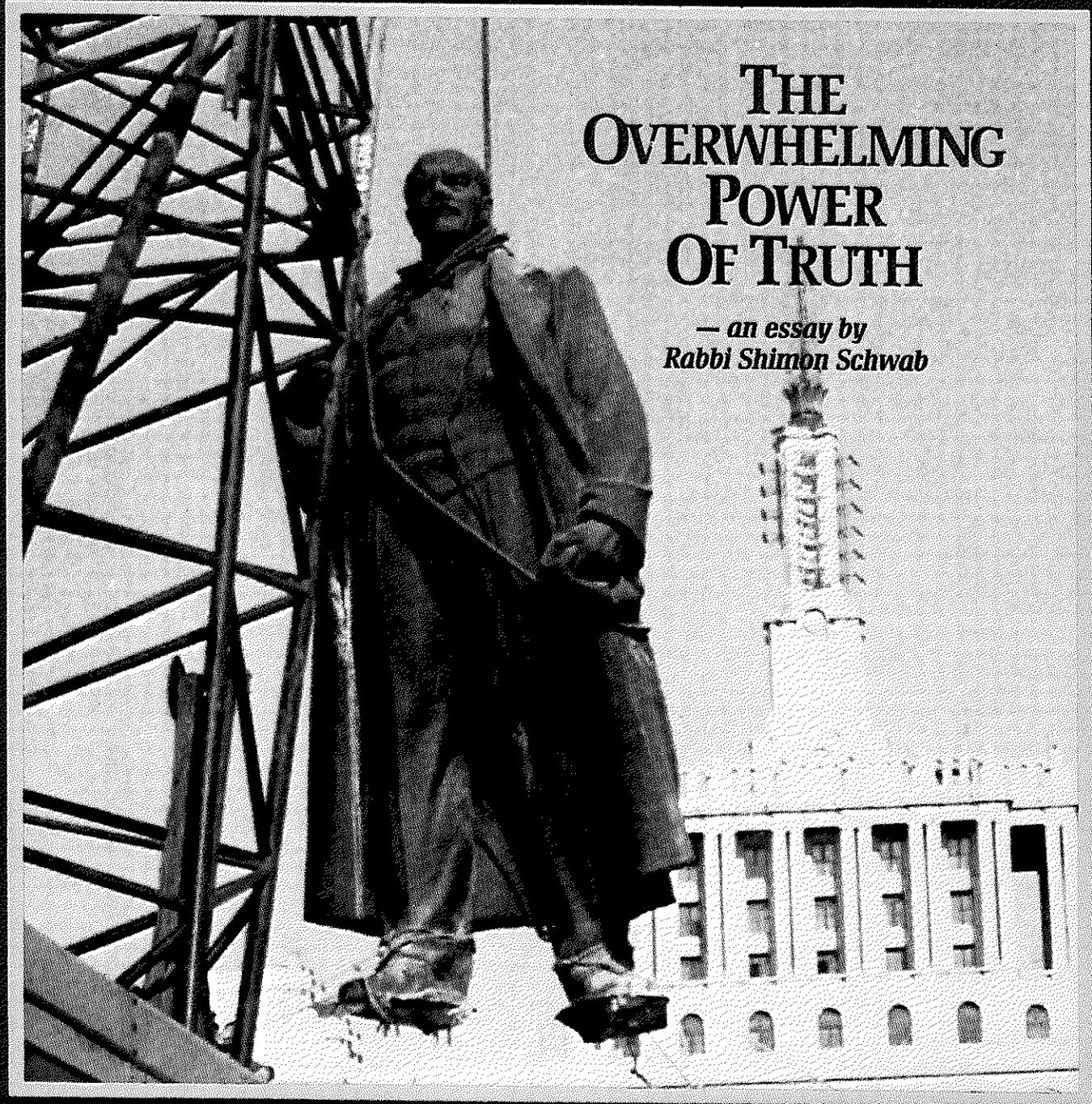


THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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VOLUME XXIII / NUMBER 2



THE OVERWHELMING POWER OF TRUTH

— an essay by
Rabbi Shimon Schwab

Lenin Statue Being Removed in Bucharest

WORLDWIDE PHOTO

WOULD YOU WANT 500 BOYS STUDYING TORAH IN YOUR LIVING ROOM?

Imagine the merit of so much Torah being learned right in your own home! Then again, you think... it might be somewhat crowded. And the carpet would probably not hold up for too long. Instead, why don't we give them a place specifically built for their needs, so that they can study in a spacious and comfortable environment?

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accommodate 1,000 students, will allow us to continue our phenomenal growth, by accepting the many students we have been forced to turn away. It will also alleviate our overcrowdedness so that our *talmidim* can develop in a setting conducive to learning.

You can have a share in this momentous undertaking. Opportunities are now available to dedicate a room or other facility - even naming the entire new building - in memory or in honor of someone dear

to you. There is no greater way to pay tribute and show your respect to a cherished relative or friend.

Even if you are unable to dedicate a facility you surely will not want to pass up this chance to be part of one of the most important Torah projects of this decade. Join with us by contributing whatever you can.

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OUR ~~THEIR~~ BURDEN:

Half Million Israelis Near Poverty

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Close to a half-million Israelis live on the poverty line, almost half of them children, according to a survey released last week by the National Insurance Institute.

Mordechai Zipori, director general of the institute, said nothing can be done to improve the situation because of economic stagnation.

"Life expectancy means that a person has to live longer than he can work."

At the same time, the poverty line has risen. They live on the family's earnings. Without a job, the population is suffering.

Jobless Rate Increases

JERUSALEM (JPFS) — Some 163,000 Israelis were unemployed in the third quarter of 1989, representing 9.1 percent of the labor force.

The rate was higher than the 8.8 percent registered a month earlier.

Economy takes a dive

JERUSALEM — After a mild recovery in September and October, Israel's economy is once more in a perilous state, with unemployment rising to a new high of 51,300 in December, a 6.3 percent increase from the previous month. It was attributed mainly to the end of the season, with a 20 percent drop in the need for factory workers.

But the unemployment trend shows no sign of abating. The absorption of tens of thousands of new immigrants is bad news for the tens of thousands of Israelis who are expected to arrive this year, many of whom will need additional training for Israel's job market.

'89 inflation put at 21.7%

TEL AVIV — Inflation bedeviled Israel last year and is expected to persist at double-digit rates. The cost-of-living index registered a 21.7 percent rise in December, bringing the annual inflation rate for 1989 to 25 percent. That is about twice the single-digit rate forecast by Finance Minister Shimon Peres at the beginning of 1989. Dov Lautman, chairman of the Manufacturers Association, said present trends indicate there is little hope the inflation rate can be brought under 10 percent in 1990.

Thousands of needy Americans in Israel — Koleh families, ill, aged, widows and orphans — are looking to Koleh America for Maos Chittim aid to enable them to celebrate Pesach.

The harsh economy, Arab unrest and record unemployment, have caused drastic price rises and subsidy eliminations. New aid applicants flood our offices as never before.

We fervently appeal to each and every American Jew to respond most generously so that we can provide for our needy American brethren in Israel.

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THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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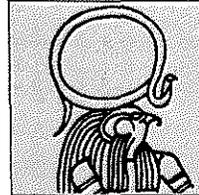
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ANTICIPATING THE FORTHCOMING NINTH SIYUM HASHAS

The date: Elul 5721/early September, 1961.

The place: Zucker's Glenwild Hotel, New York's Catskill Mountains.

The occasion: Annual Convention, Zeirei Agudath Israel.

Hundreds of Zeirei youth, members and leaders, clamor and strain to catch a glimpse of Hagaon Rav Aaron Kotler אריאל, as he approach-

es the microphone to address the gathering. The overflow crowd, whose numbers defy the yellowed occupancy sign on the wall, rise as one in reverence to the eminent *gadol*.

The Rosh Yeshiva speaks: "I am going to begin by making a *Siyum Hashas* (completion of the Talmud). For today is the day of the fifth Siyum for those who have been learning Daf Hayomi (one folio per day for seven-plus years)." The *Gaon* completes *Mesechta Nida* and says the *Hadran* (closing prayer). No one

joins in. No one else is sharing in this propitious occasion.

The scene shifts. It is now nearly 29 years later.

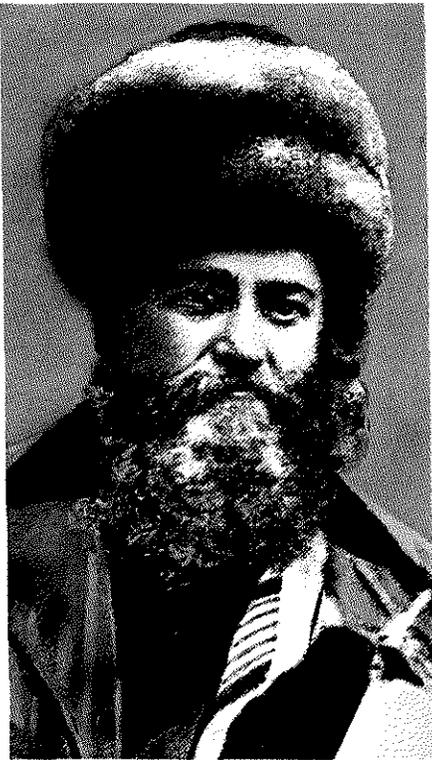
The date: Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5750/April 26, 1990.

The place: Madison Square Garden, Main Arena, New York City.

The occasion: Ninth Siyum HaShas of Daf Yomi.

Twenty thousand men, women and children, representing every walk of Torah Jewry, assemble under one roof for the loudest proclamation of allegiance to Torah

Yaakov Salomon, C.S.W. is a psychotherapist in private practice in Brooklyn, N.Y. and a member of the Kolllel of Mesivta Torah Vodaath. He is also an editor for the ArtScroll Mishnayos series.



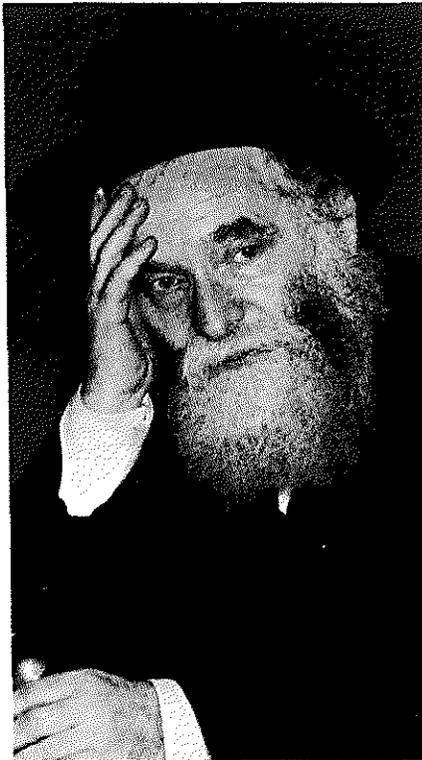
HARAV MEIR SHAPIRO

study in United States history. Forty thousand eyes witness the strength and unity of Torah, reminiscent, perhaps in some small way, of Sinai itself, while forty thousand ears hear a thunderous "Amen, Yehei shemi rabbah mevorach..." that will echo in their hearts forever! Yes. We have come a long way. *Boruch Hashem.*

PERSPECTIVE

Shlomo Hamelech taught us the appropriate vehicle for *Kiddush Hashem*: "... b'rov am hadras melech, in the multitude of people is the King's honor" (*Mishlei* 14:28). Too often, in our recent past, Jews in vast numbers have found themselves congregated for events hardly noted for their joy or celebration; i.e., funerals of *gedolim*, mass protests, and the waiting rooms of genocide. Millions of human sacrifices, Torah giants among them, journeyed on trains to extinction—never to see their families again, never to cherish Torah or even taste its beauty once more.

But on April 26th 1990, not fifty



HARAV AHARON KOTLER

years later, the subway trains will stop at 34th Street in Manhattan, and some of those same passengers, along with thousands of their children, grandchildren and *chaveirim* will surge forth from the exists and join in an unparalleled demonstration of sanctity and harmony.

Of course, the ushers and ticket-takers of Madison Square Garden are not exactly strangers to sell-out crowds. SRO (standing room only) events have been ho-hum for the folks at Gulf & Western for decades. Only this time, the protagonists will not be names like Frazier, Esposito, or Sammartino. Rock artists and lion tamers will not be in attendance. In their stead, *maggidei shiur*, prominent *rabbonim*, Chassidic leaders, and leading *Roshei Yeshiva* will shine in center stage. And the usual cheering and jeering of the crowd will be replaced by the uniform urgings of "*Hadran alach Shisha Sidrei Mishna u'Gemara*," and "*Hashem yevorech es ahmo bashalom*." Indeed, as the nightmare of one generation unfolds into the dream of another, the fulfill-

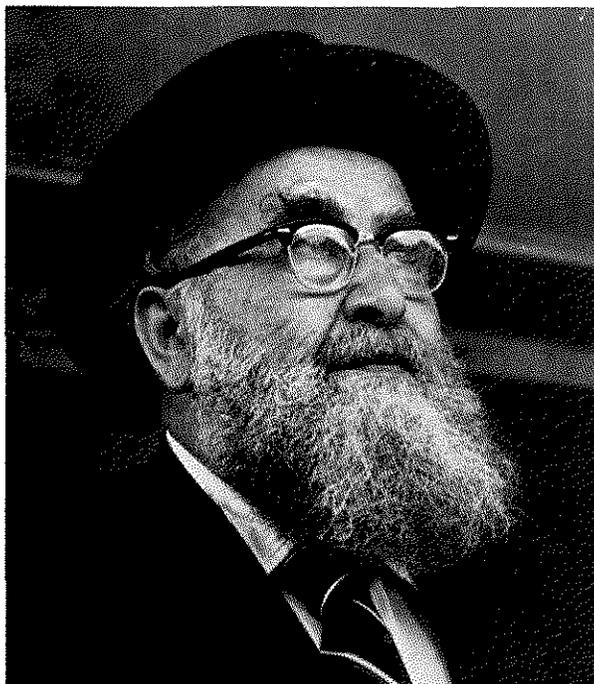
ment of the *Navi Zecharia's* prophecy is a poignant reminder of the pre-Messianic era we live in. As interpreted by our *Chazal*: "Theaters and circuses are destined to be converted into synagogues and halls of Torah study (*Megilla 6a*)"—if only for one day, this time celebrating the completion of the entire Talmud, one *daf* (two sides of the page) at a time, following the pioneering course charted by Rabbi Meir Shapiro ז"ל, the Lubliner Rav, in 1924.

"WE ARISE AND THEY ARISE"

And so the *Shas* will be completed and the traditional *Siyum tefillos* will fill the arena! "*Annu mashkimim v'hem mashkimim*. . . We arise and they arise. *Annu mashkimim l'divrei Torah, v'heim mashkimim l'devorim beteilim*. . . We arise for the words of Torah, they arise for insignificant frivolity." Directly above, championship banners and retired uniforms of sports heroes of yesteryear will hang from the Garden rafters and remind us of our exclusive status as the "*mamleches kohanim y'goi kadosh*." Let us pray that we will be worthy.

And then *Kaddish* will be said. The special *Kaddish*. The *Kaddish* reserved only for a *siyum* . . . and a burial. The *Kaddish* that will leave no eye dry, as the memories of six million *kedoshim* will be evoked and sanctified.

But even tears of anguish must also contain tears of joy. For this special *Kaddish* bears a special commonality in its recital at a *siyum* and a burial. Both of these moments only appear to be endings. They are, in fact, beginnings. Termination of one's life on this world is actually the beginning of one's eternal existence. And the culmination of the entire Talmud is also the start of the tenth cycle of *Daf Yomi*, bringing new hope and the opportunity of fulfilling in some small way the dreams and the promises for greatness that were so cruelly crushed half a century ago. ■



THE OVERWHELMING POWER OF “EMES”

“N”

I.
WHEN NEWS IS “GOOD TIDINGS”

It is almost sixty years ago that I had the privilege to be in Radin in the presence of the Chofetz Chaim זצ"ל. (See JO, Dec. '83.) At that time, I overheard a conversation between the Chofetz Chaim and his grandson, Reb Leizer, who was the *mashgiach* of the Radiner Yeshiva. It was in the morning, and the Chofetz Chaim was bent over his *sefer*. Reb Leizer entered and wished his grandfather “*Gut Morgen*.”

The above article is adapted from an address by **Rabbi Shimon Schwab**, שליט"א, Rav of K'hal Adath Jeshurun of Washington Heights, N.Y., delivered at the 67th National Convention of Agudath Israel of America.

The Chofetz Chaim turned and asked, “What’s new, Reb Leizer?”

At that time, there was a rumor that Stalin was assassinated. “We read in the papers that the *Rasha* (villain) was killed.” In those days, *Rasha*, unspecified, referred to Stalin. The Chofetz Chaim did not react. Said Reb Leizer further, “But isn’t that a *besura tova* (good tidings)?”

Replied the Chofetz Chaim, “Do the papers say that one is permitted to teach Torah to *Yiddishe Kinder in Russland*?”

Said Reb Leizer, “No.”

“In that case,” said the Chofetz Chaim, “that is not a *besura tova*.”

Today we are greeted with a *besura tova*. We are permitted to teach Torah to *Yiddishe Kinder in Russland*. It is still a long way from

having *chadorim*, Torah schools for the children. But those who teach children up to the age of 18 no longer suffer the threat of being sent to Siberia, or being sentenced to many years of imprisonment. An historic drama is unfolding before our very eyes: “*Yispordu kol po’alei aven*—the perpetrators of iniquity will be dispersed” (*Tehillim* 92,11). We are witness to the mass disillusion in Marxism, the dismemberment of the Communist empire. After more than seventy years, the so-called Iron Curtain is coming down. The world power of atheism is crumbling, and is declaring bankruptcy. “*Re’uh nijla’os Elokim*”—Let us stand back and witness what the Ruler over all nations is doing, which we are *zocheh* to see with our own eyes.

How did the ideology of Marxism actually succeed in capturing hundreds of millions of minds, to subjugate over a billion souls? And how did it come to pass that, after these seventy-plus years, this stranglehold has actually come to unravel?

"Kingdoms that Invoke Not Your Name"

We are all aware of the existence of a religion that captured the minds and hearts of a vast part of the world. It was founded by a renegade Jew, and is based on the concept of the sharing of Divinity among more than one being. More recently, a different religion—also founded by a renegade Jew, Karl Marx—also wielded tremendous power over mankind: the religion of *Ein Elokim*—י"ן. It is the religion that has captured the minds of hundreds of millions and rules over more than a billion people in Russia and China. Chazal had already told us that in *Ikvasa Damashicha*—in the era just prior to *Moshiach's* arrival—*hamalchus yehapech leminus*—the underlying ideology of the ruling government will be based on atheism, on a total denial of the existence of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, י"ן.

Many years ago, I came across a *Haggada* that was vandalized: It was published under the auspices of a Conservative group; some sections were taken out and others were put in. They eliminated the *pasuk* of "*Sh'foch chamoscha al hago'im*—Pour Your wrath upon the nations that do not know You, kingdoms that do not invoke Your name." *Se past sich nisht*, it's not polite to talk against other cultures. So they expunged it. These vandals did not realize that not only were they tampering with the *Haggada*, but they were also editing a *pasuk* in the *Tehillim* (79,5-6) of *David Hamelech*.

Little did they know that this *pasuk* was a prophecy for our time.

Until seventy years ago, there was no such thing as "a kingdom that does not invoke Your Name." Since the dawn of history, all governments have invoked the Name of G-d—for political reasons, even if the leaders did not believe in a Deity.

"*Rasha k'gova apoh bal yidrosh*"—*David Hamelech* says—the *rasha* is so conceited that he has no need to ask questions. "All his thoughts are to deny Divinity. The statutes of G-d regarding reward and punishment are so far removed from his conscience, yet he breathes about G-d's punishment to his enemies, always mentioning the name of *Hashem*" (*Tehillim* 10,4-5).

At the very time that the great powers of history committed the worst crimes conceivable, they always invoked the Name of G-d. Even pagans believed in *Eloka d'Eloka*—a Supreme Being that ruled over their demi-gods. I personally had the unfortunate experience of hearing radio broadcasts of the bloodthirsty speeches of Hitler ש"י, and every speech, replete with the most brutal, sadistic attacks against the Jews, finished with the words, "So walte G-tt, so be it His will" רחמנא ליצנן. Never did people build a government on the philosophy of atheism until the advent of Marxism, in our era—that of *Ikvasa Damashicha*.

Since the dawn of history, all governments have invoked the Name of G-d—for political reasons, even if the leaders did not believe in a Deity. Never did people build a government on the philosophy of atheism until the advent of Marxism.

And indeed, the selection from *Tehillim* quoted in the *Haggada* continues: "*Ki achal es Yaakov v'es navehu heishamu*—They have devoured Yaakov and destroyed his habitation." Millions of Jewish people were spiritually destroyed by the Bolsheviks—the *battei midrashim*, *chadorim*, *yeshivos*, the Chassidic centers, the entire fabric of Jewish life in Russia, Poland, Lithuania and the satellite countries. And they drained the surviving *Yiddishe neshamos* of any spiritual life to the point that scarcely a spark remains. Whatever attachment these people may have had to Torah and *mitzvos* was severed, lost—"Achal es Yaakov v'es navehu heishamu." Now, however, there are encouraging developments—that this tragic epoch is coming to a close. The stranglehold of the *malchus horisha* has been broken.

The Power of "Lishmo"

One wonders: How did the ideology of Marxism actually succeed in capturing hundreds of millions of minds, to subjugate over a billion souls? And how did it come to pass that, after these seventy-plus years, this stranglehold has actually come to unravel? This can be understood from the Torah's account of the creation of man (*Bereishis* 2,7), where the word "*Vayitzer*—and He created" is spelled with two letters *Yud*—וייצר—whereas the conventional spelling is with only one. Chazal explain that man was created with two inclinations: A *yeitzer tov* and a *yeitzer hora*, two inborn drives—for good and for evil, providing man with free choice. Hence the two *Yud'en*.

Now, both of these drives are invested with vast powers. Should people direct their lives by the impulses of the *yeitzer tov*, they can fill the world with *kedusha* and *tahara* (sanctity and purity), and even bring about the advent of *Moshiach*. By the same token, those who respond to the urgings of the *yeitzer hora* can blanket the world with evil and even alter the course of nature (through *kishuf*). As the *Chazal* say, "A person is assisted in following whichever path he

chooses for himself" (*Bamidbar Rabba* ch. 22). Only one condition must be kept: the person must act *lishmo*—motivated solely by his idealism, whether for good or for evil, without personal interest. Even the *mored bemalchus Shomayim*, who rebels against Divine rule, can achieve extraordinary success, as long as he is driven by his devotion to his ideal, with *mesiras nefesh*.

When Balak first dispatched messengers to Bilaam, to summon him to curse the Jews, he offered him no

incentives . . . only the opportunity to give expression to his deep-seated anti-Semitism. Had Bilaam responded to this invitation, it would have had a disastrous effect on Jewry, so G-d withheld permission from Bilaam to accept Balak's call. The second time Balak sent messengers, he offered Bilaam rewards of riches and *kavod* (fame), to which G-d said, "If the men came to call to you, go with them." *Rashi* comments, "To you—if the call is for you [to your advantage], and you expect to be rewarded, go with them" (*Bamidbar* 22:20). As long as Bilaam's motives were tainted by self-serving goals, he would not be successful. Otherwise, with a pure *lishmo* of evil, he could have brought massive destruction to the world.

Sixty five years ago, a classmate of mine, who was the son of a *talmid chacham*, became attracted to Communism. His father disowned him, neighbors shunned him. When *Spartikus*—the German Communist Party—staged a march through the streets of Frankfurt, this fellow shamelessly marched in the front row. Penniless, starving, without a friend, he didn't care. He marched to his ideal.

This young man was one of millions who swore by the altruism of Marxist doctrine, whereby the exploited proletariat would no longer suffer oppression. But their vision of justice was predicated on "There is neither Divine justice nor is there a Divine Judge." Based on denial of the Creator, it was an expression of pure evil. But its exponents served the ideal *lishmo*, so it succeeded in conquering the minds of men and controlling major parts of the world . . . erecting an impenetrable, protective Iron Curtain.

Today, generations later, a massive reversal is taking place. If I may be so bold, I would attribute this to an unusual sense of dedication, a *lishmo* in a positive sense: for the sake of Heaven . . . an expression of *lishmo* that may be very modest in scale, but not in intensity. Moreover, the Talmud tells us that "The power of good outweighs by far the power of evil."

It started with a handful of people in Moscow, and then it grew to several hundred. It spread to Lenin-grad, Minsk and Vilna, nurtured by

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the Jews of North and South America—and the rest of the world, for that matter—are exempt from this condemnation, for they are *tinokos shenishbu*—a counterpart to children brought up in captivity, victims of circumstances, estranged from their heritage. Nor is the *Rambam* referring to Russian Jews who have been indoctrinated with atheism for the past seventy-plus years.

Those millions of American Jews who are ignorant of *Yiddishkeit*, who were misled by so-called rabbis or by other missionaries or by other

teachers and preachers of *kefira* are totally innocent victims, spiritually ailing—*nebach apikorsim*. For this they cannot be blamed—so we do love them, and we feel a burning desire to heal their *neshamos*, to bring them back to their rightful heritage of *Torah min haShamayim*. But the last paragraph in the *Rambam* does indeed refer to the peddlers of *kefira* and *apikorsus*, the manufacturers of *mamzeirus*, who are not unlearned, who are the spokesmen for the Reform and Conservative movements. There is

no wonder that they do not like us, because *emes* and *skeker* are mutually exclusive—and are naturally opposed to each other.

The Torah tells us that G-d promised *Avraham Avinu*:

"Those that curse you I shall curse" (*Bereishits* 12.3). Now, who would curse *Avraham Avinu*? *Avraham* made an *aishel*—an inn for wayfarers—all *ovdei avoda zara* (idolaters) were welcome and he provided them with food and lodging; he was *mispallel* for Sodom; the people of *Chevron* declared, "*Nasi Elokim atta besochenu*—you are a G-dly prince in our midst" (*Bereishits* 23.5). Who would possibly curse *Avraham*? Why should G-d give him a special *beracha* to curse those who curse him? The answer is simple: *Avraham* was propagating *emes*. The passage: "*Vayikra b'Shem Hashem*—And he called out in the Name of G-d" (*ibid* 12.9) is a reference to propagating *emes*.

At the same time, *Nimrod* and the *dor haflaga* were proclaiming "*Na'aseh lanu shem*—Let us make a name for ourselves." This is a rallying cry for *sheker*. Since the exponents of *sheker* must hate *emes*, which challenges its validity and exposes its duplicity, it will inevitably come to curse *emes*. Thus G-d consoled *Abraham* with the blessing, "Those that curse you, I will curse."

Reassured as we are with G-d's blessing, we conclude our daily prayers with, "*velimekalelei nafshi sidom*—let my soul remain silent to those who curse me, *nafshi ke'afar lakol tihyeh*—let my soul be like dust to everyone." We must strive to embody *emes*, even as we anticipate the inevitable repercussions of rejection by the spokesmen of *sheker*. But if we lack in any way in our devotion to *emes*, we cannot survive. This means that we must beware not to become politicians, not to look for prestige, not to create headlines, not to seek publicity sensations, but to fight for the *emes lishmo*, without ulterior motives of achieving glory and fame.

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III. PROMOTING "EMES" IN ALL ENDEAVORS

This past Ellul, Agudath Israel was in the forefront of convening mass gatherings across the country on the theme of "Guard your tongue from evil." (*Tehillim* 34.14) promoting the avoidance of *loshon hora* (slander). The above passage from *Tehillim* concludes: "... and your lips from speaking deceit." We must launch a concerted effort to avoid *sheker* in our private lives, even if it is at great expense or deep pain. It is essential that we recognize that G-d is *emes*, and His entire creation is *emes*. Only man has the capacity to be false! What chance do we have to prevail in this *olam hasheker*, this world of falsehood, if we are not exactly careful to speak nothing but *emes*, to conduct all our dealings with *emes*, and to make *emes* the major premise of all our actions, private and public?

But there is more. Since the time of *Lavan Haramai*, the prototype of all charlatans, we are touched by our ancestors' last encounter with him:

Lavan kissed his daughters—the four matraichs—and his grandchildren—the *shivtei Kah*, the progenitors of the Tribes, in some measure imbuing them with his attribute of deceit. Only Yaakov, the personification of truth ("Give *emes* to Yaakov") was spared. But the rest of us carry within us some vestiges of that encounter. Yes, we are *zera emes*—the seed of that personification of truth, yet we cannot achieve *emes* without a struggle. As the Chazon Ish writes in one of his letters, "Man lacks a natural abhorrence of falsehood."

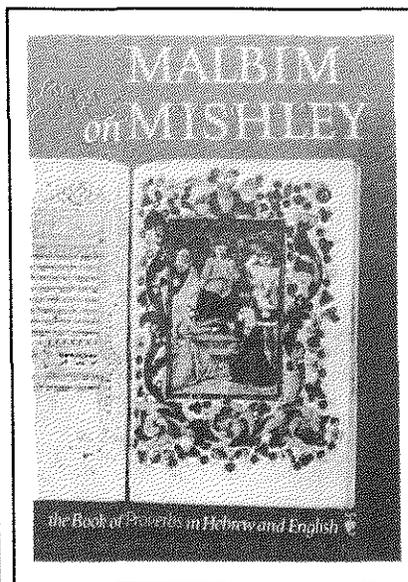
For years now, Agudath Israel has been in the lead in drawing lines of demarcation between *emes* and *sheker* in the communal sphere. One might say that the world of *emes* is personified in the *pasuk*: "You have shown to know that *Hashem*, He is the G-d, there is none besides Him" (*Devarim* 4, 35)—we only have the *Ribbono shel olam* and His Torah. Unfortunately, there are those that study His Torah, but

What chance do we have to prevail in this *olam hasheker*, this world of falsehood, if we are not exactly careful to speak nothing but *emes*, to conduct all our dealings with *emes*, and to make *emes* the major premise of all our actions, private and public?

accept the possibility of other approaches to belief. For example, there are people speaking on behalf of the three "major" rabbinical seminaries declaring that they should all work in consonance: One seminary (Orthodox) studies on the basis of "Moshe received the Torah at Sinai" (*Avos* I, 1); another (the Conservative one) studies Moshe's Torah, but deals with it as though it were not from Sinai; the third (Reform) recognizes neither the Divinity of Torah nor the all-

pervasiveness of Divine justice. And all three spokesmen would like to see their respective seminaries cooperating in establishing a united, "inter-denominational" commission to process conversions. And the Orthodox element argues that they must work together with their fellow Jews, their colleagues! My admiration for the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* (Council of Torah Sages) of Agudath Israel, then, is most profound for having issued a condemnation of this spurious union

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of *emes* and *sheker* this past summer.

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rations of *Klal Yisroel* not based on the Thirteen *Ikrim*. Most of the clergymen represented there do not know their right hand from their left. Without the support of Torah Jews, Conservative and Reform Judaism would collapse like a house of cards. By contrast, we have Torah—*Shas*, *Poskim*, *Rishonim*, *Acharonim*, *Tzaddikim* . . . *yeshivos*, youth. We have the richness of the past and the promise of the future. They have nothing but the recognition and the encouragement that we give them.

"There was nothing in the *aron* (ark) of G-d's covenant but the two stone tablets that G-d gave Moshe at Sinai." This is the basis of *Klal Yisroel*. One cannot accept a conceptualization of *Klal Yisroel* that possesses an *aron* with more than Moshe's tablets. Refining our understanding of *emes*, spreading the allegiance to *emes*, leading lives of *emes*, projecting a vision of *Klal Yisroel* based on pure *emes*—this is the formula for overcoming the sovereignty of *sheker* in this world. ■

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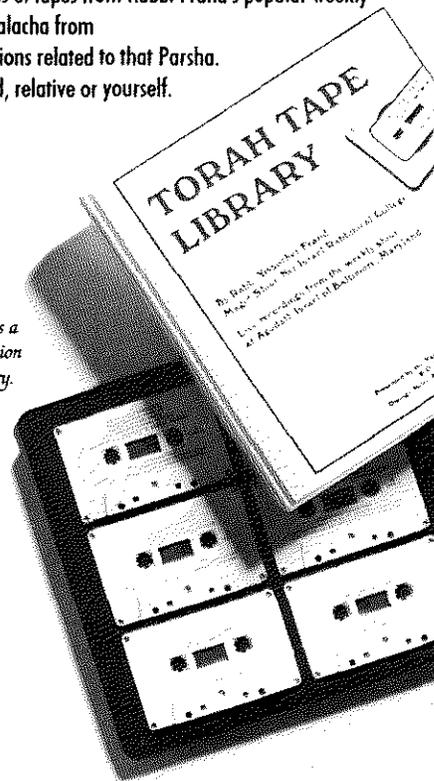
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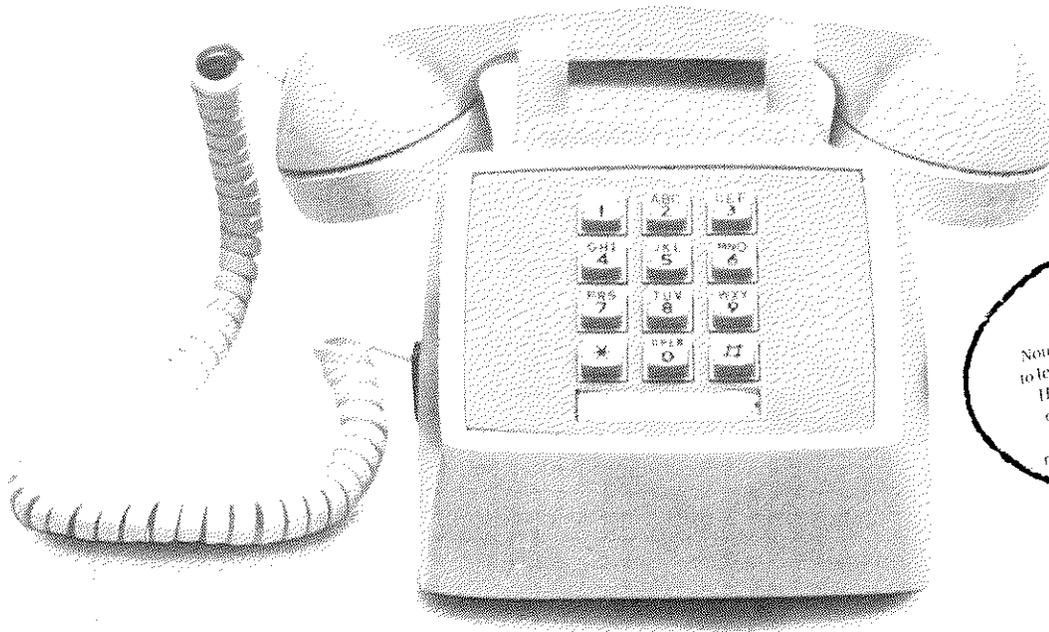
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ON THE ROAD FROM MIDYAN TO MITZRAYIM



THE MILAH OF ELIEZER BEN MOSHE

A Prelude to Redemption

BIZARRE INTERLUDE

Recorded in *parshas Shemos* between the lengthy narrative of Moshe's appointment as Redeemer and the actual commencement of *Ge'ula* are three short verses which describe a rather enigmatic episode:

And it came to pass on the way at the inn, and G-d met him [Moshe], and sought to kill him. And Tziphora took a flint, and she cut

Rabbi Kasnett is author of *A Future and a Hope* and *Ancient Mountains, Timeless Hills*, both collections of essays on *Sefer Bereishis*. His "Rabbi Abba's Esrog Tree" was featured in *JO*, Oct. 87.

off the foreskin of her son and cast it at his feet and said, "The slayer of my husband are you to me!" So He let him alone; then she said, "My husband was [nearly] slain because of the circumcision." (Shemos 4,24-6)

So much of this brief interlude is jarring—tranquility shattered by an abrupt act of violence, punctuated by a Jewish mother's harsh recrimination hurled at her innocent infant. Further, *Chazal* (Rabbis of the Talmud) render the episode in even more jarring tones; Moshe's attacker was actually an angel in the guise of a serpent, who swallowed Moshe from his head to his thighs and then again swallowed him from

his feet to his thighs (from which Tziphora understood how to act to save her husband).

One wonders: why was Moshe deserving of such strange and brutal punishment? Rav Yosi (*Nedarim* 31b) explains that Moshe had found himself in a quandary: G-d had ordered him to leave for Egypt on the very day his son required circumcision. Moshe reasoned: If I circumcise him and then depart, the child will be placed in danger for the first three days. If I circumcise him in Midyan and tarry three days, I shall transgress G-d's command, "Go, return to Egypt." Moshe correctly decided to heed the more urgent directive, resolving to

circumcise Eliezer at the earliest opportunity.

Why, then, was Moshe punished?

Answers R' Yosi: Because he occupied himself with the lodging place before attending to the *milah*!

Truly, an answer that begs explanation. How does the punishment begin to fit what appears to be a relatively minor crime? Indeed, mere failure to circumcise one's son (*a bitul asei*) is not punishable in Torah by death. Why was Moshe so severely condemned? And if Moshe did act incorrectly, we must understand the basis for his calculations—why he gave precedence to securing his lodging before performing Eliezer's *milah*. Then there is the matter of the serpent: why the angel chose to assume that particular guise to exact punishment from Moshe.

Other ruminations: Certainly *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* was aware of Moshe's dilemma. Yet . . . had not the Jewish People already waited 210 years for redemption? Would another three days in bondage truly have mattered, if Moshe had been permitted to postpone his departure for Egypt? The inescapable conclusion is that *Hashem Yisborach* had anticipated Moshe's resolution of the conflict and thus actually desired Eliezer's *milah* to occur in the vicinity of *Mitzrayim*. If this is so, we must understand why.

VERDICT OF THE HEAVENLY COURT

A related question arises from the following *Midrash*:

"And it came to pass on the way at the inn"—What does it matter that (Moshe) was at an inn/malon (i.e. why does the Torah bother to mention such a trivial detail)? Rather, we must say that the word contains a hidden meaning, and was not written by the Torah gratuitously. For malon intimates that the Heavenly Court had complained (*malinin*) against Moshe for taking his entire family with him to Egypt. They spoke harshly against him: "Is it possible for a man such as he, whom the

Holy One sent to bring the Bnei Yisroel out of Egypt, that he should take his children and other household members with him? This demonstrates that he actually desires to settle there, to establish permanent residence in Egypt!" And so the angel Gavriel attacked Moshe and sought to kill him.—Yalkut Reuveini (Parshas Shemos)

The Heavenly Court's complaint against Moshe appears incredible. Would anyone suspect, for even an instant, that the *Ish Elokim* intend-

ed to forsake his Divine mission and make his home in depraved *Mitzrayim*? The very implausibility therefore compels us to conclude that the Heavenly Court had a different perspective of the matter: Logically, Moshe should have left his family in *Midyan*, for that would have been the easiest solution to his problem. Eliezer could have been circumcised on time, and left with his mother to recuperate while Moshe travelled alone to Egypt. The fact that Moshe rejected the simpl-



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■ *Mere failure to circumcise one's son is not punishable in Torah Law by death. Why was Moshe so severely condemned? And if Moshe did act incorrectly, why did he give precedence to securing his lodging before performing Eliezer's milah?*

est approach provoked the Court to complain and order his execution. Nevertheless, that Moshe did indeed eschew the more logical path only fuels the fire of suspicion that he, too, was aware of a compelling need for Eliezer's *milah* to occur in Egypt. Hence, we are doubly constrained to discover what that need could be.

One final general observation: The entire episode appears nothing more than a private event in the life of Moshe *Rabbeinu*, hardly deserving of mention in the Torah (its supernatural aspect notwithstanding). Yet the incident's conspicuous position in the narrative suggests that the *milah* of Eliezer ben Moshe is somehow crucial to the success

of Moshe's mission and hence a prelude to *Ge'ulas Mitzrayim* itself. It is this transcendent quality of the act that we must ultimately try to capture.

OF PUBLIC CONCERN

A passage of *Zohar* provides an important clue to understanding the significance of Eliezer's *milah*:

"And it came to pass on the way at the inn, and Hashem met him and sought to kill him." The Holy One said to [Moshe], "You are on your way to deliver Israel from Egypt and to humble a great and

domineering king, and you yourself have forgotten the bris, for your own son is uncircumcised!" Immediately, "He sought to kill him." The angel Gavriel descended as a flame to incinerate [Moshe], and made himself as a serpent to swallow him.

And why a serpent? The Holy One said to Moshe,

"You are on your way to kill a great and powerful serpent, and your son is not circumcised!" [Gavriel] forthwith transformed himself into a serpent to kill [Moshe], until Tzipora saw and circumcised her son and saved her husband.—Zohar I, 93b

The import of the *Zohar* is clear: the *milah* of Eliezer ben Moshe was not altogether a private act, but was an urgent prerequisite for *ge'ula*. Moshe's mission was too great, involving an adversary (Pharaoh) too formidable, to entrust to a man fettered by personal embarrassments. Moshe must be entirely untainted in order to receive G-d's blessing to vanquish the serpentine king of Egypt and to lead his people out of bondage. Hence, the *milah* was, for Moshe the Redeemer, a preliminary act of qualification.

Now we must understand why this particular shortcoming proved a liability for Israel's redeemer. Since Pharaoh—expressed symbolically as the serpent—represents an obstructive factor that Moshe must obviate, Moshe's failure to perform the *milah* must have precluded him—specifically—from overcoming Pharaoh.

To discover the power of *milah*, we must first understand the two-fold essence of Pharaoh.

THE TWO FACES OF PHARAOH

In one brief stroke, the prophet Yechezkel projects the gargantuan ego of the Egyptian monarch:

So said Hashem Elokim: "Behold I have placed upon you Pharaoh, King of Egypt, the Great Serpent, who crouches in the midst of his river, who said, 'My river is for me, and I have become exalted' " (29:3).

"My river is for me"—I am not

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beholden to higher powers, for my river supplies all my needs; "... and I have become exalted"—By my own might and wisdom I have magnified my greatness and dominion.—Rashi

Self-sufficient, defiant, supremely confident, Pharaoh has cast off from all beneficent supernal moorings to bask in a glory of his own making. Pharaoh as deity, then, is the first facet of this Serpent's identity:

The Holy One said to Moshe, "The evil Pharaoh has made of himself a god, as it says, 'My river is for me, and I have become exalted.'"—Shemos Rabba 8:1,2

Yet, while a serpent may seasonally shed its hide, it cannot shed the core of its personality. Just as the primordial serpent lusted after Chava, and this serpent's ancestor lusted after Sarah *Imeinu*, so, too, does our Pharaoh personify a nation that is called "the nakedness of the earth" (*Bereishis* 42: 9, 12). And if the essence of a people finds full expression in the person of its monarch, then the ancestor-

Pharaoh is surely speaking of himself and of all past and future Pharaohs when, as he returns Sarah to Avraham, he cautions, "And now, here is your wife; take her and go!" (*Bereishis* 12:19)

[Pharaoh did] not [react] like Avimelech, who said to [Avraham], "Behold, my land is before you." Rather, [Pharaoh] said to him, "Go, and do not tarry," for the Egyptians are inherently lustful, as it says, "And whose issue is like the issue of horses" (Yechezkel 23:20).—Rashi

"Like the issue of horses"—who overindulge in carnal activity, more than all other male animals.—Rashi on Yechezkel 23:20

With this we complete our portrait of Moshe's great adversary—a Pharaoh-serpent who is part self-proclaimed god and, paradoxically, part abject slave to his own basest desires.

THE DUALITY OF MILAH

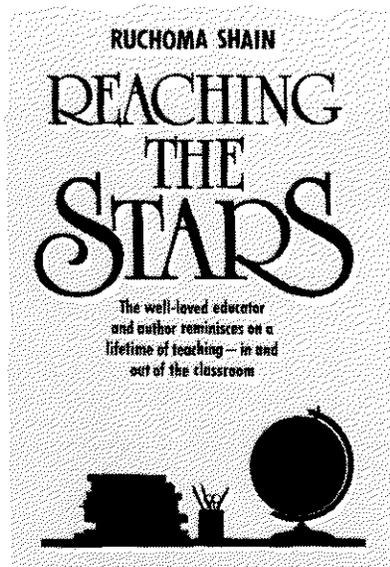
Twice by blood was Israel saved from Mitzrayim—by the blood of the korban Pes-

ach and by the blood of milah, as it says, "And I said to you, 'By your blood shall live'; and I said to you, 'By your blood you shall live'" (*Yechezkel* 16:6); with the blood of the korban Pesach and the blood of milah.—Shemos Rabba 17:3*

Klal Yisroel ultimately won its freedom by repudiating the two-pronged allure of Mitzrayim. For the korban Pesach, the common act of *avoda* (Divine service) performed at great personal risk by every Jewish family, demonstrated our absolute allegiance to the Master of the Universe—an unqualified denouncement of the Egyptian propensity for idolatry. And *milah*, symbolic of limitations on sensual gratification (see *Yisroel Kedoshim*, p. 62b, by Rav Tzaddok HaCohen) is Israel's response to the unholy, unbridled lust-drive of Mitzrayim.

Both national attainments, however, were foreshadowed by private

*See also *Mechilta* (Bo) and *Yalkut Shimoni* (*Yechezkel* 16).



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events in that hostelry on the outskirts of Egypt**

Fortunate are Israel who offer their sons on the eighth day as a korban before Hashem.—Zohar I,93

This korban (i.e. milah) resembles an animal sacrifice, for both come on the eighth day.—Zohar III,44

Whoever offers up his son for this korban is considered as though he offered up all the korbanos in the world before the Holy One, and as though he built before Him a perfect altar.—Zohar I,95

It now becomes clear why the Almighty and Moshe both knew that Eliezer's *bris milah* must be performed in the vicinity of Mitzrayim. For *milah* is not only a repudiation of Egyptian pursuit of self-indulgence, but also an act of ritual worship of the highest order! *Milah attacks head-on the twofold power of the Serpent*. And so Gavriel came as the serpent to alert Moshe to his miscalculation, to punish him—ironically—for attempting to mount that attack!

** See *Ran, Nedarim* 32a, who writes that the inn was situated adjacent to Mitzrayim, so that the brief final leg of the journey posed no danger to the newly-circumcised infant.

MOSHE'S MISJUDGMENT

Why was Moshe punished? R' Yosi said, *Because he occupied himself with the lodging place before performing the milah.*

Moshe understood that G-d desired Eliezer's circumcision to occur in Egypt in order to weaken the collective power of Mitzrayim, thereby paving the way for *Bnei Yisroel's* eventual exodus. Hence, he reasoned that he first must gain a foothold in Egypt for his *tikkun* to take effect. That is why he procured lodgings on the outskirts of Mitzrayim—so as to meet the minimum requirements of contact and proximity. Having done so, he fully intended to circumcise Eliezer and effect the *tikkun* forthwith. Hence, the accusation of the Heavenly Court that Moshe intended to settle in Mitzrayim was indeed correct! Moshe needed to establish a minimal residency there to carry out his plan, all according to his estimation of the Almighty's will.

But Gavriel came in dramatic fashion to apprise Moshe of his miscalculation, a misjudgment so

serious, in fact, that it jeopardized the Redemption itself and was therefore punishable by death. For the purpose of the providential opportunity that was Eliezer's *milah* was not to weaken Mitzrayim, but to qualify Moshe personally for the role of Israel's redeemer:

"You are on your way to deliver Israel from Egypt and to humble a great and domineering king, and you yourself have forgotten the bris, for your own son is uncircumcised!" Zohar, cited above.

The emphasis of G-d's censure is on Moshe's personal disqualification for his mission. The *milah* had been an opportunity to strengthen in himself the twin attributes of faith and holiness which were the extreme opposite of the twin elements of the Egyptian national character, as most fully expressed by Pharaoh himself. The point was not to debilitate the metaphysical Mitzrayim, but to differentiate, to demark unmistakably the line between holiness and profanity, between self-sacrificial commitment to G-d and self-serving commitments to amenable and convenient godheads. *Havdalah* is everything!

Blessed is He, our G-d,

Who created us for His glory,

Separated us from those who stray,

Gave us the Torah of truth and Implanted eternal life within us.—Siddur

True, the *milah* was correctly performed in the vicinity of Mitzrayim, for distinction can best be made when the opposing force is at hand. Had Moshe circumcised Eliezer in Midyan, far from the aura of Mitzrayim, the contrast would have been lost. Once having reached the outskirts of Egypt, however, there was no need to secure a foothold, for distinction requires only proximity, not engagement.

ONE MAN'S PLEASURE . . .

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■ *While a serpent may seasonally shed its hide, it cannot shed the core of its personality. Just as the primordial serpent lusted after Chava, so, too, does our Pharaoh personify a nation that is called "the nakedness of the earth."*

compassing oneness—"There is none else besides Him!" Hence, precisely because Moshe was the humblest of men, precisely because—as the *Nefesh Hachaim** writes—he negated all sensation of his own being, the *Shechina* spoke to mankind from within his mortal throat.

THE GREATEST PLEASURE OF ALL

In truth, questing eternally for pleasure is the essential condition of mankind. *Mesilas Yesharim*** writes that man was created exclusively for the purpose of experiencing pleasure. However, genuine *ta'anug*, which is the state of *deveikus*, or bonding, with *Hashem*, is possible only in the

*By Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821), prime disciple of the Gaon of Vilna.

***Path of the Upright*, classic mussar sefer by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1747).

Therefore, let us return to Pharaoh's proud declaration: "My river is for me, and I have become exalted" (*Yechezkel* 29.3). In this statement, as explained by *Rashi*, we sense an intense and profound expression of Pharaoh's pleasure-drive. It begins with *kefira*, denial of G-d's providential relationship with man: "My river is for me"—*I am not beholden to higher powers, for my river supplies all my needs (Rashi). Hence, I exist absolutely independent of G-d's sustaining influence. This is the pure pleasure of being. Then, "... and I have become exalted"—By my own might and wisdom I have magnified my greatness and dominion (Rashi). Here gasus haruach, expansive pride, has been achieved: My being fills the world. My wisdom and might influence world events—kochi v'otzem yadi. This is the exhilarating pleasure of accomplishment. Finally, as a natural concomitant of the above, comes the desire to expand this intoxicating sensation of one's own reality by experiencing every pleasure this material world has to offer—down to the very basest.*

But it all starts with the point of *kefira*; this most basic human drive for pleasure starts with the denial of the existence of the Creator Himself, ה"ו. And since every created thing has its counterpoint

זה לעומת זה ברא אלוקים, it must be that the starting point for attaining true, spiritual pleasure is *emuna*, self-effacement vis-a-vis the overwhelming reality of the Holy One, perceiving to some degree His all-en-

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World-to-Come. This world is where one is to earn that sublime delight, which we do by performing *mitzvos*. Physical pleasures are obstacles to achieving this goal. In fact, these "illusions of pleasure" create a constant battle between the *yeitzer tov* and the *yeitzer hora*.

There is one exception to the above rule. One can experience genuine pleasure, the sensation of oneness with *Hashem*, even in this world—through the study of Torah. This is because *Kudsha-Brich-Hu v'Oraisa chad*—the Holy One and the Torah are one (*Zohar*).

The *mitzva* of learning Torah, which entails perceiving and

knowing the truth, is chiefly for the purpose of one's perceiving the truth and taking pleasure and delighting in the knowledge, for (the purpose of) making one's heart and mind rejoice, as it is written, "The orders of *Hashem* are upright, gladdening the heart" (*Tehillim* 19,9). *Rabbeinu Avraham Min Hahar, Nedarim 48a*

The primary aspect of the *mitzva* of learning Torah is to exult and rejoice and delight in one's learning, and then the words of Torah will be absorbed into one's blood. And by taking pleasure in Torah one become attached (*davuk*) to the Torah . . . for also the pleasure is

a *mitzva*. *Sochotchover Gaon Introduction to Eglei Tal*

"And by taking pleasure in Torah one becomes attached to Torah. . ."

KUDSHA-BRICH-HU V'ORAISAH CHAD

One who attaches himself to Torah cleaves to the Holy One Himself because the Torah is called the "Names" of *Hashem Yisborach*, which means the revelation of His existence. Nor (and herein lies the wonder and the supreme irony of it all) does this *deveikus* spell the total demise of selfhood; rather, through Torah and specifically *chiddushei Torah* (original interpretations) one is allowed to experience in a permissible, pure and exalted manner the greatest pleasure of all—the sense of one's own being constantly expanding through the accomplishment of *chiddushei Torah*. And this is possible because, in fact, *Kudsha-Brich-Hu v'Oraisa v'Yisroel chad*—the Holy One and the Torah and Israel are one! (*Zohar*) Hence, the Torah scholar experiences his reality in the tangible expression of *Hashem's* reality—the Torah itself, the "Names" of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Further, this objective reality, which is the sum total of one's perceptions of Torah, is in truth one's only true accomplishment in this world:

First the Torah is called the Torah of the Holy One, but in the end it is called one's own, as it says: "In the Torah of G-d is his desire, and in his Torah he reflects day and night"—(Tehillim 1,2). Avoda Zara 19a

Deveikus, therefore, involves not abnegation, but identification with the Source of all reality. And since man's essential being derives from the expression of G-d's reality (i.e. from the Holy Torah), man's existence thus becomes intrinsic, and his pleasure eternal.

Thus is the Exodus from *Mitzrayim*—release from the dominion of Pharaoh—culminated by receiving the Torah at Sinai, seven weeks later. ■

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Our Man on Campus

WORKING THE WALL

It was a cold, rainy November afternoon in Jerusalem. The area in front of the Wall was all but deserted. A guard sat in his small shack at the entrance to the men's side, warming his feet with an electric heater. Two young tourists with backpacks stood looking at the Wall at a respectful distance, rain trickling down their faces.

"Hi, where you all from?" called out an energetic, friendly voice.

The two tourists looked down towards the direction of the voice and saw Jeff Seidel, his glasses fogged from the cold. His now famous white and tan saddle shoes were visible under the hem of a green rubber raincoat. He was the very image of the man you *would* buy a used car from. His manner was instantly charming and disarming.

"Why, we're both from North Carolina," the young man answered with a thick, lazy drawl. The girl smiled and nodded.

"North Carolina," Jeff repeated. "Wow, you're a long way from home. By the way, either of you happen to be Jewish?"

Chaim Chlorfene, a native of Chicago who lives in the Old City of Jerusalem, is the writer/producer/director of educational videos, including "Wake the Dawn, the story of Jerusalem's Holy Temple," and a recent production on the Thirty Nine Melachos of Shabbos.

"Why, no, were not," the young man answered with a quizzical look.

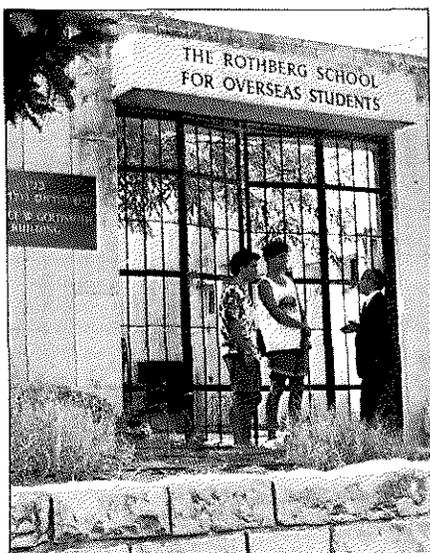
"Well, I just wondered. Anyway, nice meeting you. Enjoy your stay in Jerusalem," Jeff said, then departed.

Had either of the two visitors responded affirmatively, Jeff Seidel would have immediately drawn them into some interesting tidbit of information about the Western Wall. He would then have offered to take one or both of them to observe a class in English at a yeshiva. If they balked at that, he would have invited them to have a free *Shabbos* dinner with a religious family in the Old City to see how the real Jerusalemites live. Despite the cold, and despite the miniscule number of tourists due to the intifada, 85 students and young American visitors to Israel showed up at the Wall the previous Friday night, where Jeff Seidel, working in tandem with the venerable Meir Shuster, set them all up for *Shabbos* dinners with *frum* families.

The *Shabbos* placement work at the Western Wall is a most effective *kiruv* program. Each of the families, from Chassidim in Me'a She'arim to yeshiva *Yungeleit* in the Old City, receives a phone call Tuesday evening asking how many *orchim* they plan to take for the coming *Shabbos*—how many by night and how many by day. At the Wall on Friday

night and again around ten thirty the next morning, Jeff matches up the cards with the families names on them with the student adventures. The biggest single *Shabbos* dinner placement they had this past summer was 150 students and visitors. During the years before the Intifada, when tourism was in full bloom, they had as many as 220 kids, eager for a free Jewish meal and a bona fide Jewish religious experience. Each family has its own approach to *kiruv* and Jeff matches visitor and family. Over the years, thousands of Jewish youngsters have become *baalei teshuva* through a first experience at one or more of these homes.

Jeff Seidel keeps meticulous records of the number and names of people he talks to, and takes to yeshiva, or sets up for *Shabbos*. Follow-through is paramount in *kiruv*, and he makes a point maintaining contact with as many as possible while they are in Jerusalem and even after they return to the States. This winter he is traveling in the United States where he has arranged a reunion party for students at the University of Michigan he has brought into some level of Torah observances, with others planned in University of Pennsylvania, the University of Maryland, Emory College in Atlanta, Georgia, and colleges in the Boston area.



KIRUV GOES TO COLLEGE

Jeff is not unique at the Wall. He is merely upholding a modern tradition of masterful *kiruv* specialists, including Meir Shuster and several others. Where Jeff Seidel's Torah outreach efforts are unique, is on the two main university campuses in Israel, Hebrew University on Mount Scopus overlooking Jerusalem and at Tel Aviv University. This year, he began programs and outreach at Bar-Ilan University, as well.

Even for his work on these campuses, Jeff uses his position at the Western Wall as a springboard. He strikes up a conversation with the student and during it gets their room number at the university dorm in order to visit and have a little *shmuess*. During these evening visits, Jeff answers their questions, talks with them about Judaism. With the students at Tel Aviv University, he sets up lunches and *Shabbos* dinners with families in Bnei Brak, and gets them to sit in a class at one of the yeshivas for *baalei teshuva* in Bnei Brak.

"The main thing I try to do is dispell the false ideas these kids have about Judaism and religious Jews," Jeff says. "The vast majority come from Conservative and Reform families and they have all been handed a tradition of baloney as

they were growing up. The most common question they ask is, 'Do religious Jews consider me Jewish?' Many of these kids are merely looking for a way into *Yiddishkeit* or at least to find out what it is really all about. I don't proselytize them. I just show them they have options that they didn't know about, and that an observant Jewish life is their birthright."

But for all his good intentions, Jeff Seidel is treated as public enemy number one at both universities. In fact, they fear him more than the cults that have tried to make inroads at these campuses. The attitude is epitomized by the Director of Tel Aviv U.'s Overseas Program (Amos Gilboa). He publicly addressed a group of students and announced, "Your parents would cry if you went with the Mormons. They will cry the same way if you go with Jeff Seidel." He said this on Erev Tisha B'Av.

FAIR GAME FOR HARASSMENT

Campus officials are instructed to be on the lookout for Jeff and to harass him in any way they can. At the beginning of the school year, Jeff went to check up on students he had met at the Wall and was taken into custody. Campus police detained him in a locked room and confiscated his passport. A student *madrish* told Jeff that he was not allowed on campus. Inasmuch as Tel Aviv U. is a long ride from Jerusalem, Jeff does not go there more than once a week, and when he goes now, it is always at night. Jeff's *persona non grata* status at Tel Aviv is a simple matter. As the Director of the Overseas Program clearly told the *Jerusalem Post*, he is blacklisted from campus, "because he recruits students for *yeshivos*." But as difficult as Tel Aviv U. has been, Jeff's battles with Hebrew University have become legendary. Situated just a few min-

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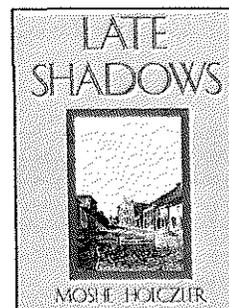
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“I don’t proselytize them. I just show them that they have options that they didn’t know about, and that an observant Jewish life is their birthright.”

utes from the Old City, it is the perfect place to talk to American kids about *Yiddishkeit*. And Jeff

takes advantage of it, visiting the campus constantly. His enemies among Hebrew U.’s anti-religious

faculty have tried everything—calling security guards to arrest him, spreading the canard among students that he works with Meir Kahane—who is singularly unpopular with the students.

According to the university charter, officials cannot throw Jeff off campus if he is invited to a student’s room. So the standard procedure has been to walk him to the door of a student he has come to visit, and without allowing Jeff to speak, ask the student if he had invited Jeff.

CHANUKA PARTY AT THE HEBREW U. DISCO

Last year, Jeff tried to organize a Chanuka party on campus, but was blocked by the administration who told him that all events had to be held only in official campus locations. So Jeff rented “The Baritone,” the official campus disco, and held the Chanuka party, which 500 students attended. When Hebrew U. officials discovered that their disco was being used for a Chanuka party, they voiced a strong complaint, but it was too late to do anything to stop it.

This year, out of a total overseas student body of 650, more than 300 came for *Shabbos* dinners. And 150 of the Hebrew U. students visited a yeshiva to attend at least a class.

The battle between Jeff Seidel and Hebrew University has raged for six years. This year he finally bested them. He enrolled in the University Ulpan. As an official student, his presence or work on campus cannot be limited in any way.

Finally, with Jeff as a student, Hebrew U. has begun to soften its attitude towards him. It has begun putting notices of his events in the

A HEART TO HEART REQUEST (מהרש"א-שבת לא) “דהיינו להשיא יתים ויתומה”

Dear Brothers!

During the time between October 1988 and January 1990, our chessed fund has provided 275 Kallahs with clothing. These are the Kallahs we have helped:

- 1 Kallah is a convert to Judaism.
- 66 Kallahs are orphaned of a father or a mother.
- 9 Kallahs or their Chossonim do not have a father and a mother.
- 5 Kallahs and their Chossonim are both orphaned of a father.
- 3 Kallahs are both orphaned of a mother.
- 1 Kallah has no father and her Chosson has no parents.
- 1 Kallah and her Chosson both haven't any parents.
- 1 One Kallah has divorced parents and her Chosson has no parents.
- 58 Couples are Baalei T'shuva.
- 117 Kallahs come from large families. (7-15 children, כ"י) and their parents' financial situation is very difficult.
- 13 Kallahs have parents with serious illnesses, ל"ע.

All totalled: **275 Kallahs.**

These Kallahs do not buy apartments after they are married, yet they still can't afford a wardrobe toward their wedding, and their anguish rises to the heights of the heavens. We have provided them with clothing and other necessities, each at a value of \$500-\$700, part of which we pay for ourselves at an average cost of \$200. \$200 x 200 Kallahs in one year = \$40,000.

Dear brothers! If these Kallahs were to knock on your door, wouldn't you give them something? Certainly, you would! These Kallahs will not come to you. Instead they come to us, knowing that the Malovs help needy Kallahs. Without your generous support, how would we be able to help them?

Perhaps it would be better if we were to visit you at your homes, but this is not feasible since we are busy with our own family and have little free time. We will not allow ourselves to come to a point where we would have to deny these Kallahs the help they so desperately need.

In the January issue of *The Jewish Observer* we printed the letter of endorsement we received from the following Rabbonim and Gaonim שליט"א (listed in order of signature): Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, The Novominsker Rebbe; Rabbi Elya Fisher, Rosh Kollel of Gur; Rabbi Avraham Pam, Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaas; Rabbi Moshe Stern, The Debritziner Rebbe; Rabbi Avraham Bick, Rav of Kehilas Etz Chaim.

In the November issue of *J.O.*, Mrs. Ruth Steinberg wrote an article about our fund. She has visited our warehouse and has seen how the Kallahs receive their clothing.

Dear brothers! From the depths of our hearts, we turn to you! Please help us to help them! Your contribution will be most gratefully appreciated. We thank our past contributors for their generous donations and we thank those of you who will lend your help from now on.

May the father of all orphans reward you will all the blessings of the Torah. We pray that you will merit good deeds and we wish you a happy and Kosher Pesach.

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מודעה זו נכתבה לזכות האשה הענטא חיה בת לאה גיטל מרים תחי' לרפ"ש בתושחי

H.U. newspaper. The *madrichim*, however, remain as antagonistic as ever, and Jeff's on-campus posters are the only ones which seem to come down.

At least twice a week, some event is held in Jeff's Student Information Center in the Jewish Quarter. Housed in an eight hundred year old building opposite the Ramban synagogue, Jeff's Information Center hosts a selection of dynamic speakers from the various *yeshivos* in Jerusalem, as well as showing films

on Jewish themes followed by discussions of the films. The Information Center also publishes a 100-page student travel directory, *The Jewish Traveler's Resource Guide*, listing contacts for *Yiddishkeit* in cities around the world. All these activities are conducted under the auspices of American Pe'yim.

Jeff's plea to American Jews is to get our youth to come to Israel for a visit, as a student or merely as a tourist. Here, through the efforts of Jeff and his colleagues at the Wall,

1200-1400 kids a year attend a class in yeshiva or some kind of organized Torah learning.

According to Jeff, "In recent years with tourism in Israel way off, the numbers of kids coming are way down, but the ones who are coming are the best I've seen. They are the dedicated courageous diehards. A lot of them are looking for a way into *Yiddishkeit*, many without even knowing that this is what they are looking for. We are here to help them in their search." ■

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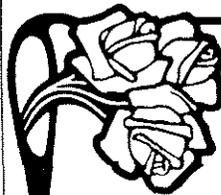
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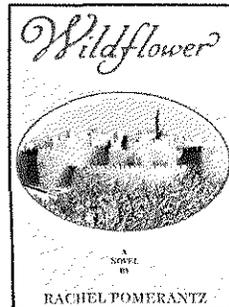


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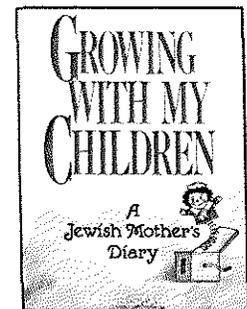


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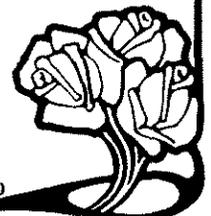
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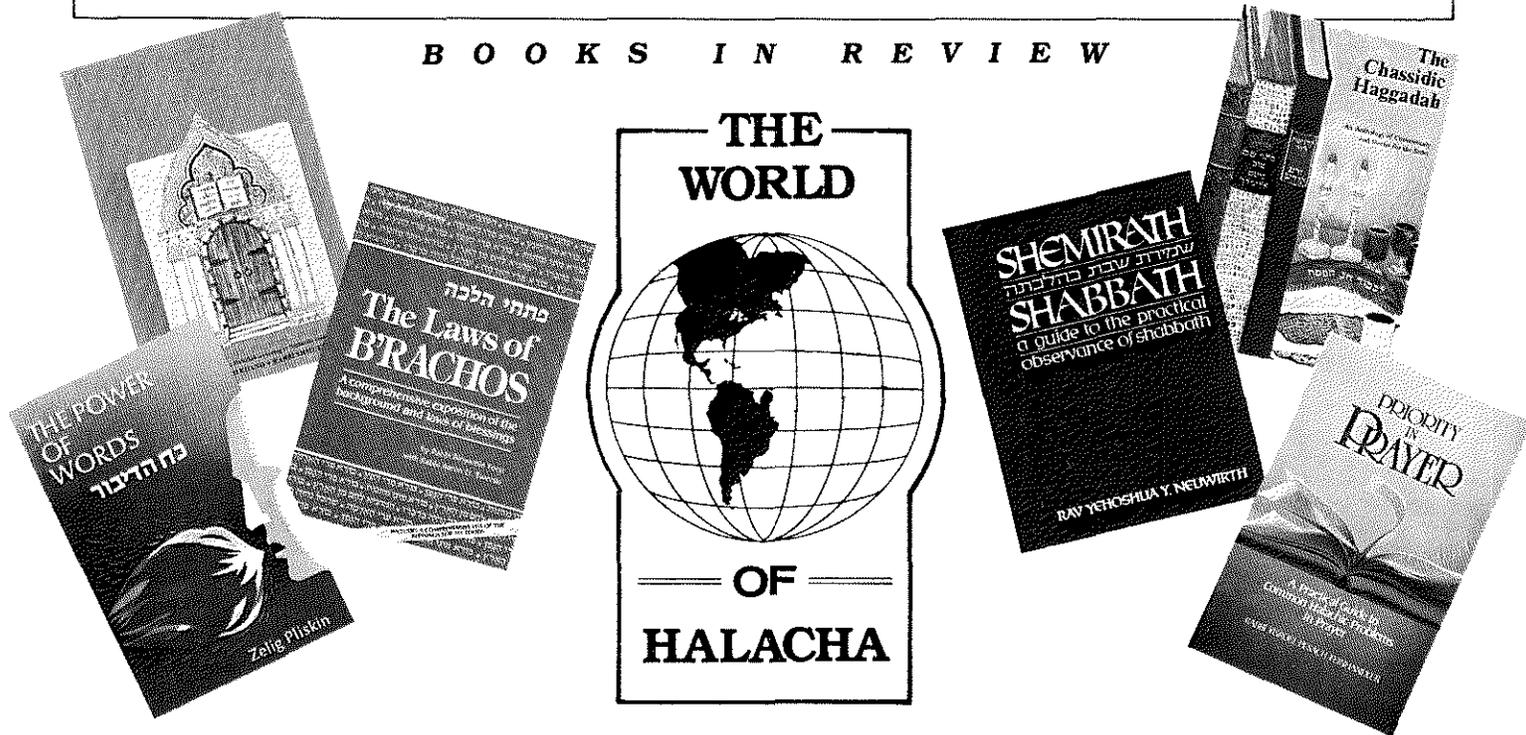
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The current flood of Judaica also engulfs the area of *halacha*. It may be rewarding, at this point, to turn to specific aspects of *halacha* that have recently received special attention.

THE SEPHARDIC CONNECTION

Of special interest are publications for Sephardic Jews for whom, in the past, little material in English was available. A special welcome should be extended to the **Halachot of the Ben Ish Hai**—an English translation, by *Shmuel Hiley*, of the halachic sections of the classic guide for Sephardic Jewry by Hacham Yosef Hayim of Baghdad (vol. I, Hevrat Ahavat Shalom, Jerusalem, 1989 dist. by Feldheim Publ. \$15.95). This work may be considered the Sephardic counterpart to the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* or *Chayeh Adam*, and its availability in a clear and concise translation is a most significant event. It should be noted that the author was both an outstanding Talmudic scholar and an eminent master of Kabbalah, and he therefore was able to present Sephardic practice with its Kabbalistic component, in a manner intelligible to the layman and of impor-

tance also to the Ashkenazic reader (note e.g. his remarks on the *Kedushah deSidrah* p. 259). The value of this volume is further enhanced by a lengthy introduction on the history of the *Mesorah* and, specifically, on Torah scholarship in Baghdad.

Detailed and practical everyday guidance to *halacha*, according to Sephardic tradition in general, and Syrian custom in particular, is provided by a new series, **Gateway to Halacha**. The first volume (C.I.S., Lakewood N.J. 1988, \$12.00), by *Rabbi E. Toledano* and *Rabbi Shmuel Choueka*, covers the festivals of the month of Tishri. The authors have tried to be brief and to the point, and stress in their introduction that, whenever the reader may be in doubt, he must ask a competent rabbinic authority. However, special mention should be made of the Hebrew footnotes which give the sources used, as well as additional halachic material; they should be of great help to the reader seeking further enlightenment. Each section of the work has also a short introduction to the meaning of each festival.

Recently a second volume has appeared (C.I.S. Distributors, Lakewood, 1989), which deals with the

halachos of the month of Nissan. It follows the pattern of the first volume, and again, presents an exceptionally well arranged collection of all relevant *halachos*.

Very different in its approach is **A Treasury of Sephardic Laws and Customs**, by *Rabbi Herbert C. Dobrinsky* (Yeshiva University Press and Ktav, New York, 1986, \$29.50 h.c., \$19.95 p.b.; a teacher's guide was published in 1988). This work represents an extraordinary labor of love by the author, dedicated to the preservation of the customs and folkways of Sephardic Jewry in its manifold diversity. The author collected from well over a hundred sources the information here provided, under separate headings, on special family events, reminders of the Torah heritage, worship, and special days in the year—with due attention given in each case to the differences between Syrian, Moroccan, Judaeo-Spanish, and Spanish-Portuguese Jews. However, the author's approach places the emphasis on actual practice rather than on halachic requirements. Dr. Dobrinsky is fully aware of this, and stresses in his introduction that his work represents "descriptive research" (rather than a normative halachic statement) and that it

should not be considered as an authoritative, legally binding halachic work. Yet this disclaimer notwithstanding, this presentation of current usage poses dangers, especially if used as an educational text (as the author would like it to be), since it will all too readily be accepted as the norm.

This reviewer is in no position to pass on the correctness of the details of current usage that Dr. Dobrinsky describes; however, we know how halachic observance was weakened among Ashkenazic immigrants to the United States, and it should therefore not be surprising if the same happened within the Sephardic community. Hence "current usage" will not necessarily always be in full conformity with halachic norms. To present questionable practices as "the thing that is done," or halachic requirements as mere customs or acts of special piety, is bound to mislead. Compare these quotes taken at random: "The Judaeo-Spanish community permits flowers to be sent to cover the coffin, an obvious influence of the non-Jewish world, which they have accepted" (p.89); "The custom of observing 'days of rejoicing' is no longer adhered to as stringently as it was in Syria. . . . On the Sabbath following the wedding, or as soon as the bride and groom have returned from their honeymoon, the groom is again called for an *aliyah*" (p.45, ed. italics). In Morocco only kosher cheeses were eaten; "thus the custom (sic!) of purchasing kosher cheese appertains in America as well" (p.126). Among Syrian Jews "it is customary that most of the wives of the rabbis have their hair covered" (p. 132). Clearly, there is lacking a dividing line between halachos, legitimate customs, and undesirable usage (of the type characterized by the *Sdey Chemed* as *Minhag* read backwards—*Gehinom*). The very laudable desire of the author to strengthen knowledge of, and pride in, the Sephardic heritage is not incompatible with the drawing of such distinctions; it would appear to this reviewer that America's Sephardim (just like the Ash-

kenazim) have shown such growth in the establishment of Torah institutions and education that the acknowledgement of even higher goals would not be discouraging. As it is, this work provides very many fascinating details; but it is to be hoped that it will not be misused as a guide to *halacha*.

BRACHOS IN DAILY LIFE

Brachos play a central role in our life and relationship to G-d. The need for guidance in this area has produced two outstanding works: **The Laws of B'rachos**, by Rabbi *Benyamin Forst*, with Rabbi *A. D. Twerski* (ArtScroll, Brooklyn, 1990, \$15.95 h.c., \$12.95 p.b.), "a comprehensive exposition of the background and laws of blessings," and **The Halachos of Brochos**, by Rabbi *Yisroel Pinchos Bodner* (Feldheim, 1989, \$12.95 h.c., \$9.95 p.b.). It should be said from the

outset that both are excellent works suitable both for systematic study and for consultation in case of need. Yet there are distinct differences. They do not cover exactly the same areas; thus Rabbi Bodner devotes a section to the question of making *brachos* in the presence of an improperly clad person, a subject not dealt with by Rabbi Forst. They do not arrange their subject matter in the same way, and do not give the same amount of space to each topic. Generally speaking, Rabbi Forst goes into more detail; thus the complex subject of soups is treated by Rabbi Bodner as part of his chapter on *Ikar Vetofel*, while Rabbi Forst has an entire chapter on vegetable and fruit soup (he is able to handle the mass of details through excellent lay-out of the material including a large number of charts). Both provide charts of what *brocha* to make, but Rabbi Forst's chart (which also includes the *brocha acharona*) is part of the

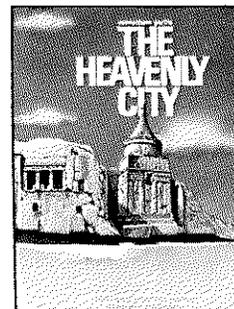
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book, while Rabbi Bodner's chart (reprinted from Rabbi G. Krausz's work on *Brachos*) is a separate pamphlet that can be carried in one's pocket.

Here, too, Rabbi Forst is more expansive; e.g. Rabbi Bodner gives the *brocha* for cereals made from corn flour as *Shehakol* but on his list of foods there is only corn flakes, for which he gives *Ho'adomoh*, expecting his readers to realize that they are made from milled kernels; Rabbi Forst's list specifically distinguishes between corn flakes made from flour and those made from kernels. (The reader should take note that two technical errors crept into Rabbi Forst's list—in the case of orange juice and of rugalech.) The same difference of approach may account for Rabbi Forst giving his supplementary footnotes in English, while Rabbi Bodner has them in Hebrew. Since both works truly are excellent, it is up to each buyer

to decide which of them is best suited for his needs.

An interesting contribution to the field of *brachos* is *Brachos For Breakfast*, a booklet distributed by Post Cereals. One can truly say that "only in America" could one find a mega-corporation producing a multi-colored activity book teaching Jewish children between 7 and 11 which *brachos* to make on their food (this booklet, which follows one produced last year, has an accompanying *Brachos* Guide poster). There are puzzles and mazes as well as a chart of food with the appropriate *brachos*—surely to no one's surprise, the only cereals listed are those manufactured by Post. Also included is a very well designed quiz (Which *bracha* is mentioned in the Torah? What *bracha* is only recited on Wednesday or Thursday?). Produced under reliable rabbinical supervision, this is indeed an interesting and entertaining teaching tool.

THE POWER OF THE SPOKEN WORD

Words are powerful, in many ways. In prayer, they are our means of communicating with G-d. In our social life, they have the power to build or destroy human relationships.

The Power of Words, by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin (Benet Yaakov Publications, Brooklyn, 1988, \$13.50 h.c., \$11.00p.b.), is a practical guide concerning the Torah prohibition against causing pain with words, offering alternative approaches for effective communication. In his inimitable way, Rabbi Pliskin shows here once again his ability to present important lessons in a down-to-earth manner that will capture the reader's attention—and his heart. About 300 aspects of *Ono'as Devorim* (hurting people) are each discussed in a couple of paragraphs; they include such diverse issues as heckling a speaker, "rubbing it in," nicknames, or the use of "never" and "always" in correcting somebody. There will be few people who will not blush as they read this book and realize their own insensitivity to others. A list, at the end of the book, groups the topics discussed under major categories so that this work can be used for systematic teaching of the subject.

Priority in Prayer, by Rabbi Yisroel Pesach Feinhandler (dist. by Feldheim, 1989, \$14.95), an English translation of the author's *Avnei Yoshfei*, prepared by Rabbi Jonathan Cohen, is meant to serve as a practical guide to common halachic problems in prayer. There are many such problems that can arise. When there is insufficient time for *all* prayers, which take precedence? Should a *kohain* rather *daven* with a *minyan* or recite *Birkas Kohanim*? Questions such as these, arranged according to the order of the prayers, are the subject of this work. For each *halacha*, Hebrew footnotes provide sources and elaboration. At the end of the book a series of charts provides a convenient summary of all the *halachos* discussed, and an index enables the reader quickly to locate any

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subject on which he needs guidance. As the author points out, many of the questions discussed here cannot be found in the *poskim* and were clarified through consultation of present-day Rabbinic authorities, notably Rabbi Elyashiv; and even those laws discussed in earlier works are scattered throughout Rabbinic literature. It is therefore a very great service that this work renders, and it is sure to be received with open arms.

Our regular *tefillos* all too often became a matter of habit, and rarely do we feel the need for special *tefillos* on particular occasions. **A Joyful Mother of Children**, by Rabbi D.S. Rosenthal (dist. by Feldheim, 1988, \$9.95 h.c., \$6.95 p.b.) will serve to encourage this important practice for at least one type of special situation. Rabbi Rosenthal has gathered from traditional sources *tefillos* to be recited both during pregnancy and after childbirth. In addition he discusses the *halachos* particularly needed at these times. His little volume is both inspiring and useful and will surely find widespread use.

Talk But Not During Davening, by Rabbi Moshe Goldberger (Box 82, S.I., N.Y., 1988, \$2.95), is another in the series of valuable and original pamphlets published by the author. Here he has collected from rabbinical authorities their statements on proper conduct in *shul*, particularly during the *tefillos*, and their warnings against talking in *shul*. Nobody who reads their words can remain unaffected by them. Another pamphlet by Rabbi Goldberger, **Speak In All His Wonders** (1984, \$2.95), is a guide to the daily morning blessings, based on writings of Rabbi Avigdor Miller, and offers a practical 30-day program for thanking *Hashem* for all his manifold kindnesses that we usually take for granted. (Other recent pamphlets in this series, are **Torah Treasures** designed to further *Sholom Bayis*, right speech, and long life; **How to Achieve Wealth the Torah Way**, about honesty in business; and **Watching Your Weight—The Torah Way**, which shows how the Torah

and its laws guide us to proper and healthful eating.)

KEY WORKS ON THE SHABBOS

The subject of *Shabbos* for obvious reasons occupies a central place in halachic literature. The second volume of *Rav Yehoshua Newirth's Shemirath Shabbos Kehilchosoh*, translated by W. Grangewood, has now been published by Feldheim (1989,

\$17.95 h.c., \$14.95 p.b.). Following the pattern of the first volume, it deals with a variety of subjects ranging from housekeeping activities to the employment of non-Jews, to the laws concerning sickness and other emergencies. Of course, physicians have much greater need for detailed guidance in the latter area than laymen; hence they will be particularly interested in **A Physician's Hospital Manual**, by Dr. Benjamin Sokol (Regensberg Institute, Jerusalem, 1986). This is a

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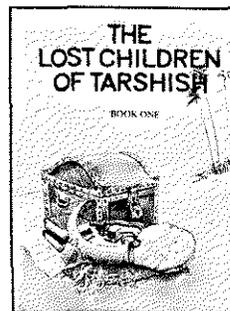
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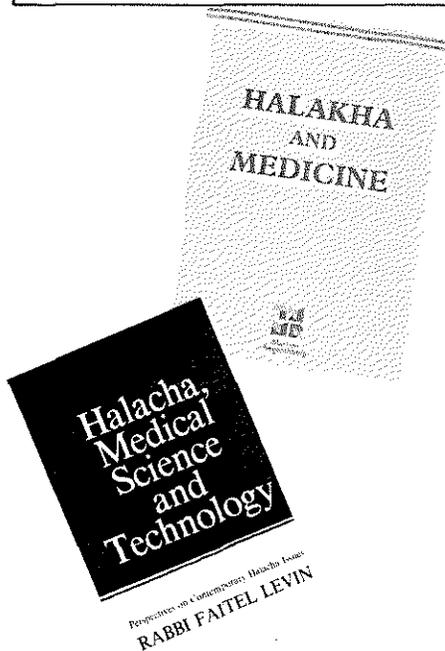


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options open to the care giver and the halachic issues involved in each course of action. The clear and systematic arrangement of the topics enables the user to find them quickly, an important consideration on many occasions.

Another work providing detailed technical analysis for the benefit of the Orthodox community is **Shabbat and the Modern Kitchen**, by Rabbi L.I. Halpern, translated by Rabbi David Oratz (Gefen Publ., Jerusalem, 1986, \$13.95). Rabbi Halpern is the head of the *halacha* department of the Institute for Science and Halacha, in Jerusalem. With his approval, Rabbi Oratz reorganized the material, also adding new aspects of the topic, the problems of preparing and warming foods on *Shabbos* in modern kitchen installations. Specifically, this book is concerned with food service in hospitals and commercial institutions where it is essential to ensure freshness and proper temperature. To this end, various technical devices are suggested that would bypass halachic problems, such as the use of time-clocks and *grama* switches, and the relevant opinions of the *poskim* are analyzed in order

to determine which arrangements would be halachically satisfactory. In a concluding essay, Chayim Friedberg examines the obvious question whether such technological arrangements, as developed by the Institute, do not in effect breach the wall of proper Sabbath observance. He concludes that they do not, and cites, in support, the *Chazon Ish* and other *Gedolim*. However, to this reviewer, it would appear that Rabbi Moshe Feinstein's objection to *Shabbos* clocks (except for purposes of controlling light) reflects his basic reservations about the technological set-ups here discussed—and the author's interpretation of Rabbi Feinstein's position (pp. 73 and 87) is not convincing. While this does not invalidate the suggestions offered in this book (especially for hospital use), it does illuminate the complexities of the issues involved.

The electric kitchen on *Shabbos* is also one of the issues discussed in Rabbi Faitel Levin's **Halacha, Medical Science and Technology**, offering perspectives on contemporary *halacha* issues (Moznaim Publ. Co., New York—Jerusalem, 1987, \$13.50 h.c.). Rabbi Levin stresses that no statement in his work should be taken as a definitive halachic ruling. His aim is to show that technology is not an invasion of G-d's domain, but rather the development of the potentialities present in G-d's creation, and their use in G-d's service. To that end, he analyzes issues raised by medical technology and research (from organ transplants to sound nutrition and smoking); the halachic status of the deaf and mute in the light of technical advances; the use of timers and similar devices on *Shabbos*; and some aspects of problematical products on Pesach (an interesting discussion but, in this reviewer's view, not sufficiently concrete, e.g. concerning denatured alcohol). In his concluding essay the author points out that many contemporary halachic questions flow from the fact that basic concepts, such as matter, time, and space, must be viewed differently in the

highly technical work. It disclaims any desire to serve as *psak halacha*, and stresses the importance of an ongoing relationship between a physician and a halachic authority. The purpose of this work is to present the wide spectrum of problems of medical care on *Shabbos* in an organized fashion, analyzing the

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light of modern science than they used to be. The nature of microscopic phenomena, electric current, the transition from life to death, in vitro conception, etc.—all pose halachic questions. The challenge is to find the way to apply eternal Torah concepts to a changing reality. This essay in particular, which includes many practical examples, makes most interesting and thought-provoking reading.

NEW WORKS FOR PESACH

The central place that the Seder and the Haggadah occupy in the life of each Jew is reflected in the way in which each community within Klal Yisroel has developed its own approach to the Seder—its own customs, its songs, its interpretation of the Haggadah. This is excellently illustrated by two recently published Haggados, one from the world of the Lithuanian Mussar Yeshivos and the other from the world of Chassidus.

The Haggadah of the Mussar Masters (Mesorah Publ., Brooklyn, 1989, \$13.95 h.c., \$10.95 p.b.) presents selections from the original Hebrew edition, by *Rabbi Meir Sholom*, translated by *Yaakov Petroff*. All the classical works of the Mussar movement are represented in this volume and the passages chosen deal with the fundamental ideas of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and the observance of Pesach (e.g. Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz's famous analysis of *bedikas chametz*). The volume is enriched by brief biographical sketches of the personalities represented in it.

The Chassidic Haggadah, edited and translated by *Rabbi Eliyahu Touger* (Moznaim Publ., Jerusalem—New York, 1988, \$9.95 h.c.), offers a collection of thoughts and stories gathered from the broad spectrum of Chassidic literature. However varied, they each reflect the particular approach of *Chassidus*, quite distinct from the style of the *Baalei Mussar*, even though ultimately the ideas meet. The reader will appreciate that—as in the case

of the Mussar Haggadah—comments are also offered on the second part of the Seder, which is so often neglected. At the end of the volume

there is a section on the *Halachos* of Pesach and of the Seder, supplementing the directives given through the Haggadah. ■

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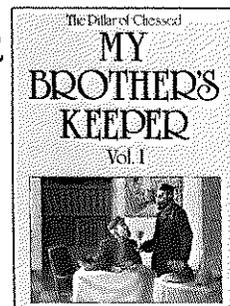
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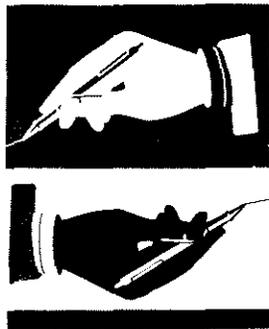
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AUTHOR'S DEFENSE OF SOURCES AND INTERPRETATION FOR "RETURNING TO TRADITION"

To the Editor:

The November issue of *The Jewish Observer* contains a review of my book *Returning to Tradition: The Contemporary Revival of Orthodox Judaism* (Yale University Press) which misstates and distorts what I wrote and cited.

The reviewer writes that the trouble with the book "is due to the sources on which he [the author] relied (for the difference between Chassidim and modern Orthodox Jews, he refers the readers to Potok's *The Chosen*)." The clear implication is that Potok's book is the sole source for my writings on Chassidim. In fact, this reference occurs on p. 142, where, after stating that I have chosen *not* to discuss Chassidim, I refer readers interested in

Chassidim to Poll (1962) and Rubin (1972) for community studies of Chassidim in America and Buber (1947, 1948) and Weisel (1972) for Chassidic leaders. I then write "for a novel dealing with the relation between Chassidic and 'modern' Orthodoxy, see Potok 1967."

The reviewer states that I "do not ever touch . . . on the impact of the Mussar movement on the yeshivos and the non-Chassidic world." In fact, the Mussar movement is discussed at the very outset of the book (p.16).

The reviewer writes that "in discussing the *mehitza* he refers to "the Second Temple . . . where men worshipped in one courtyard and women in another." Yet I say "in synagogues men and women have worshipped in separate areas separated by a *mehitza* for thousands of years, as far back as the *Temple*" (p. 104). (Emphasis added.)

The reviewer claims to have found an error in my statement that Yeshiva University's high school for girls founded in 1948 was the first. He says Rebbetzin Kaplan founded her Beth Jacob High school in 1944. I don't know where the reviewer gets his facts. I provided sources for mine. Readers are welcome to examine Klapperman (1967) or Schiff (1956) for support of my view.

The reviewer states that I argue that the American Talmud Torah provided "access to the community of prayer," not to that of study. I do say this (p. 47) but continue the discussion to argue that yeshivos provided access to the community of study, "where study was thought of as religious devotion rather than merely an educational experience"

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(p. 50). My views are again distorted to make it appear I am unaware that many Talmud Torahs provided in the reviewer's words "intensive education." A reader of my book is aware that this is not my point.

The reviewer states that I write of secular studies in 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." In fact, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch founded a primary school, a secondary school and a girls' high school. In these schools not only were Jewish and Hebrew taught, but also German, mathematics, natural science and geography. This broad curriculum was a clear reflection of Rabbi Hirsch's views of the need to combine Torah with *derech erez* and aroused the antagonism of Rabbi Isaac Dov Bamberger.

The reviewer claims that I have "reiterated 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.)" Yet there can be little doubt that some pious Jews understood this to mean that the *Aruch Hashulchan* permitted *even* the saying of blessings and *Krias Shema* in the presence of uncovered hair (despite his obvious dismay at the practice of uncovering the hair). How else can we explain the refusal of the daughter-in-law of Rabbi Hillel Klein, a founder of Agudath Israel to cover her hair, or the fact that Nancy Isaacs Klein writes in her book that "none of the daughters, daughters-in-law or grand-daughters in her father's family ever wore a sheitel"? (Nor apparently did they cover their hair. See the same essay in which my book is reviewed p.19.) My point is that this was the view of many pious Orthodox Jews at that time.

The reviewer writes that "particularly ludicrous is the author's statement that "social dancing was permitted in some Orthodox German schools between the wars." He

offers the correction that it was done in some circles even before the war as well. He apparently objects then only to my statement that it was taught in schools. My statement is based on information provided by persons whose parents attended this school. If on further investigation it appears that these informants erred, I shall be glad to correct this and any other errors of fact in the next printing of the book.

Finally the reviewer rejects "the claim found in modern Orthodox publications that *Daas Torah* is a twentieth century invention." He says, "It is clearly spelled out in Talmudic sources." Two points: 1) I am not making that statement. I am quoting a source that makes it. 2) The *Encyclopedia Talmudis* written under the general editorship of Rav Meir Berlin זצ"ל and Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin זצ"ל makes no mention of *Daas Torah*.

One criticism remains: that is that I made no mention of "der pintele Yid." That I leave for the reviewer.

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(DR.) M. HERBERT DANZGER
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OUR REVIEWER RESPONDS:

I regret that Dr. Danzger consid-

ers my review as having misstated and distorted what he wrote, and I will try to deal with each of his points. First, however, I would like to deal with what I referred to as the "pintele Yid" factor. My remark that as a matter of course, this is ignored in sociological studies was not a criticism of the specific book (and certainly not of Dr. Danzger). It was meant to point out the

inherent limitations of an academic study such as this.

Perhaps it is useful to begin with a general comment on the current proliferation of Judaic Studies publications, Ph.D. theses, and research papers. Unfortunately many of them are deeply flawed. The JO in the past reviewed Professor Wasserstein's *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*, which in effect falsified the historical record because the author, for reasons at which we can only guess, totally omitted any reference to the comprehensive *Hatzolah* work of Dr. Shoenfeld, the Chief Rabbi's Emergency Council, and Agudath Israel. This is an extreme case, although regrettably not the only instance when organizational loyalties and prejudice influence authors. More typical is the case of Steiman's biography of the *Maharil*—a Brandeis University Ph.D. thesis beset by innumerable mistakes and misinterpretations due to the inability of the author to understand the Hebrew texts which he was supposed to draw on. Even when the translation does not pose difficulties to the aspiring author, his schooling has all too often left him uninformed and unsympathetic to traditional Judaism, instead imbuing him with fixed ideas—secular evolutionist, and historicist—about Jewish history and literature. But even where this is not the case, it has, at the very least, trained him to use established academic historical-sociological categories of thought and analysis. For some subjects they may be appropriate—but all too often they form a *Sodom-bett'l* (or should I say Procrustean bed?) into which the research results have to fit if they are to gain academic recognition. Moreover, once published, these works, whatever their flaws, become the reference material for subsequent research—truly a process of inbreeding (and we know what inbreeding leads to!).

Dr. Danzger's work happens to be a sincere and straight-forward effort to explore the *Teshuva* movement and, even though I pointed out what appear to me as some mistakes, I

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stressed in my review that the book provides interesting observations and useful insights, particularly due to the presentation of so much first-hand material garnered from interviews and observations. Yet even with the greatest sympathy and effort to report objectively, the academic scholar faces at least one of the limitations described above: the need to deal with his subject in strictly "scientific" terms. Dr. Danzger, for instance, analyzes the factors producing the *Teshuva* movement—notably, changes in the American society and the counter-cultural movements that emerged. These are undoubtedly valid points—but, from the vantage point of Torah, there are other factors that must be considered primary even though they have no academic standing: in the first place, what I called the "*pintele Yid*," the Jewish soul that thirsts for contact with its Creator and seeks to break through the "iron wall" that separates them—and Divine Providence that manipulates the cause-effect relationships of our world to further the Divine goals in Creation. Who knows, e.g., whether the conditions



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promoting the *Teshuva* movement were not created because the destruction of European Jewry had to be followed by a revival of Torah on this scale? The truth is that there is a uniqueness about G-d's people and G-d's Torah that is inaccessible to the academic scholar's search. Perhaps that is why a *Gadol BaTorah* is quoted as saying that "even if one goes to college, he should under no circumstances take Judaic studies."

OTHER POINTS OF CONTENTION

At this point, I would now like to discuss the other issues raised by Dr. Danzger in his letter:

1. I did *not* write that Potok's book is the author's *sole* source; rather, I objected to readers being referred to Potok's book as a source on *anything* Chassidic, since it is built on a totally fictitious and fanciful fantasy about a *Rebbe's* conduct. However, I could (and should) have also commented on the author's choice of Martin Buber and Elie Wiesel as interpreters of Chassidic leaders (see Rabbi Alter B.Z. Metzger's "Chassidus and the Lonely Jew," JO Nov. 1973, for an analysis of Wiesel's book—as for Buber, his "reinterpretation" of Chassidism needs no documentation). This is precisely what I had meant when I criticized the author's choice of sources.

2. The founding of the Beth Jacob High School in 1944 is amply documented. *The Torah Profile*, pp. 312-314, gives a detailed account of the event (see also *Daughters of Destiny*, p. 218); and *The Day Schools and Torah Umesorah* quotes a memo of April 20, 1944, mentioning the school. Here again the trouble is with the author's sources. They are both not from Beth Jacob records but from outsiders—in this case the Yeshiva University circle—and his reliance on these sources has led him to other errors. He mentions the founding of Teachers Institute for Women in 1952—without apparently realizing that it was preceded by a much older pioneering institution, the *Beth Hamidrash Lamoros*. He writes: "Yeshiva University encouraged the

Once published, these works, whatever their flaws, become the reference material for subsequent research—truly a process of inbreeding.

development of congregational schools in the Orthodox community, and these schools often became the nucleus of yeshiva day schools”—while nowhere in his book is there any mention of Torah Umesorah, the universally acknowledged key agency in the creation of the day school movement (which he himself emphasizes as such a crucial development for American Jewry). There is no mention of the part played by SEED in furthering the return to Judaism in this country (or of *Arachim* in Israel); and while *kollelim* are mentioned as a counter-cultural phenomenon, there is not a word about the impact of the community *kollelim* all across the country.

3. Dr. Danzger chose to quote his remarks on p. 104, concerning the Temple, but apparently overlooked p. 152 where he wrote the exact sentence that I quoted, and to which I correctly objected (the *Ezras Noshim* was not a courtyard for women's prayer, in contrast to the *Ezras Yisroel*, but a courtyard to which women were admitted as well as men, unlike the *Ezras Yisroel*). Moreover, on p. 104, in a footnote to the sentence which he quotes in his letter, he refers the reader to *Sukkah* 5:2 for "the origins of the women's gallery and separate area in the Temple for women"; yet the gallery here referred to was only built for the *Simchas Beis Hasho'eva*, and the "separate area for women" is apparently his mistaken interpretation of *Ezras Noshim*.

4. The author does not quote me correctly concerning the question of dancing. A reading of what I really said should make it clear that my objections went far beyond what he quotes. I wrote: "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 . . . it was fought by the rabbis, never penetrated into the schools, and was never given a green light by any halachic author-

ity." The author's statements to the contrary deserve more substantiation than he offers—at the very least the schools and, above all, the Rabbis in question should be identified. Lacking such information, such hearsay should surely not be offered as fact.

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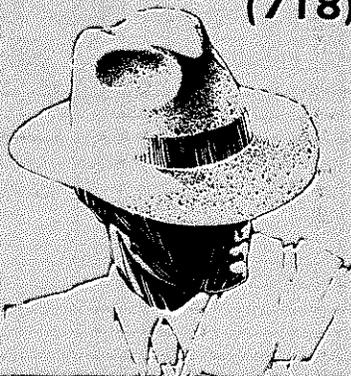
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promoting the *Teshuva* movement were not created because the destruction of European Jewry had to be followed by a revival of Torah on

5. I cannot understand Dr. Danzger's comments concerning the *Aruch Hashulchan* at all. In his book (p. 153) he speaks of the *Aruch Hashulchan's* ruling, "once widely accepted by the modernists, [and] slowly being rejected, as more of the modernist women cover their hair." These words clearly suggest that the *Aruch Hashulchan* ruled such covering to be unnecessary. In actual fact, as I pointed out, he did no such thing. His ruling, concerning blessings, was in fact a *response* to the widespread disregard of the requirement of covering the hair—it was not the *cause*. The fact that "some pious Jews" misunderstood—or misused—the words of the *Aruch Hashulchan* does not entitle us to quote him wrongly and lend support to what I rightly called an old canard. In any case, the *Aruch Hashulchan* should certainly not be blamed for the wholesale abandonment of this *halacha*. "How else can we explain it?" By the same factors that caused other *dinim* to be abandoned in the name of modernity (such as *Shaatnez* in this country, until it was belatedly rediscovered).

6. As for *Da'as HaTorah*, Dr. Danzger writes: "In the past two or three decades (my italics) traditionalistic yeshivot have been claiming that the basis for religious authority is not only *halacha* but also *Da'at Torah*" (p. 167). This is his own statement, not attributed to a source. In a footnote he adds that "this formulation leans primarily on Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman" and quotes from the Yeshiva University's *Hamevaser* the modernists' objections, without questioning them. The fact that he indeed agrees with them is made clear on p. 180 where he says about the claims for *Da'as HaTorah*, in non-halachic matters, that it is "a position that we have already indicated is fraught with problems." Hence I felt it necessary to register my disagreement: *Da'as HaTorah* is not a novel idea and the problems he sees are no problems if properly analyzed. As for the

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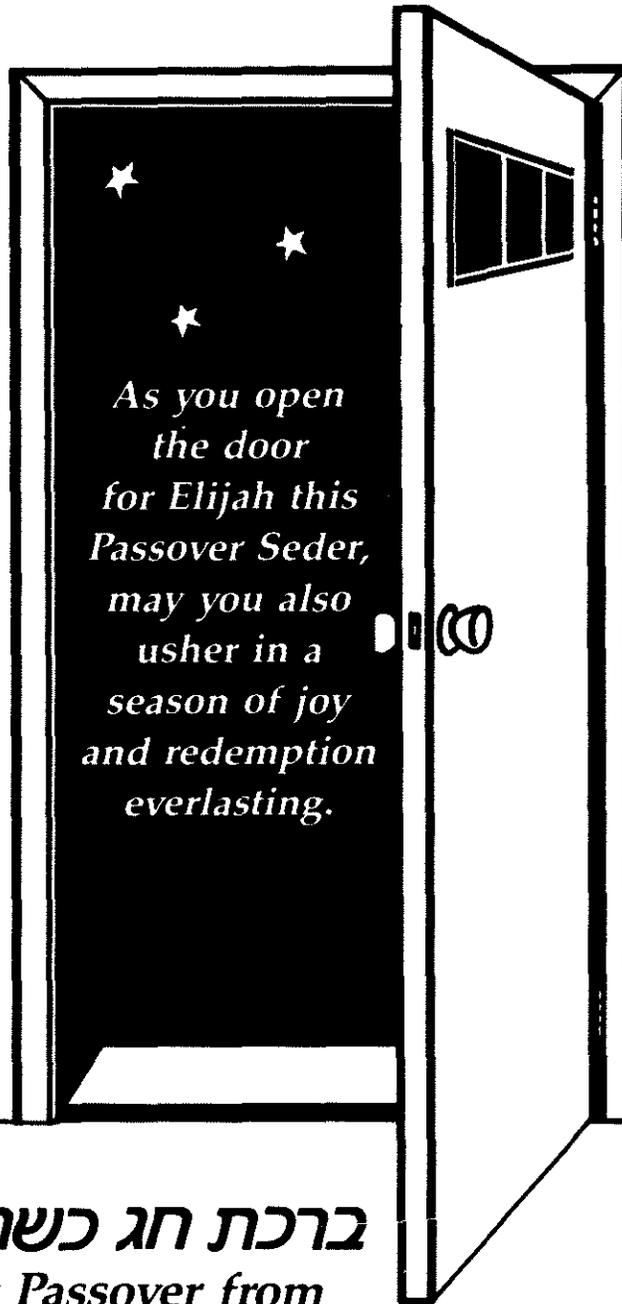
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"WE DON'T DO THIS FOR ANY OTHER YOM TOV"

No, that elbow isn't really dislocated, it just feels that way. And surely my knees can hang on just a few minutes longer. And yes, ammonia and boiling water are not good for the fingers, but I ought to be able to tie my shoes—there! Oh, how good it feels to be moving slowly again; we're

Yaakov Lavon studied in Yeshivos Ohr Somayach and Netzach Yisroel in Jerusalem, and currently serves as the *sofer STaM* for the Yeshiva community of Yeroham, in Israel's Negev. His article, "The Jewish Light Artillery," was featured in JO, Dec. '89.

through! And we have indeed been through it: a month in the salt mines would be a luxury vacation by comparison (at least it feels that way). Two weeks of round-the-clock scrubbing and mopping, bleach, ammonia, steel wool, and boiling water, insufficient sleep, borderline malnutrition—what kind of a way was that to get ready for a festival?

... A hot shower was definitely just the thing; nothing better for assorted bruises and scrapes (picked up while heaving around the furniture and manhandling the kitchen appliances). ... What was I thinking? Oh, yes—

What kind of preparation was this? We don't do this for any other *Yom Tov*; and for Pesach, the biggest one of all, we do. We must be crazy, no?...I don't think that the soap really got the smell of ammonia off of me. Oh well ... Now to get a tie—*oy vay*, my back is killing me. Why do we do it all, anyway?

... Every year I can't sleep properly until the matzos arrive; I pay double prices for dish detergent, shampoo, toothpaste, even the soap I use in the shower; I buy twelve dozen eggs, as if "cholesterol" weren't in the dictionary; I refuse to buy any processed foods, lug a sack of potatoes home, bring a live turkey to the *shochet*, and cook the way my great-grandmother did—yeah, I must be crazy.

But—ay! there goes my knee again (the one that I banged on the step-ladder)—I love every minute of it. ... *Nu*, so I'm double crazy. The Mad Paper-Spreader, that's me. How many yards of shelf paper, double-thickness aluminum foil, contact paper, did I lay down this year? I don't know. I stopped counting three days ago—or was it four? The brain gets a bit fuzzy when you're this lacking on sleep. What am I doing now? Oh yes, tying my tie.

THE YEARLY MIRACLE

And yet, tonight, G-d willing, it will happen again, the yearly miracle. After crawling to *shul*, groaning my way through *Maariv*, barely making it home; I will sit at the table robed in white, and talk, and talk, and talk, endlessly loud and clear, now singing, now reciting, now explaining to the children, hour on hour as if I hadn't once been tired for the last month. Hunger? What's that? Although I haven't eaten since breakfast, at ten-thirty tonight I will be strong and happy, as every year. How? A good question, that ...

My coat must be somewhere. Oh, there it is, it's just that my eyes aren't working any more; no wonder, too; they haven't had much time off recently. ... Well, it is a good question, but I suppose that

Yeshaya HaNavi already answered it:

Do you not know, or have you not heard?
HaShem is the Lord of the world:
He creates the ends of the earth.
He neither tires nor is fatigued—
There is no knowing His wisdom.
He gives the weary strength,
And showers vigor on the exhausted.

Youths may tire and be wearied,
Young men trip and stumble;
But those who trust HaShem will renew strength,
They will grow wings like the eagle,
Run and not be wearied,
Walk on and not tire.
Yeshayahu 40, 28-31

That certainly explains why the last three weeks haven't landed me in the emergency ward. You do what

you can for HaShem, and He gives you the strength to do it. But for these last weeks, the arrangement was just barely working; tonight, G-d willing, there will be plenty and to spare of strength. What's the difference, then?

... Where did I put my *Machzor*? Oh, there ... amazing what a hot shower can do to revive the half-dead. ... Well, for one thing "HaShem doesn't show himself to us except when we're happy." Scrubbing and starving isn't quite conducive to effervescent cheerfulness; but at the *Seder*, who isn't happy? Certainly that's part of it, then; but what was it that the *Chida* said? In a little old book I once picked up from a peddler in the Me'ah She'arim marketplace. The pages are so old that they're brittle—here it is: "This night shines as bright as the sun with the awesome light of Heaven." That's the kind of night it is: no need to worry about the laws of nature. This is the night that HaShem stood nature on its head to bring us out of Egypt, the night that He showed Himself to us regardless of our *madreiga*. There is strength enough for an army tonight, just waiting for me to take it. No tiredness could stop a Jew from serving HaShem, not on the *Seder* night.

... My fingers look well enough recovered to turn the pages in the *Machzor*; that's something. Reach for the hat—oh, that back!—and let's get a move on for *Maariv*.

"THE WISE MAN LOCKS HIS DOOR"

The *Chida* has more to say: "The *yeitzer hora* is looking to insinuate himself into one of the family this night; so a wise man will lock his door before it, and forgive whatever happens; he will take out strife and bring in love."

What could be more fitting for the *Seder* night? There was never a night of greater love than this. This was the time that G-d reached out to us with absolute love, forgiving all of our sins and gathering us in



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This was the time that G-d reached out to us with absolute love, forgiving all of our sins and gathering us in to Himself to be His people. The only answer to such a love is to give the same love back.



to Himself to be His people. The only answer to such a love is to give the same love back. Of course the *yeitzer* is going to try to break up this great beauty; all the more reason to be infinitely patient and loving. Isn't that just what *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* did for us back then?

... I've made it to *shul!*—Settle creaking and groaning onto a bench ... still a few minutes until *Borchu*.

Maybe that's the answer to my biggest question of all: *why do we do it?* Why would anyone put himself through the mill of these last three weeks? Only for love. Now it begins to make sense: all year long I'm pretty careful about *kashrus*; come Pesach time, I run amok with a scrub-brush and hunt down the last crumb of *chometz* to its inev-

itable extinction. All year long I'm careful about keeping *milchig* and *fleishig* separate; for Pesach I have a separate corkscrew, bottle-opener, funnel, *Havdalah* candle—you name it. All year long, I'm particular about *hechsheirim*; when Pesach comes, I just don't buy processed foods, period. What's it all for, then? Perhaps it's just because we love *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* more than ever at Pesach time. *Chazal* tell us that when it was time for the Exodus, *Am Yisroel* simply didn't merit being redeemed, so *HaShem* gave them a few *mitzvos* to do, and then with the merit of those *mitzvos*, He brought about a tremendous awakening of Heavenly love. With that love, we were redeemed, and every year, the *seforim* say, that

same love awakens at Pesach time. It's only natural for *Am Yisroel* to respond to it, to be filled with love for *HaShem* when Nissan come around.

What else could explain the yearly "insanity" that strikes my home? And what explanation could be better?

... Time for *Borchu* now; and now it strikes me how wonderful it is to be saying *Borchu*.—"Happy are you, *Yisroel*; who is like you, a people saved by *HaShem!*" Who would have thought that the way to joy is through scrubbing and cleaning? But the love of *Am Yisroel* for *HaShem* is so deep and strong that nothing should surprise us, and there is no time like Pesach for expressing that love. ■

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THE CARDS ARE NOT FOR FLIPPING

Notes on Collecting "Rabbi Cards"

The cards have 4-color likenesses of "heroes" imprinted on them. No, they're not baseball stars. No RBI's or batting averages printed on the back. Just some vital statistics and major contributions to the Jewish People. "Torah Personalities," they're called, and they've already sold close to a million copies. How has that come to pass? And why do the secular media seem so interested?

When a newspaper called for what turned out to be the first interview on the topic, I was reluctant to get involved with them. But my *Rav* advised me to cooperate: *Everyone should get to know who the Torah leaders are.* That mandate is being fulfilled.

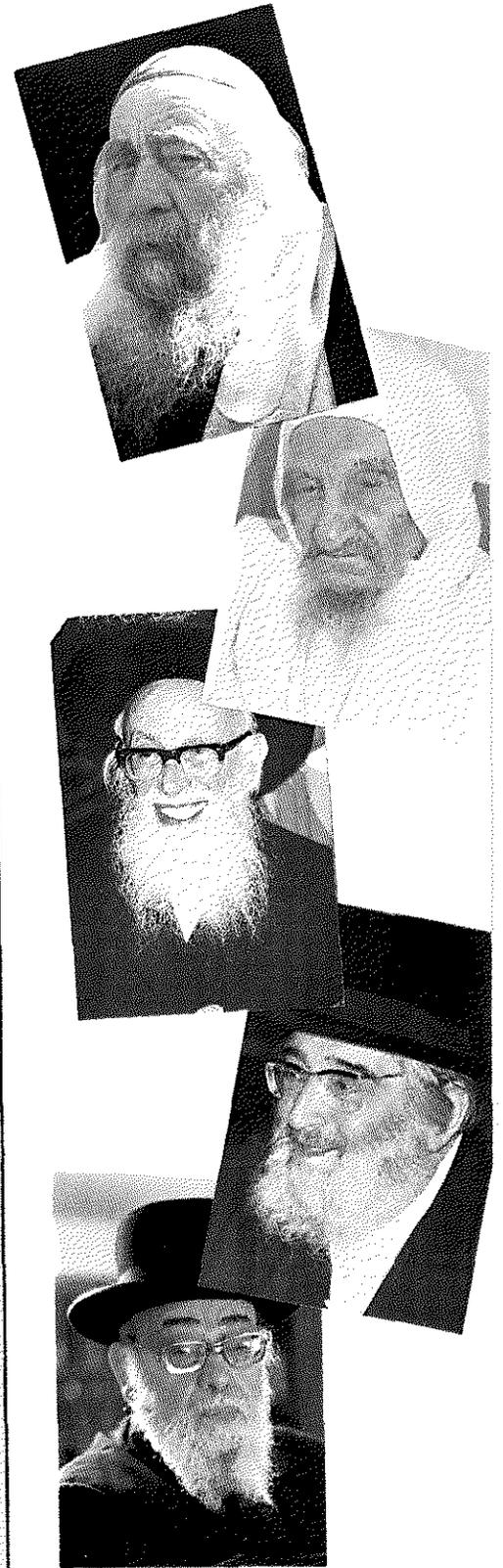
Since that first interview, articles have appeared in *Time Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated*, and in newspapers throughout the country from the national news syndications. The "Rabbi Cards" have also been featured on CBS-Radio, National Public Radio, and various other radio and television programs. The articles

Chonon Shugarman is the editor of Agudath Israel of Baltimore's *Newsletter*, President of Etz Chaim Center for Jewish Studies, and founder of Torah Personalities, Inc., producers of the "Rabbi Cards."

were written by non-religious Jews or non-Jews and of course had a secular slant to them. They couldn't help but compare the photos to baseball cards, and certainly didn't give the degree of respect to our *Rabbonim* that we would have preferred. Considering their perspective, however, the articles were remarkably positive. Somehow, the expected anti-semitism of some of these papers did not show up at all.

At the outset, many reporters found the idea a bit humorous. However, when they saw the quality of the photo cards—they look more like first-rate Kodak prints than baseball cards—they began to take it more seriously. The scope and sincerity of the project—they aren't accustomed to the Torah world where something can be done *l'shaim Shomayim* (for the sake of Heaven) on a non-profit basis rather than for money—also impressed them. Many interviewed young Yeshiva children, and encountering their genuine excitement over collecting the photos, and their sincere respect for the Torah leaders, the reporters recognized the unique nature of this project.

The esteem that Orthodox children accord these photos and the





rabbis pictured seemed to be a major point of many of the articles. By contrast, the popularity of leading sports figures, movie and television stars, politicians, and leaders from other religious groups have greatly decreased in popularity in recent years. The reporters were surprised that true role models still exist in this day and age.

No doubt, a *siyata diShmaya* (Heavenly assist) facilitated this interest. This is most clearly evident in the unusually prominent and sometimes almost out-of-place positioning of the articles, such as the one in *Time Magazine* (July 17, 1989). That issue of *Time* featured five articles under Business Notes, the most prominent one, on Torah Personalities. But compare the articles. The others were on the plunging U.S. Dollar, a South Korea boycott of U.S. produce, Big Eight accounting firms merger (a \$4.9 billion dollar deal), and an expected takeover of the world's second largest gold producer at \$5.5 billion. Pitted against these multi-billion dollar deals and other major economics stories is the "Rabbi trading cards." The article states that 400,000 had sold at 20 cents a piece. A quick reference to a calculator shows what a heavyweight this is—a full \$80,000, or one fifty-thousandth the size of the other deals. Yet the story of Rabbi photos not only made the page, but received top billing.

Among the many lessons I have learned from this project, is that we have a responsibility to use the many recent technological advances to our advantage, to enable as to accomplish much more than in the past for furthering Torah causes. As Torah representatives to the world at large, we should never settle on producing our material in any but the best manner possible. You never know when the world (non-religious Jews, as well as non-Jews) may take a look, creating an immeasurable *Kiddush Hashem*. And then, the subject matter of what we are producing deserves no less than the best. ■

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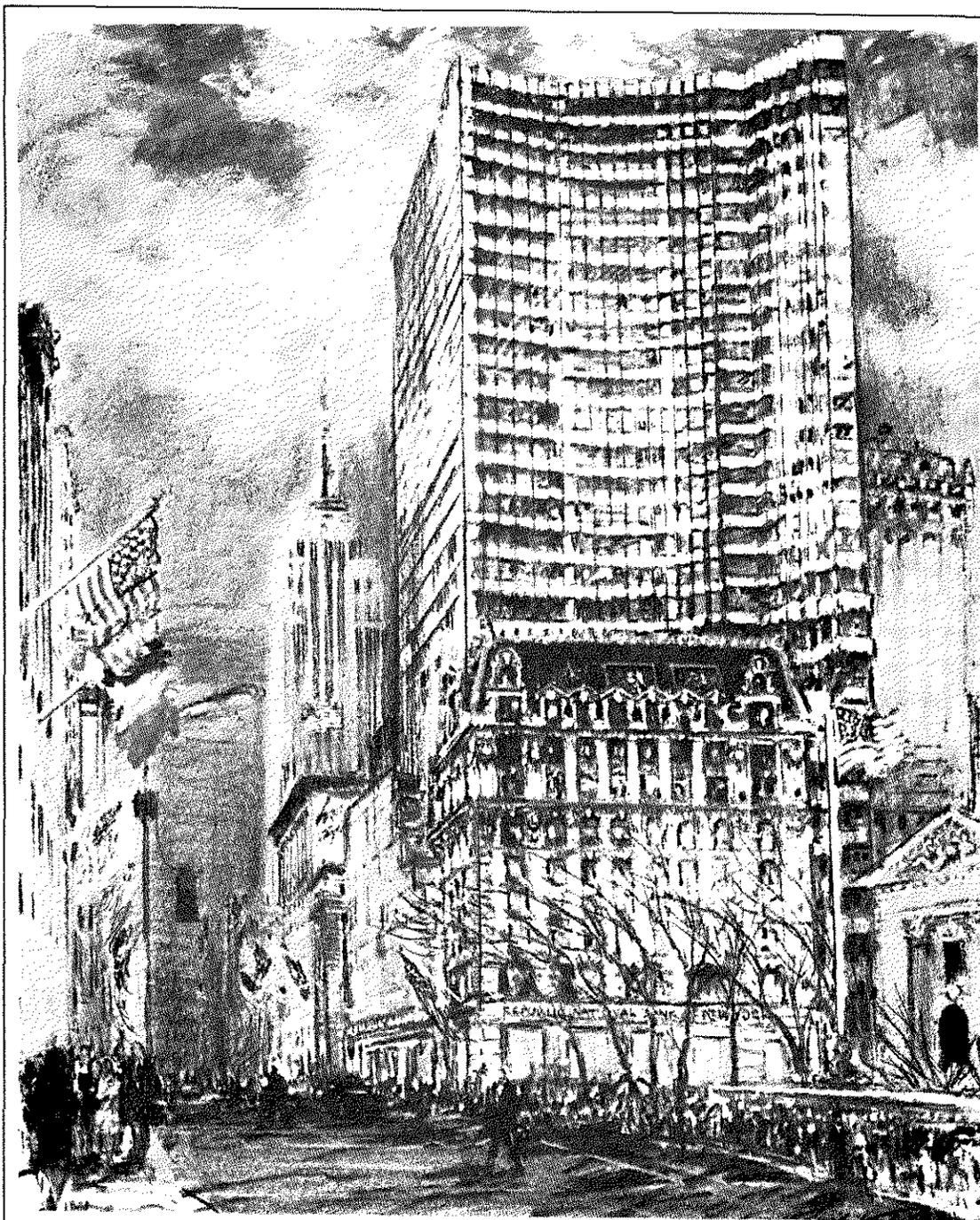
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have imbued their family with, have touched all of us in many ways.

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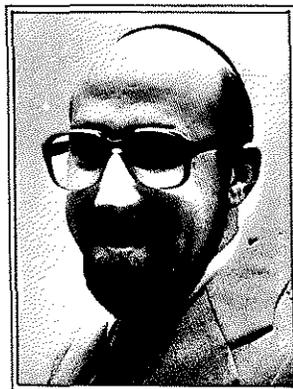
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Washing dishes, watching the dishes,
not really seeing
her hands wash the dishes,
because it's always like this, and the sun
lengthening along the floor.

One,
two o'clock,
and then she's done
the laundry. Get the baby crying. Oh, sweet baby.

Because.
There is no because.

But one day the sun hits a frying pan in soapy water
and she's holding a rainbow.
The thought flashes through her like lightning:
"G-d's creating light!" and she sees
all this,
the light the water her hands herself
are miracles.



Sarah Shapiro lives in Arzei HaBira, Jerusalem. Her book of poetry, *Growing With My Children—A Jewish Mother's Diary*, is soon to be published by Targum Press.

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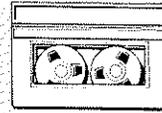
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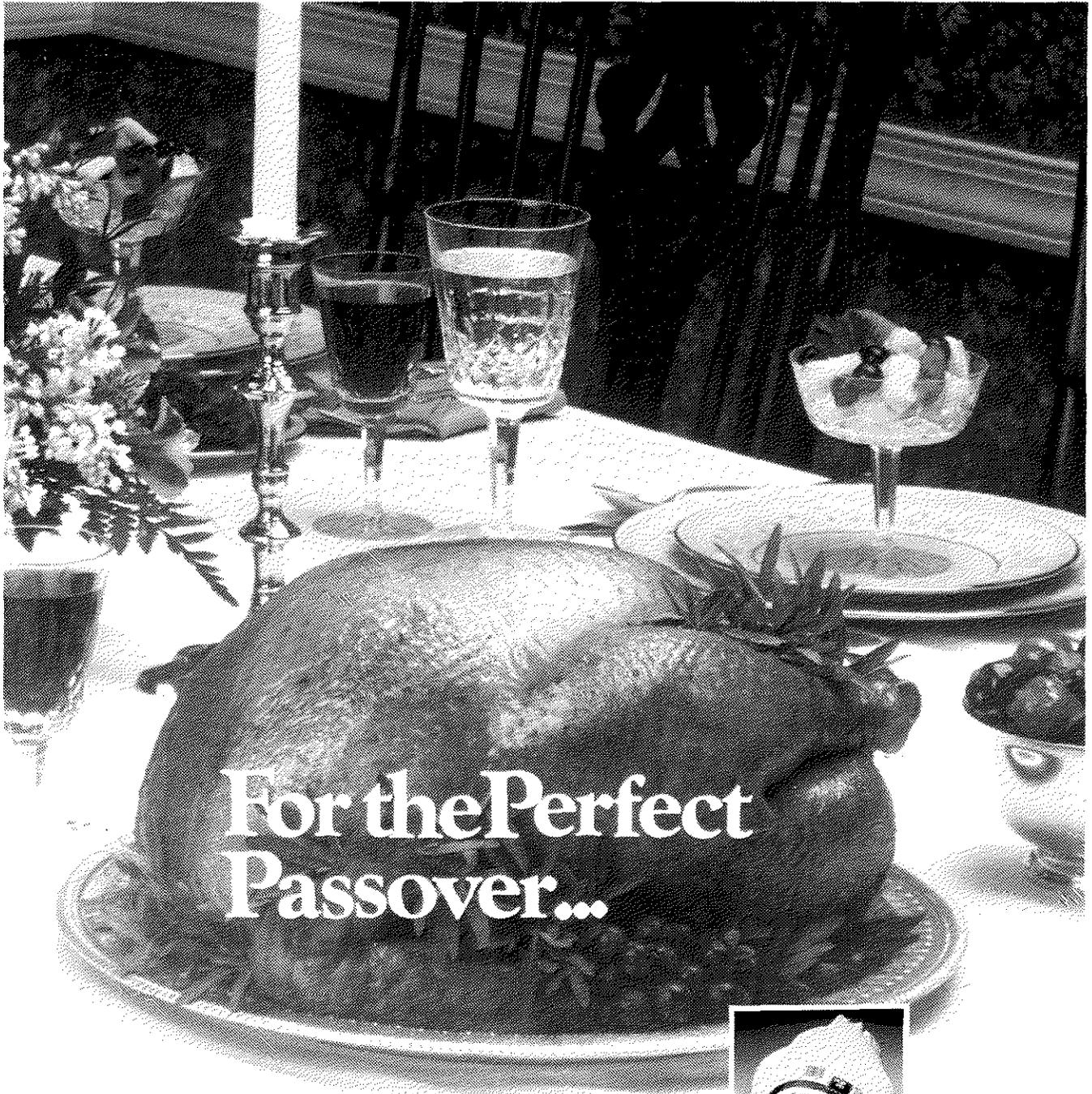
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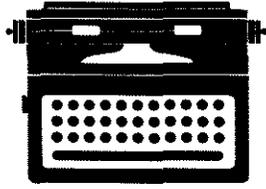
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Letters to the Editor

THE CHILDLESS NEED NOT BE POOR

To the Editor:

I just received *The Jewish Observer* with the letters regarding the "Childless Poor." My husband and I don't have children . . . and we have learned to accept this.

I have found that when people feel that they can't act naturally around you and have to be on their guard, they avoid you altogether. The result of this is further isolation for the infertile couple. To me it is preferable to have people act naturally around us and include us in their lives rather than be excluded. By the nature of Jewish family life, the infertile couple is excluded from many functions anyway; there are no car pools, P.T.A. meetings, etc. It therefore takes an extra effort on the part of others to include us in their lives and this is the area in which my hurt has been the greatest. Wouldn't it be nice to be included in a friend's daughter's graduation or to assist that friend when shopping for a dress for that daughter? When was the last time a family invited us along to an amusement park when they took their kids? . . . When I asked my sister to send a child or two for *Shabbos* and the answer was "no." I knew never to ask again. A father could have asked my husband to join him when he learns with his son, or maybe my husband could learn with one son while the father learns with the other. This is where we have felt the most pain—when people have not considered sharing their good fortune with us.

A *baalas teshuva* once asked me how many children I have and when I told her that I didn't have any, her

reply was: "Wow, you must really be special because *Hashem* made your situation different from everyone else." I try to keep this in mind, but it is difficult when you see others around you having *nachas* and making family *simchos*, things that you will never experience. Though we are "childless," we don't necessarily have to be "childless poor" if people could find it in their hearts to include us in their lives and share the riches that *Hashem* gave them.

NAME WITHHELD

A SEFER FOR THE "CHILDLESS POOR"

To the Editor:

I was very moved by the letters of compassion to the childless woman (Jan. 90). May I add that a *sefer*, *Rani Akara*, has just been published by Rabbi Yaakov Hillel, Rosh Hayeshiva Ahavat Sholom. It has the approbation of the *Eida Hacharedis*, Rav Pinchas Scheinberg and Rav Wosner, and can serve as a source of guidance, inspiration and comfort for others who consider themselves "Childless Poor."

NACHMAN BAUM
Ezras Torah/Jerusalem

IN SEARCH OF ROLE-MODELS FOR ENCOURAGEMENT AND FORBEARANCE

To the Editor:

Among the many caring letters in response to the "Lifestyles of the Childless Poor" article in your Dec. 89 issue, was one from a Brooklyn gentleman who cited the episode of Penina and Chana in *Tanach*.

It was truly magnanimous of him to accept his wife's stinging words

as reflecting the intentions that Penina had had, when she taunted Chana to inspire her to prayer. The Torah indicates that that is the proper way for a husband to react, as is shown by the incident where Rochel so unjustly berated Yaakov for her lack of children; yet Yaakov was chastised for his insensitive response and his poor understanding of a broken heart, as is related in *Midrash Rabba*.

Unfortunately, this gentleman's letter left the impression that Penina's method was correct. This view is completely erroneous, since *Rashi* in *Shmuel I*(2,5) reports the horrible punishment meted out to Penina, for causing Chana such anguish, even though it was well-meant, thus forcefully demonstrating that one must never hurt someone else's feelings no matter how well-intentioned one may be.

This approach was exemplified on numerous occasions by *Rabbi Umori Hagoan* Rabbi Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל as is shown by the following representative anecdotes. Although a *Rebbi* has the right to embarrass a negligent *talmid* when necessary to affect improvement (*Rambam, Talmud Torah* 4), Rabbi Feinstein never resorted to that. On the contrary, he bent over backwards, so that even when a *talmid* asked a foolish question or gave a



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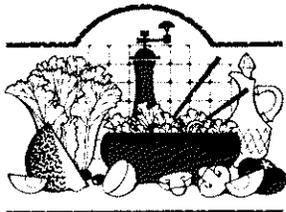
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less-than-intelligent answer, rather than belittle him or what he said, Rabbi Feinstein quite frequently would somewhat alter the *talmid's* remarks and thereby make them worthwhile, consequently encouraging him and building his self-esteem while indirectly showing him that his logic needed improvement. Likewise, on an occasion when I, as a *Rebbe*, came late, he quietly said to me, "Nu, you came a little late today, you probably couldn't come any earlier," and immediately walked away, without even asking "Why"? so as not to cause me to divulge what could possibly have been an embarrassing reason, yet letting me know that my tardiness did not go unnoticed.

Rabbi Feinstein's stringency on this subject can well be understood in light of the *Gemora* in *Erachin* 16b, which states that since the time of the *Tanna* Rabbi Elazar Ben Azarya, no one could be found who could properly observe the *mitzva* of *Tochacha* (reproving someone), because of the great difficulty of doing so without embarrassing the subject.

RABBI NOSSON LOMNER
New York City

CREDIT FOR DEVOTION TO THE LATE BLUZHEVER REBBE

To the Editor:

The January issue of *The Jewish Observer* contains a most moving article honoring the memory of the late Bluzhever Rebbe זצ"ל. On page 17, mention is made of my name regarding "self-sacrificing efforts" on his behalf. I am not sure what compelled the author of the article to ignore the many other physicians and nurses that stood ready to minister to the needs of this great *tzaddik* day and night, with no less devotion and *zerizus* than attributed to me in the article. In addition, I was hardly at the helm of his medical team, nor the only one following instructions.

If only one name had to be mentioned, the author should have looked among the *Rebbe's* grand-

children. Their complete devotion and *mesiras nefesh* to the Bluzhever *Rebbe's* welfare virtually 24 hours a day, at the expense of health and even risk to *Shalom Bayis*, was a source of inspiration to all of us who cared for this great *tzaddik*.

(DR.) DAVID LEVY
Brooklyn, N.Y.

VE'EILEH SHEIMOS BNEI YISROEL

To the Editor:

During the course of the year, but mostly around the *Yomim Tovim*, most of us receive gifts from organizations soliciting contributions. We get calendars, *Siddurim*, *Birchas Hamazons*, *Machzorim*, *Seforim* on all topics, *Kr'ias Sh'ma al Hamitah* charts—you get the idea. In many cases, donors cover the costs, but often the money invested would be better spent as a direct solicitation. Most of my acquaintances inform me that though they would not let a plea for funds go unanswered, these mailings never get more than a token contribution.

The gifts are discarded. How many *Birchas Hamazon* booklets does one need? We already have more keepsakes than we know what to do with! (By the way, do waiters and bus boys at *tzeddaka* dinners know how to treat all those Hebrew texts left over?)

Aside from the waste of money, another problem needs to be addressed. We are virtually being buried in *sheimos!* In fact, we are producing instant *sheimos*, in addition to what comes in the mail. Most yeshivos send home a weekly newsletter. Part of the letter must be "discarded in a dignified manner." The same is true for many *shul* newsletters. Worse are some of the abuses of the photo-copy machine. *Sedros* are photocopied, so that the person studying the *laining* need not lug around a *Tikkun*. I've attended many *shiurim* where the *maggid shiur* has photocopied the *mareh m'komos* (reference texts). During the *shiur*, he reads them to us, translates them, and explains

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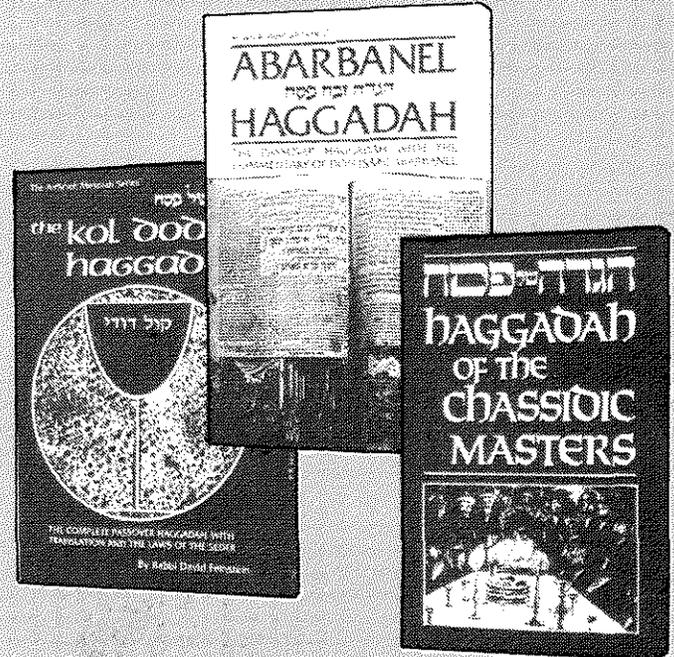
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them. What happens to them after the *shiu*?

Our *shul* has a room for the storage of *sheimos* waiting for burial. (I remember when it was a box to which was contributed an occasional *sefer* that, due to age, had become worn beyond repair.) *Sheimos* are interred with each *kvuras hamets*, but the piles keep growing. Our *shul* once bought an entire gravesite exclusively for *sheimos*, but we seem to have *Eliyahu HaNavi's pach hashemen* of *sheimos*.

MARVIN OPPENHEIMER
Teaneck, N.J.

REACH OUT AND . . . DEFEND CARDIAC JEWS

To the Editor:

When commenting on the state of Jewish connection among American Jews, *frum* publications often use the phrases "twice-a-year Jews," "pocket-book Jews," and "cardiac Jews." The descriptions may be accurate, but the derogatory implications are inappropriate.

At the time when members of the Jewish community knew about Jewish laws and observances, and deliberately limited expressing their Jewishness by going to *shul* only on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur (twice-a-year), supporting Jewish causes (pocket-book Jews), or claiming to "feel" Jewish in their hearts (cardiac Jews), the negative implications were deserved.

Today we face an entirely different situation. Most Jews are totally ignorant of basic Jewish principles. The knowledge they do have, which they assume to be authentic, was more than likely provided by a botched "Sunday School-pre-Bar Mitzva" education, descriptions of Judaism contained in trashy novels, Christian mis-interpretations of Judaism as purveyed in the mass media, imagination based on the few facts they may have acquired, and Biblical movie spectaculars.

This unsavory collection of misinformation presents Judaism as primitive, irrational and as virtually useless (if it weren't for the Jewish delicatessen).

For a Jew to brave this storm of abusive anti-Jewishness and to raise his head high with a pledge of \$500, is nothing short of miraculous. For him to even show up in a synagogue, which is identified with Judaism, shows a deep desire to be part of the Jewish people. For him to admit any feelings of Jewishness with pride, shows his firm roots in *Am Yisroel*.

The *Mashgiach* of Slobodka, Rabbi Isaac Sher, "saw that while American Jews often exhibited little outward *mitzva* observance, they were, in the deepest recesses of their *neshamos*, deeply committed to *tzeddaka* and *chessed*. They simply need to learn how to transform these feelings into open *mitzva* observance" (*A Fire In His Soul* by Amos Bunim).

For us, it is easy to be Jewish. We know that G-d gave the Torah at Mt. Sinai. We know that Judaism is not only rational, but defines rationality. We cannot help but to be proud of our Jewishness as G-d's chosen people—and as the fulfillers of the purpose of creation.

A Jew who, lost among the treacherous mountain crags and precipices of total assimilation, hangs on with his fingernails, deserves our respect, if not our awe.

We must extend our hand and pull our Jewish brothers to the safety of living Judaism. Some of them may have been brainwashed into believing that we hate them. All that we need to do is to show them a little warmth and friendship so that they will allow us to help them. They cannot help themselves and if we do not help them. . . .

ADAM WINSTON
Jerusalem

(The writer is author of *Pleasures—A Jewish Approach To Life*, and *G-d—Tools To Experience the Ultimate*, both distributed by *Feldheim*.)

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We would like to ask anyone who has information about his activities, pictures, stories, or letters about his life, to contact the following people:

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SEEKS INFORMATION RE: MANTELLO

To the Editor:

I am completing a book on the rescue activities of George Mantello, First Secretary of El Salvador in Switzerland during World War II (he was recently honored by Agudath Israel and many other Jewish organizations—he was particularly close and helpful to Agudah leaders in Switzerland and England). In order

to obtain some crucial interviews of Jews saved by means of Salvador Citizenship Papers which he dispensed gratis by the thousands. I would appreciate hearing from anyone who was rescued via such papers during World War II.

(DR.) DAVID KRANZLER
Brooklyn, New York
718-375-6010

(The writer is author Thy Brother's Blood: The Orthodox Jewish Response During the Holocaust, and Japanese Nazis and Jews).



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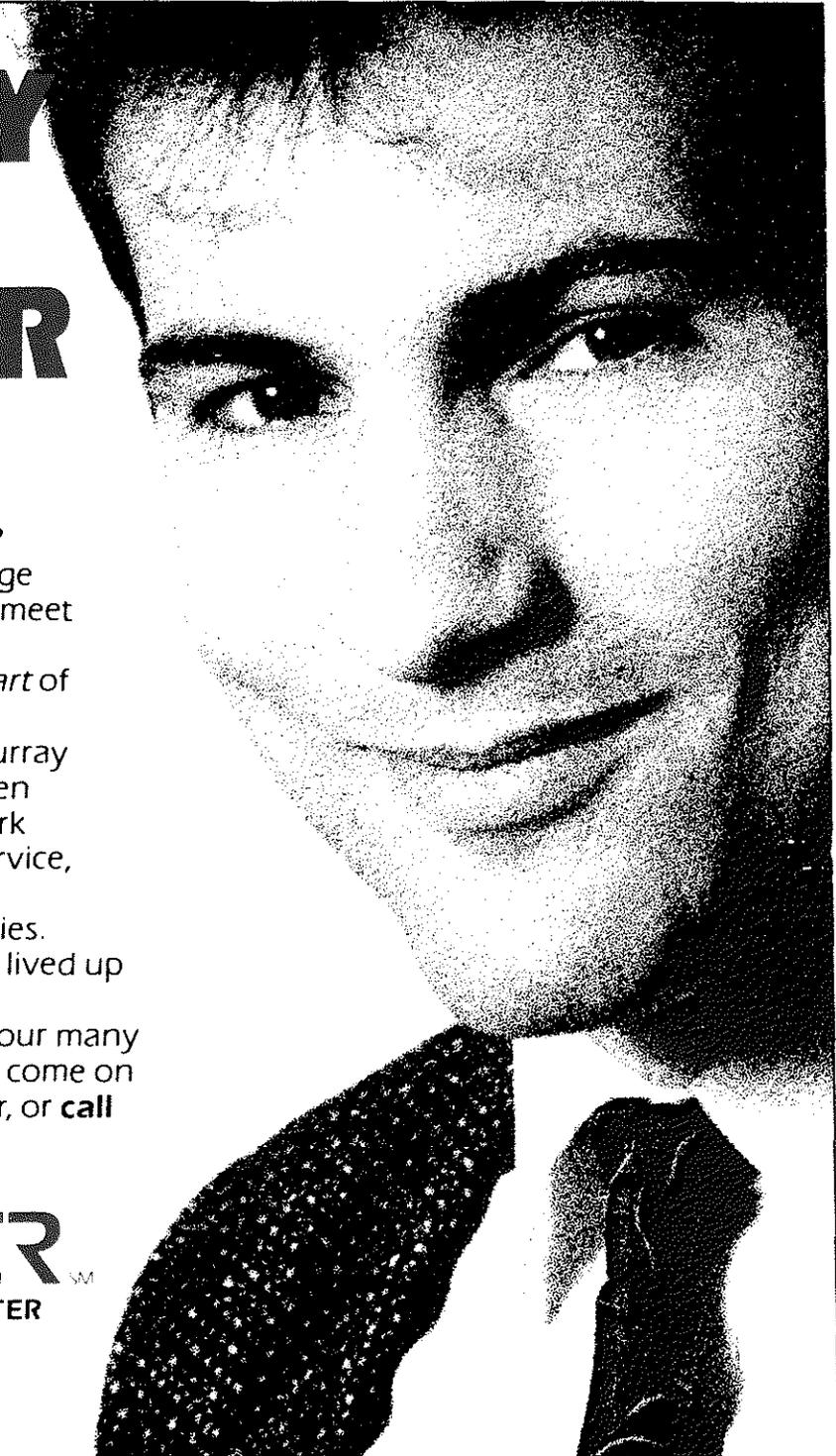
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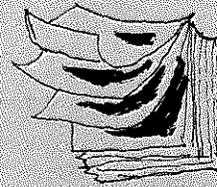
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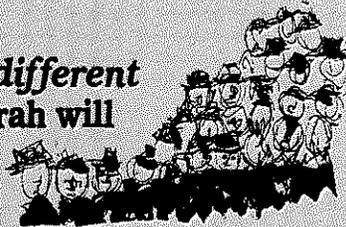
When asked why he was celebrating—after all, he had hardly studied much Torah—he replied, “You are my brother. You *have* studied. For you it’s a *simcha*. Can it be that my brother should celebrate and I should not celebrate, too?”



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