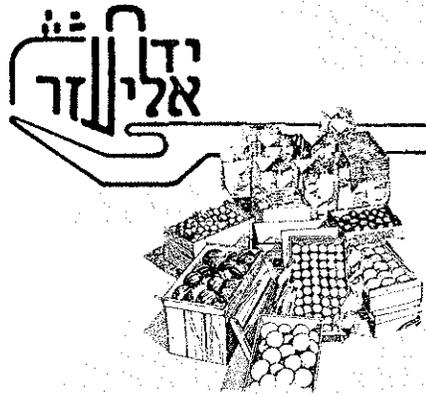
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soon to be married, about her wedding plans. It turned out that an ordinary wedding in an average hall cost five thousand dollars! "You don't have money for a *shetel*—five thousand dollars?" Mrs. Weisel asked.

The *kalla* had no answer. Mrs. Weisel offered to organize some of her fellow teachers to prepare the wedding dinner themselves, at a tremendous savings to the young couple. The dinner was a great success. It was not long before they had another request, and another, and another. Today the "Yad Eliezer wedding" is a carefully planned effort involving scores of people. They serve a standard Israeli wedding dinner, part of which is made by a vast number of volunteers. The volunteers are headed by a group of wedding *merakzot*, each in charge of a single item. The paid staff at the weddings—cooks, waiters, cleaning help, and so on—are less-



than-affluent people whom Yad Eliezer pays more than the going wage. The families of a *chassan* and *kalla* abroad are invited to sponsor a Yad Eliezer wedding; the five hundred weddings in four years, with one hundred in the six months between last Tishrei and Nissan alone, are ample proof of Mrs. Weisel's words: When *Hashem* sends Yad Eliezer an idea, He sends the means to implement it.

For many families, monthly food baskets are not enough. About three years ago, Yad Eliezer developed a new plan to provide of cooked *Shabbos* food to those in need. One or more portions of cooked *Shabbos* food are delivered to a neighborhood *merakezet*. There is one for every few streets or buildings in the religious neighborhoods, with one hundred fifty in Har Nof alone. From the *merakzot*'s homes, the food is brought to three huge industrial freezers, in Ezras Torah, where it is stored and ultimately delivered to some four hundred families (wedding leftovers find their way to these freezers too). To this add chickens, vegetables, and other supplementary items on a weekly basis, totaling 2,000-2,500 chickens monthly, paid for by regular contributions. (Contributions are marked according to *hechsheitim*, and are then matched with the recipients' preference.)

Seasonal projects include three-times yearly distribution of large sacks of potatoes, *shalach manos* for otherwise forgotten families, *matanos la'evyonim* pledges

phoned to Yad Eliezer co-ordinators abroad and delivered on Purim, and an extensive *maos chittim* program for Pesach. In addition, as individual need arises, Yad Eliezer provides money to pay for disconnected utilities; for shoes, blankets, and medicine; for food for special diets.

Yad Eliezer's newest project is Yad Eliezer for Babies. Special baby formula can cost as much as fifteen dollars for a three-day supply. Some desperate mothers had begun to halve the amount of milk powder in every bottle. This may cut down on expenses, but it also cuts down on the baby. So concerned Jews "adopt" a baby in *Eretz Yisroel*, funding a healthy supply of full bottles of nutrition formula.

Yad Eliezer operates out of the Weisel home on a strictly volunteer basis; the budget is over \$1 million yearly, covered only by private contributions. Of the 1,250 families reached by Yad Eliezer, a great many quite literally live on the help it provides.

Who is served by Yad Eliezer? Needy people, regardless of social or cultural background; large families who cannot possibly manage on their bread-winner's paycheck; a frighteningly large number of sick people; families whose incomes are consumed by the high rents prevalent in Jerusalem; and *baalei teshuva* who need help getting established in their new lives. Yad Eliezer does not distribute *tzed-daka* money lightly; every case is carefully evaluated. They are proud to note that 950 families have left their rolls, since they no longer need help.

"When we first started giving out food," recalls Rabbi Weisel, "I held every can of food as if it were an *esrog*—a *mitzva* object. *Baruch Hashem* I still have the same feeling for every last can, for every small detail of our work."

The Weisels insist that they have seen again and again the principle of *s'char mitzva mitzva* as a living reality. The thousands of *mitzvos* Yad Eliezer does are always rewarded with the means to do still more. ■

Rabbi Aryeh Schechter

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# Reb Yaakov Kaminetzky's Cheder Is Evicted From Its Home

## 250 Talmidim are scattered to six locations as Bais Mikroh races to complete new facility

MONSEY, NY—Yeshiva Bais Mikroh, the cheder founded 15 years ago, by Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky Zt"l, is without a home. Town authorities have similarly attempted to close several other Yeshivas and Shuls in Monsey.



Reb Yaakov, zt"l, with a Bais Mikroh student.

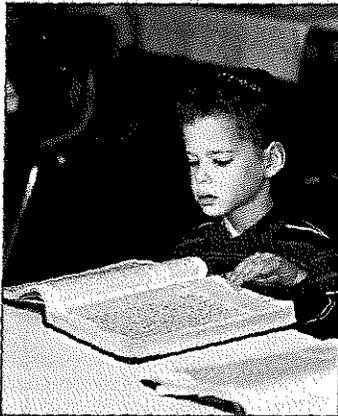
After town authorities reneged on an agreement to permit classes to continue until the Yeshiva's new building was completed, Bais Mikroh was forced to make emergency arrangements to enable school to begin on schedule in September. Among the six makeshift rented locations are a dormitory room in another Yeshiva, the Ezras Noshim of a Shul, and the finished basement of a private home.

Meanwhile, the Yeshiva accelerated the construction schedule of

its new building on Viola Road near West Maple Ave. "Although our facility and students are making the best of the situation and learning is at a high level," said Rabbi Gavriel Bodenheimer, Menahel, "the present conditions are intolerable. We must complete the new building much faster than we had expected."

With a massive infusion of cash, the building could be completed by February, according to Executive Director Rabbi Shaye Cohen. "Each parent has undertaken a large obligation to help finance the accelerated construction," he said. "But the sum that was to have been raised over a two or three-year period must now be raised in just a few short months."

The Yeshiva's housing crisis is an ironic chapter in the history of the



A Bais Mikroh student.

cheder, which Reb Yaakov Kaminetzky zt"l founded and nurtured until his passing. With his input into pedagogical methods and curriculum, Bais Mikroh soon gained national recognition for its distinctive, non-pressured learning envi-



Bais Mikroh races to finish building.

ronment, where children are treated as individuals and where creativity and inquisitiveness are encouraged. With the passage of time, the remarkable learning achievements—qualitative and quantitative—of the students vindicated Bais Mikroh's methods. Its fame spread and it became a model for elementary schools elsewhere.

But success brought with it popularity and growth, and the school's enrollment outgrew its modest facility. Classrooms suitable to 15 children were used for 25. The school purchased a two-acre property for a new building to accommodate the current student body as well as modest growth.

**Our students are scattered in makeshift locations all over town, evicted by town ordinances and officials who are hostile to the needs of the Torah community. Won't you please help us finish our new building quickly so that we can be under one roof again?**

Please mail to: YESHIVA BAIS MIKROH,  
23 West Maple Ave., Monsey, NY 10952.

Dear Rabbi Bodenheimer:

**Yes, I want to help.**

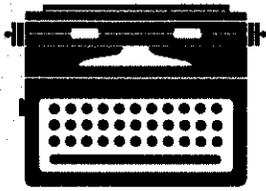
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# Letters to the Editor

## KIRUV OPPORTUNITIES IN THE BIKUR CHOLIM SETTING

To the Editor:

I am responding to the article on "The Art of Bikur Cholim" (Oct. '88)—I found it most beneficial and inspiring. However, I cannot but object to the last of the eight practical guidelines mentioned. The content of this particular paragraph is that one should not be tempted to make the hospital patient *frum*, as (a) he will always suspect one of trying to "sell" something, rather than being genuinely interested in his well-being; (b) he is only in a temporary frightened and vulnerable position, and once out of hospital he would generally revert "back to normal"—from Rabbi Schecter's experience, people on recovery from a serious illness usually want to just "enjoy life," as they feel uncertain as to how much of it they still have left; (c) the most potent *mussar* for the patient is for him to see one's example of concern for his welfare.

These lines surely contradict very basic Jewish *hashkafa*. For what purpose should physical suffering be inflicted upon an individual, if not to bring him closer to his Creator, to arouse him to the realization that life is in His hands, and it should rather be used to fulfill His wishes? I do appreciate the fact that, of course, one cannot openly preach to a weak, bed-ridden patient, but any patient who has experienced the fear of a serious health problem, and has at least a little faith in G-d, already feels that he is under His mercy, and is obviously praying to Him for his help to recovery—this person is only *looking* for someone to talk to on these lines. From what I have seen here in *Eretz Yisroel*, even the secular cry out to G-d out of pain and anxiety. What situation is more propitious than this to bring a person to *teshuva*? A subtle suggestion toward commitment would certainly not be out of place.

Whilst impressing the patient by genuine kindness shown towards him, I feel it would be an asset to

his spiritual well-being if a word could be added that one is pleased to use one's good health to do the will of the One Who granted it . . . the patient probably has time to think this over.

Through his connection with Jewish hospital of Montreal, Rabbi Schecter has the opportunity of helping those who have recovered to appreciate the value of the experience they underwent, enabling them to "enjoy life" in its true sense of purposeful living.

MRS. T. COHEN  
*Bnei Brak*

## THE JOYS OF VISITING PATIENTS

To the Editor:

I particularly enjoyed your article on *bikur cholim*. Having visited a local nursing home weekly for the past three years, I was able to identify with the things you wrote about.

One particular point I found interesting was your statement, "Don't try to make the patient *frum*." Having been involved in *kiruv*, I often tried to work on my nursing home friends. After getting into a theoretical argument with a sick woman, however, I realized I had been making a mistake. Thank you for clarifying that point.

There is one more point I would like to stress. Besides being a great *mitzva*, *bikur cholim* is extremely satisfying and enjoyable. People that come to visit the nursing home with dragging feet always return with alacrity the next week. The sick and elderly have so much advice to give. Hearing a sick old man say that Thank G-d he is fine, can teach a person a lot. In addition, the stories the elderly tell are often amazing. I can honestly say that visiting the nursing home is fun and I look forward to it weekly.

VIVIANNE ALEXANDER  
*Flushing, N.Y.*

## THE ESSENCE OF BIKUR CHOLIM

To the Editor:

In regard to your extensive cov-

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erage of the *mitzva* of *bikur cholim*, I think it is worthwhile to point out an insight from *Harav Hagaon Rav Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל* in *Igros Moshe, Yoreh De'ah* 1:223, par. 2

"Although all of the components of the *mitzva* are essential, prayer for the patient is unique in that it is a *mitzva* that is impossible to accomplish through others. Thus, even if others will also pray, the need is never filled—your prayer will still be lacking, and each individual's prayer is helpful.

"This explains the emphasis we find in *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah* 335: 4, 'One who visits but fails to pray for the patient's recovery has not fulfilled the *mitzva*.'"

(RABBI) MOSHE GOLDBERGER  
Staten Island, N.Y.

(The writer is author of a number of instructive and inspirational books and pamphlets on the proper observance of various *mitzvos*.)

#### TRY THE NURSING HOMES

To the Editor:

In response to a beautiful article, "The Art of *Bikur Cholim*," by Rabbi Myer Schecter, as a *mevaker cholim* I would like to add a few suggestions, some of which were alluded to in the article.

I strongly feel that a greater need lies in visiting patients confined to their beds in nursing homes who must cope with never-ending, depressing circumstances, with generally few family members or friends to comfort them, than visiting hospital patients who usually must cope with only a short-term illness, with family and friends nearby. Granted that this is not always the case, I find it more the rule than the exception.

Further, due to the fact that many of the *cholim* are and have always been irreligious Jews, it is advisable to bring them a candy or dried fruit and assist them in making a *bracha*. The merit of a *mitzva* can make a person well, as is written (*Shabbos* 32a) "To a *choleh* we say, 'display your merits that you may be healed.'"

Thank you for a much needed article and let us hope that in the *zchus* of this great *mitzva* we will soon merit to welcome *Moshiach*, as is written in *Avos D'Reb Nosson* (chapter 30): "Comforting mourners and visiting the sick bring good to the world."

ELIEZER CHULDA  
Chicago, Ill

#### CHESED HOTLINE

To the Editor:

The recent issue devoted to *chesed* (Oct.'88) prompts me to

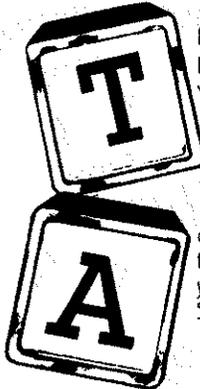
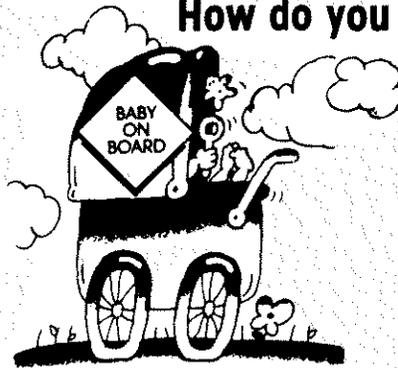
inform your readership of a unique, free *chesed* service, our Hotline to Jerusalem.

The Hotline was originally instituted as a medium for Kollel America to repay in some measure the generosity of American Jewry that funds the activities of the American Rav Meir Baal Hanes Charity in *Eretz Yisroel*. It has burgeoned into a conduit for *tefilla* requests from both American continents as well as Europe.

Recent upgrading of the Facsimile machine (the fax) as our communication vehicle to Israel has

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\*ANSWER: Materna

increased the efficiency and flexibility of the operation, and *avant garde* technology is being utilized to facilitate the age-old communication of man with his Maker, a sort of modern-day *Kfitzas Haderech* for one's supplications to arrive at the *Makom Hamikdash*.

Sharing knowledge of the existence of the Hotline will undoubtedly increase its use, bringing *א"ת* more *refuos* and *yeshuos*, happiness and hope to the world. The Hotline number is 1(800) 545-PRAY.

RABBI CHAIM LEVIN  
Executive Vice President  
Kollel America  
New York City

### HELPING FAMILIES OF PATIENTS

To the Editor:

Your article on *chessed* prompted me to write about our town, Pittsburgh, where we have world-renowned university-affiliated hospitals, which specialize in all types of transplant surgery. In the past five years or so, we have hosted many patients and their families from all parts of the country and the world, particularly *Eretz Yisroel*. These patients are seriously ill, and this surgery is their hope for a new beginning, with the help of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*.

*Boruch Hashem*, we have had many success stories of men and women who go on to lead high-quality lives, each one in itself is a *nes min hashamayim*, and deserves a story in itself; sometimes there is high hope, only to see a tragic end. We have had a number of patients from Bnei Brak, Yerushalayim, and *Kibbutzim*. They run the gamut of observance and *hashkafa*. This is true for the American patients, as well.

Under the leadership of Chantze Butler and Rebbetzin Faygie Safran, a program was instituted to take care of their needs, while they are here. To make them as comfortable as possible, an apartment was set up to house the families in the home of Rabbi and Rebbetzin Safran. They have since left Pittsburgh, but the kind people who purchased the house still maintain it for this purpose. The apartment happens to be next door to the Kollel, and so Kollel *Yungeleit* become involved and helpful to the patients and their families.

People have freely given their homes to patients and their families, upon their release from the hospital, for the period of their recuperation and to their families as they come and go during the recovery period.

Meals are coordinated, cooked and delivered to each one according

to their specific *kashrus* standards. Patients and families are routinely picked up and taken to the airport. Relatives have been accompanied by foot on *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov*. Patients who share rooms with our guests marvel at the attention and care they constantly receive. Our members keep in constant touch with doctors, the staff, the patients and their families.

Some have spent many a night at the bedside of our guests and we have been *zoche* to share in subsequent *simchos*. Through this network, each patient is "adopted" by a family here who keeps in close touch to fill needs as they arise. Needless to say, much *tefilla* and many tears go into each case. We hope for *siyato deshmayo* and a favorable outcome for all our guests.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Other letters described similar hospitality and support systems sponsored by groups as well as individuals from Washington Heights to Midtown Manhattan, in Deal, N.J., and Suffern, N.Y., from Boston to Seattle.

The cover picture illustrated *Bnos Agudath Israel Bikur Cholim* volunteers visiting home-bound seniors as part of Project STAY, which coordinates the *chessed* activities of several hundred girls. Other activities include special celebrations in honor of *Yomim Tovim*, home-bound parties and *tele-pals* for people in inaccessible neighborhoods.—N.W.

### RABBI SCHECTER RESPONDS:

Theoretically, I'm in complete agreement with Mrs. Cohen, but it is not so simple. It would be ideal if the *choleh* is "looking" for someone to talk about faith, purpose in

## 200 ORPHANED BRIDES . . .

Last year, תשמ"ט, about 200 Kallahs, Yesomos and Baalei Teshuva, received a complete wardrobe toward their wedding from the Malov family. Weekly, about 5-7 Kallahs with no one to turn to, came to the Malov family for this *chessed*.

Each Kallah cost them about \$200. Some clothing were donated, some were received directly from factories, and others were privately purchased by the Malovs.

The Rabbonim and Gaonim of *Eretz Yisroel* have given their approval on this work and have publicized it.

Dear Brothers. The Malov family does not have an office or secretaries. They are trying to help these Kallahs on their own.

We ask you to please send new clothing for these Kallahs, or send your contribution, which could help purchase this clothing.

American and Canadian residents,  
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life, concepts of *yesurim*, and a *hashkafa* of what has happened to him/her. My experience is that the vast majority of patients are not looking for *hashkafa* and are annoyed at the suggestion.

Mr. Chulda's advice such as making a *bracha* with the patient has more meaning to the *choleh*, since it gives him immediate hope, without contemplative thought. Even when a person is seriously ill and cries out to G-d for help, the true test of that cry is seen after the patient leaves hospital. Few individuals take the decisive step. The irony of it is that those who promised themselves more vacation time usually revert to their older patterns, even as workaholics.

The bottom line is that we all continue to walk a thin line, delicately balancing ourselves between fulfilling the *mitzva* of *tochacha* and recognizing situations when *tochacha* will not help. The success of the *Baal Teshuva* Movement has mainly come through Torah study and rational thinking in rational moments.

Commenting further on Mr. Chulda's most sensitive letter, we can only emphasize that *Bikur Cholim* does not involve choices of "more important" or "better" areas to visit. Hospitals include sick and crippled children up to the paralyzed aged, or victims of Alzheimer's. We cannot measure tragedy to patients and families. It is so personal, sometimes devastating. We look at the individual and do the best we can for him—wherever he is found—with the tools that G-d gave us.

(RABBI) MYER SCHECTER

#### NEO-NATAL LESSONS

To the Editor:

Having given birth to a premature baby and benefitted from the tremendous advances made in neonatal care, I wish to share with your readers the following incident.

I invited my S.E.E.D. partner (an outreach effort in Manchester) to come up to the Special Care Baby Unit. On noticing a baby that weighed 750 grams at birth, born after a gestation period of 23-24

weeks and still surviving after three weeks, she commented, "And look at the Abortion Law!"

Overwhelmed by all the advanced machinery, fetal heart-monitors etc., I recalled a topic in Jewish Outlook that I learnt from my esteemed teacher Rabbi M. Miller (Gateshead Teachers Training College) based on the writings of Rabbi Dessler. This theme "Science and Moral Programs" teaches that all scientific, medical and industrial inventions were introduced for the benefit of mankind, to strengthen their faith. Scientific progress is inversely proportional to moral progress. Necessity is, and will remain, the mother of invention. As morality declined, it necessitated these advances in science. To illustrate, in short:—Clothing began with Adam and Eve as a result of their sin. The Caxton Printing Press was invented after 24 cart loads of Jewish books had been burnt. Who could rewrite so many volumes? What would happen to the learning of Torah and to our Jewish heritage? Likewise, the telephone was invented to strengthen our appreciation of: "There is an attentive ear"; and, finally, satellites conveying news and events from all over the world at one and the same time—that "There is a watchful eye" (*Avos* 2,2).

And so to her comment regarding abortion: In our day and age, people

are willing to discard a fetus, suggesting that it has no claim to survival. The Almighty has allowed so many advances in the *last few* years in the field of care for premature babies to make us consciously aware, and to convince us, that one cannot put a value to *any* life nor know its potential for life. . . .

MRS. C. WAGSCHAL  
Salford 7  
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November 23, 7:30 P.M.

Symposium: **HONESTY AND INTEGRITY: ARE WE LIVING UP TO OUR IDEALS?**

### FRIDAY MORNING

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November 26, 10:00 A.M.

Symposium: **STRANGERS IN OUR MIDST: REACHING OUT TO THE LONELY, THE UNATTACHED, THE NEWCOMER**

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