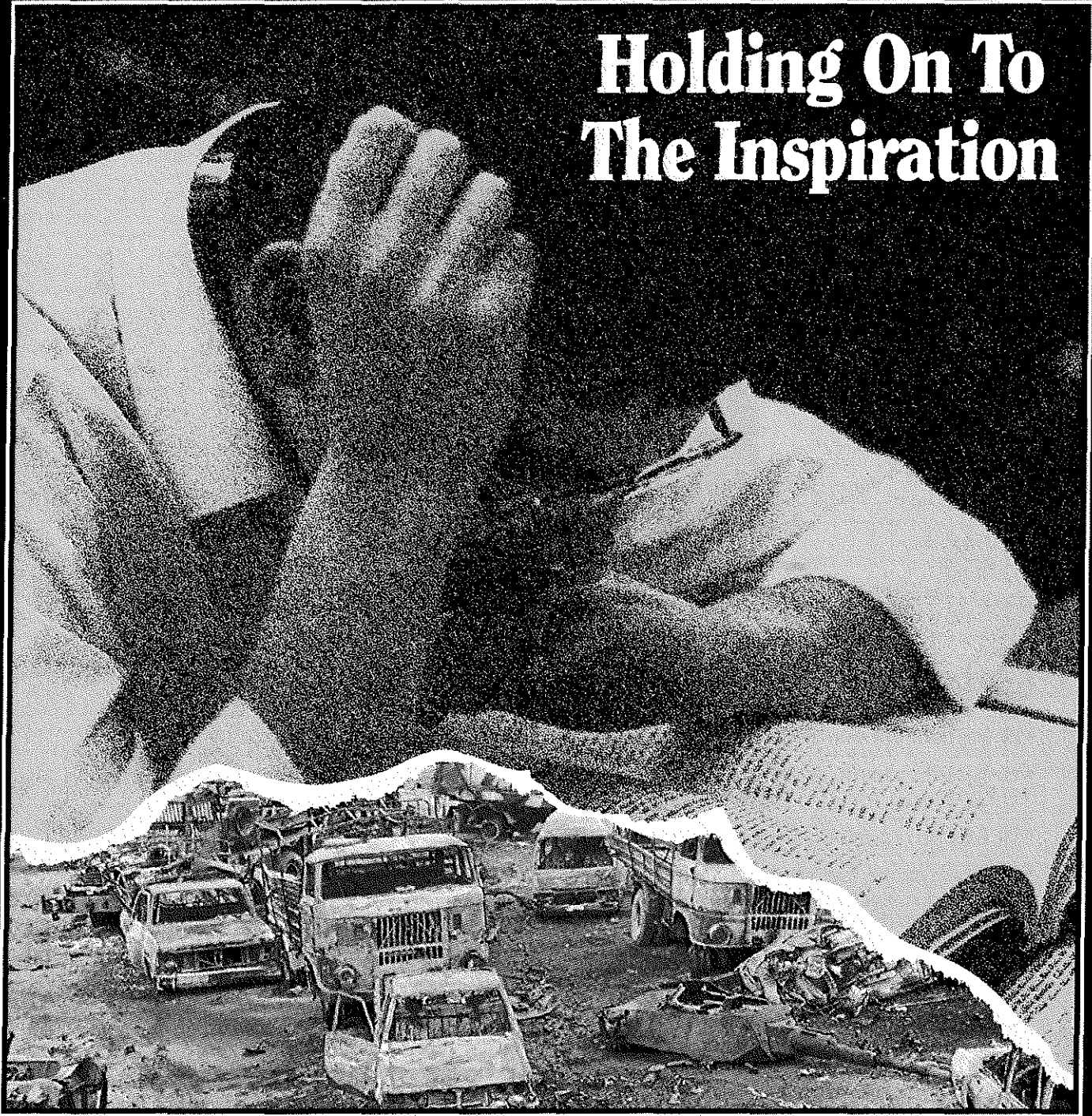


THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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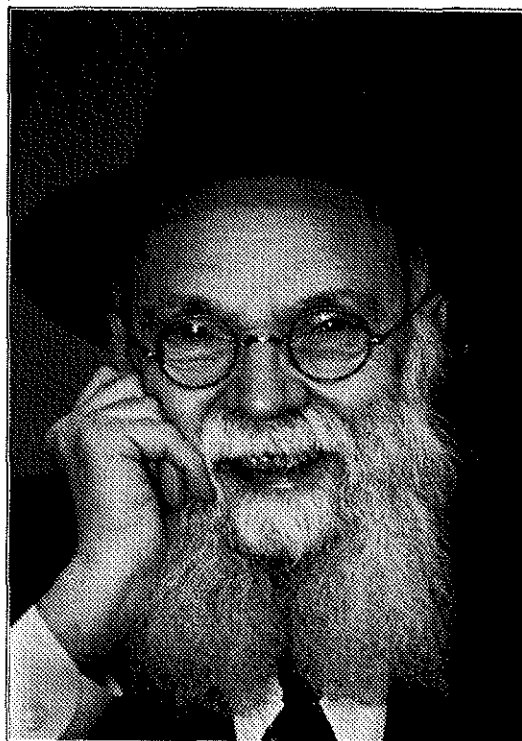
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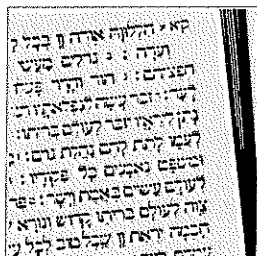
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דולי התורה בארה"ב

A CALL FROM THE MOETZES C

A CALL OF THANKSGIVING TO HASHEM

(a free translation)

Let us thank G-d for the wondrous deliverance and awesome miracles he has wrought for us through the defeat of our wicked enemy and the thwarting of his designs to destroy the nation of G-d that dwells in Zion.

The miracle of our deliverance in this instance was evident to all the world. All the more significant, it became manifest on Purim, a day marked for the downfall of our enemies — a clear sign of the hand of G-d coming to our aid at a time of darkness and distress.

Now, as Pesach — the festival of our redemption — arrives, let us reflect upon the connection between one deliverance and another, as indeed we do each year as we recite the words of the Haggadah: "In every generation, enemies rise up to destroy us, but the Holy One, Blessed Be He, saves us from their hands."

This is the obligation incumbent upon us at this hour: to express special, heartfelt prayers of thanksgiving to He who watches over Israel.

Upon further thought, however, we must recognize that with thanksgiving alone we have not fulfilled our duty. It is our obligation to ponder deeply and take instruction from all that has happened.

We have all been witness with our own eyes to overt Divine intervention on our behalf, without any military effort expended by the people of Israel. Moreover, in spite of harrowing Scud attacks that wreaked frightful destruction upon buildings and homes, our brothers and sisters miraculously escaped with almost no casualties.

It is essential, then, that we take to heart the lesson of this experience by deepening and reinforcing our own simple faith and trust in G-d at all times. "It is only He who gives us strength to do valor." We must root out from within ourselves every measure of reliance on any other force in this world other than HaShem for our good fortune, both in our personal lives and in our life as a people, as it is written: "Blessed is the man who trusts in HaShem; and HaShem will be his succor."

And our Chazal have taught us that only through a person's spiritual merits does he earn G-d's favor for blessing and success in all his endeavors.

If we indeed want to express our thanks to HaShem, it is our responsibility to continue in the ways that bring man close to Him, the ways of Torah, Avodah, and Gemillus Chassodim. We dare not grow lax nor slip back from the levels of effort in these areas that we undertook during the time of crisis. We must rather build upon them even further, increasing our Torah learning, improving in our Tefillah and our praise of G-d, extending our generosity in Tzedakah and Chesed, refining our character, and strengthening bonds of closeness between man and his fellow man — and particularly our bond with our fellow Jews who have arrived from the Soviet Union.

It is worthy of note that the Meshech Chochma (Parshas Bo) writes that the entire existence of the Jews in the lands of exile depends upon their observance of the precepts and parameters of conduct that distinguish the Jewish people from other nations, that ennoble every aspect of their lives with sanctity. In our time, it is particularly these values that call for strengthening.

We pray that through the merit of our renewed efforts in drawing close to our Father in Heaven, His compassion and kindness will never be removed from us. This Pesach, may we see the ranks of all Israel joined in devotion to HaShem and His Torah, leading ultimately to the ingathering of all our exiles to Zion with joy.

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בס"ד

קול קורא הודו לה' כי טוב

נודה לשם חסדו ונפלאותיו לבני אדם על התשועה הגדולה והנסים הכבירים אשר עשה עמנו ועם בית ישראל בארץ ישראל. בקום מושל רשע ועריץ אשר אמר להשמיד את עם ה' השוכן בציון, וה' איש מלחמה הפר את עצתו ושיבר את כוחו, וישועת אלקינו הופיעה לעיני כל אפסי ארץ בדרך נס ופלא שאי אפשר לשער.

ומה גם שאירעה הישועה ועברה הסכנה ביום הפורים, יום מפלתן של שונאי ישראל, אצבע אלקים היא המראה בעליל על יד השם המאירה מתוך חשכה והאל-המושיע לעמו ישראל בעת צרה.

ועכשו בימי הפסח הבעל"ט נתעורר נא כולנו להסמיך גאולה לגאולה, וכדרך שכוללים בסיפור נפלאותיו ית' שגם בכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותנו והקב"ה מצילנו מידם, עלינו עתה לתת שבח והודי מיוחדת להקב"ה שומר עמו ישראל בעומקא וברעותא דליבא, לשבח ולהודות לאבינו שבשמים על כל החסד והרחמים אשר גמלנו. זוהי החובה השומה עלינו כעת.

אמנם בהתבונן עוד מעט נדע נאמנה כי בזה לא נצא עדיין ידי חובתנו, כי עלינו גם לקחת לקח ולהסיק מסקנות מכל המאורע הגדול ומפלאות ההשגחה שהתגלו לעינינו. הרי ראינו כולנו בעיני בשר כי מאת ה' היתה זאת מבלי תכסיסי נשק וכלי מלחמה מצדם של ישראל, וביותר גבר עלינו חסדו שכל הטיילים המשחיתים שנזרקו מידי אויב לאה"ק כמעט שלא פגעו בגופם של אחינו היקרים, ונשפך חמתם על עצים ואבנים, הודו לו ברכו שמו.

אם כן איפוא חזקו והתחזקו עם ה' באמונה תמימה, ובטחו בו יתברך בכל עת כי רק הוא הנותן כח לעשות חיל. ועלינו לשרש מקרבנו כל צל ודופי של משען או מבטח בכח אחר ועוצם יד זולתי השי"ת לבדו. ורק בו יהא מבטחנו בכל שטחי החיים בכלל ובפרט, ככתוב ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח בה' והיה ה' מבטחו. וכבר הורונו חז"ל כי רק בזכויותיו של האדם ימצא חן בעיני ד' להנחילו ברכה והצלחה בכל מעשי ידיו.

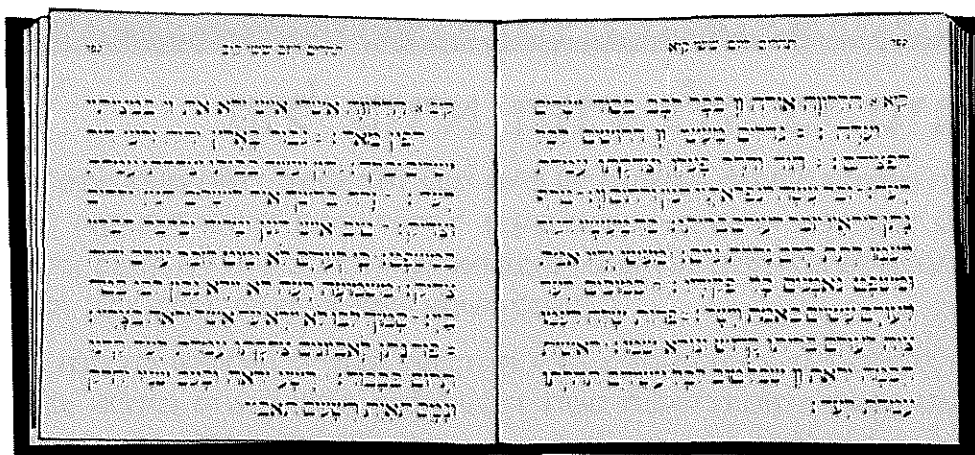
ואם באנו להחזיק טובה לאבינו שבשמים על רחמיו וחסדיו, נתבעים אנו ומחוייבים אנו להמשיך באותם הדרכים המקרבים את האדם לבוראו, ולקבוע שעבוד הגוף והנפש לתורה ולעבודה ולגמילות חסדים; שלא להתרפות חלילה מכל הפעולות והמאמצים שעסקנו בהם בשעת הסכנה, אלא אדרבה להוסיף חיל בתלמוד תורה ובעבודה שבלב זו תפלה ובמזמורי שיר ושבח לבעל הרחמים, להרבות בצדקה וחסד ולדקדק במדות טובות ובקירוב לבבות איש אל רעהו וביחוד לאחב"י יוצאי רוסיא בארץ ובגולה.

וראוי להתעורר לדברי בעל "משך חכמה" בפרשת בא (י"ב, כ"ב) שכל קיומם של ישראל בארצות גלותם תלוי בשמירת הגדרים והסייגים וההנהגות הגודרים את ישראל מן האומות ומטביע עליהם צביון הקדושה בכל מערכות החיים. ודבר זה צריך חיזוק גדול בימינו לעם הקרוי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש.

ובהתקרב לבבנו אל אבינו שבשמים, יעלה זכרוננו לפניו לטובה שלא ימוש רחמיו וחסדיו מעמו ונחלתו, ותתקיים לעינינו שירת כל ישראל בליל התקדש חג, זך שוכן מעונה, קומם קהל עדת מי מנה, בקרוב נהל נטעי כנה, פדויים לציון ברנה.

— מועצת גדולי התורה בארה"ב

י"ב ניסן תנש"א



A Time For Gratitude

Based on one of the many addresses by
Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Alter שליט"א,
Rosh Hayeshiva of Yeshiva Sfas Emes in Jerusalem,
 to his *talmidim* during the recent Gulf War.

Every event in the world has a lesson for us. We must constantly ask ourselves what our response to a specific occurrence should be, especially in such a momentous time.

First and foremost, we are obliged to thank *Hashem Yisborach* for all the goodness He has bestowed upon us until now. The miracles that have occurred recently are so obvious that even people far removed from religion must echo the words of *Hallel*: "This emanated from *Hashem*, it is wondrous in our eyes."

The designs of destruction that the Iraqi dictator had against the Jewish people echo those of his predecessors. In regard to Nevuchadnetzar,

King of Bavel (Biblical Iraq), Yechezkel the Prophet says, "And he shall set his battering engines against your walls, and with his axes he shall break down your towers" (26,9), to which *Rashi* comments: "One of the besieger's tactics is to cast large stones...." A thousand years earlier, Og King of Bashan dug out a mountain to hurl it upon *Am Yisroel* (*Berachos* 54b; see the *Maharsho* there). And now G-d protected us again and wherever the missiles impacted, minimal damage occurred. At worst, we suffered in line with: "And He pours out His wrath on wood and stone," sparing precious lives. How deep, then, should our gratitude to our Divine Protector be!

STONES OF DESTRUCTION, STONES OF INSPIRATION

The *Gemora* in *Berachos* (*ibid cit*) calls for praising G-d "upon seeing the stones that Og King of Bashan wished to cast upon *Yisroel*, [as well as when seeing] the stone upon which Moshe sat when Yehoshua defeated Amaleik in battle." The *Gemora* states that the second stone is the one upon which Moshe sat when his hands, which were raised to inspire *Klal Yisroel's* thoughts heavenward, grew heavy. As the *Maharsho* explains, the miracle and the victory flowed not from Yehoshua's military skills, but from the prayers of *Moshe Rabbeinu*.

This was reflected in the fact that Moshe's hands were steady, with the help of the stone upon which he sat, as the *Mishna* writes: "Whenever Yisroel looked upward [as directed by Moshe's hands] and subjected their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they prevailed; but if not, they fell" (*Rosh Hashana* 29a).

We thus can understand the connection between the stones hurled by Og and the stone that supported Moshe Rabbeinu: The stones of Og put fear into the hearts of *Bnei Yisroel*, and if used correctly, as a source of gratitude for being spared, these stones can serve to subject our hearts to Heaven—as did the stone of Moshe Rabbeinu.

Today, too, our previous fear of Saddam Hussein's missiles can now inspire us to special gratitude toward G-d.

MORE THAN THANKSGIVING

But thanksgiving alone is not sufficient; another important task is placed upon us at a time such as this. The *Gemora* says that a person should pray that a miracle not be preformed on his behalf, for if one does take place, it is deducted from his merits. There is a Chassidic explanation to this *Gemora* that differs from the conventional one: One who is privileged to have a *ness* (miracle) done on his behalf is elevated from his previous status—*ness*/miracle may be understood in terms of *ness*/flag, implying elevation. Because of his new, heightened spiritual perspective, his obligations to Heaven are much greater than before, and he must increase his *mitzvos* and the quality of his good deeds in keeping with his new status. One who is not exalted by the miracle he experiences, will have the benefit of the miracle deducted from his merits for not responding to his newly gained status of elevation. This is intimated in *Tehillim*, when it states: "He guards the soul of His devout ones, from the hand of the wicked He rescues them," followed by, "Light is sown for the righteous, and for the upright of heart, gladness" (97:10,11). The grouping together of rescue with righteousness

and gladness implies that after being saved from the designs of the wicked, one must arouse one's heart to righteousness through the joy of the Torah.

The *Sforno* comments on the *pasuk*: "And they beheld G-d and ate and drank" (*Shemos* 24,11): "When one attains spiritual heights, one should make a *seuda*." The *Ramban* there explains that this is the source for making a *seuda* upon the completion of writing a *Sefer Torah*, or studying a volume of Torah—to give lasting emphasis to the event. This is also the idea of a convening *seudas hoda'ah* after being saved from threat of death. When one attains higher spiritual levels through such a *ness*, the *baal haness* feels inspired to increase his efforts in

We, too, can fulfill our obligation to respond to the miracles that graced us by increasing our efforts in Torah and *Yiras Shomayim*, and by striving for humility through *teshuva*.

Torah and *Yiras Shomayim*, and the *seuda* adds emphasis and joy to the occasion. We must bear in mind that *Rashi* tells us that the first battle with Amaleik came after the Jews became lax in Torah. My father, the *Admur of Ger* זצ"ל (the *Imrei Emes*), asked—The battle took place before *Mattan Torah*; how could "laxity in Torah" have been possible? He answered that it refers to their desire to possess the Torah; in this they became lax. It follows, then, that the victory over Amaleik was dependent on the subjugation of their hearts to their Father in Heaven and a growth in

their desire to serve G-d, compensating for the previous default.

We, too, can fulfill our obligation to respond to the miracles that graced us by increasing our efforts in Torah and *Yiras Shomayim*, and by striving for humility through *teshuva*.

ANOTHER MESSAGE OF RECENT EVENTS

Recent days have clearly demonstrated that the Hand of G-d is guiding the Jewish nation to conduct itself in a fitting manner. Public transportation was forced to stop on *Shabbos*; places of entertainment, which have provoked the *charedi* community, were closed, to the chagrin of those who have no regard for Torah values.

We, too, must respond by accepting upon ourselves the yoke of *Malchus Shomayim* and strengthening ourselves in *Yiras Shomayim* with improved *midos* (character).

Now is an opportune time—when hearts are turned upward and people are prepared to listen—for us to rid ourselves of all *sinas chinom* (baseless hatred), *machlokes* (disputes), and other evil *midos*. Let us be stringent in regard to having "clean hands." *Chazal* have declared that "most people are found culpable for financial dishonesty." The lack of "clean hands" on our part leads to "heaviness" in the hands of Moshe—as is explained in *Chassidic* sources. Moshe Rabbeinu's "eyes were not dim, nor were his natural forces abated" when he was 120 years of age. It is most unlikely that he would have suffered from "heavy hands" some forty years earlier, during the war with Amaleik, if not for some fault in "the hands of the Jewish nation." Only this could cause this heaviness, this weakening of Moshe's ability to inspire the people. Only when the Jews achieved "cleanliness of hands" did Moshe's hands become "steady until the sun went down."

The *charedim ledvar Hashem*—those who truly fear G-d—must strengthen themselves to do His will with joy—and increase their time and effort in Torah and the service of Hashem Yisborach. ■

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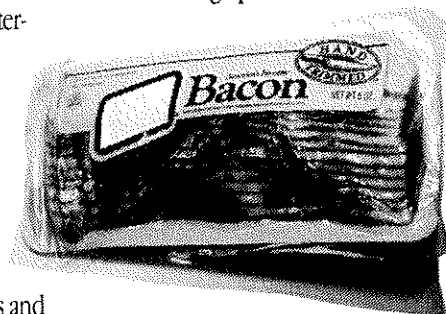
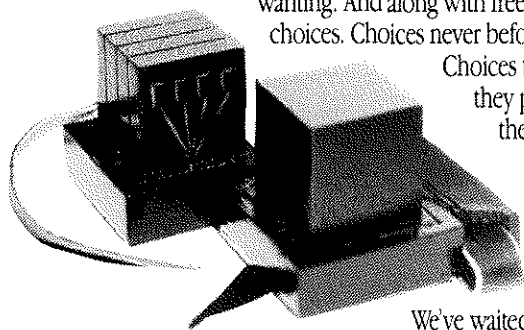
Choices to go where they please, to live as they want, even to think as they choose. And one of these choices is to be a Torah Jew.

We've waited 75 years to see this miracle. But But let's not kid ourselves. Even in Israel the allures of a secular culture call and pull. Many of our Israeli cousins don't know the light of Torah. And for someone who doesn't know the difference between

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AWAKENING THE JEWISH SOUL

Purim



Under Cloudy Skies

When a friend called me with the news on Thursday morning around nine o'clock, I did not jump for joy. "Really?" I asked. "But we heard Kol Israel at seven and they didn't say anything like that."

"They announced it just now!" she exclaimed. "Nachman Shai got on and said we can take apart our sealed rooms!"

"You mean Saddam Hussein accepted all those terms for a cease-fire?"

"Yes! I feel like dancing and singing in the streets! We've already ripped all the plastic off our living room windows and the apartment

looks so large and light! I don't want to close the windows all day!"

We got off the phone and I went back to making breakfast, waiting for my own sense of personal liberation to arise along with Kuwait's. Yet this did not occur. I harbored within a murky sense of apprehension, incompleteness, dissatisfaction. Why, after such a tremendous victory by the allies, should there be this incomprehensible sense of anti-climax? I felt like a woman who's been in labor since August 2nd, and all pains suddenly disappear. The midwives inform me that I can get into my street clothes and go home.

"But...is there a baby?" I ask.

"A baby? No, no, you were asleep. You can get out of that hospital gown! Don't you understand you can really go home! Congratulations!"

It dawned on me now that whereas the state of the clouds and sun had been classified information for many weeks, the morning broadcast had indeed concluded with a weather report. In what constituted the first reliable proof of the war's end, Reuven Dovid Miller had actually dared to inform us that "skies will be overcast."

I looked out the window now at the fine grey rain coming down in a mist. A truck accelerated shrilly on Rehov Shmuel HaNavi and my heart tightened with a spurt of adrenaline. (Just my sirenitis acting up again; it does that every time the kettle whistles, too.) Standing there at the radio, trying to tune in to B.B.C., I fretted to myself. Do I feel we're left hanging precisely because Saddam himself is not left hanging? Or because even if Iraq seems to be temporarily

Sarah Shapiro, who lives in Jerusalem, is a frequent contributor to these pages. Her book, *Growing With My Children*, was published by Targum Press.

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taken care of, now we have Assaf to worry about, and a militarily strengthened Saudi Arabia, and Gaddafi and Abu Nidal and the intifada, and Lybia and Jordan and United States pressure....At this point, I hadn't even heard about the new state-of-the art Scuds on their way from Italy to Syria. Nor of the murder by Palestinians early that

harbored within a murky sense of apprehension, incompleteness, dissatisfaction. Why, after such a tremendous victory by the allies, should there be this incomprehensible sense of anti-climax?

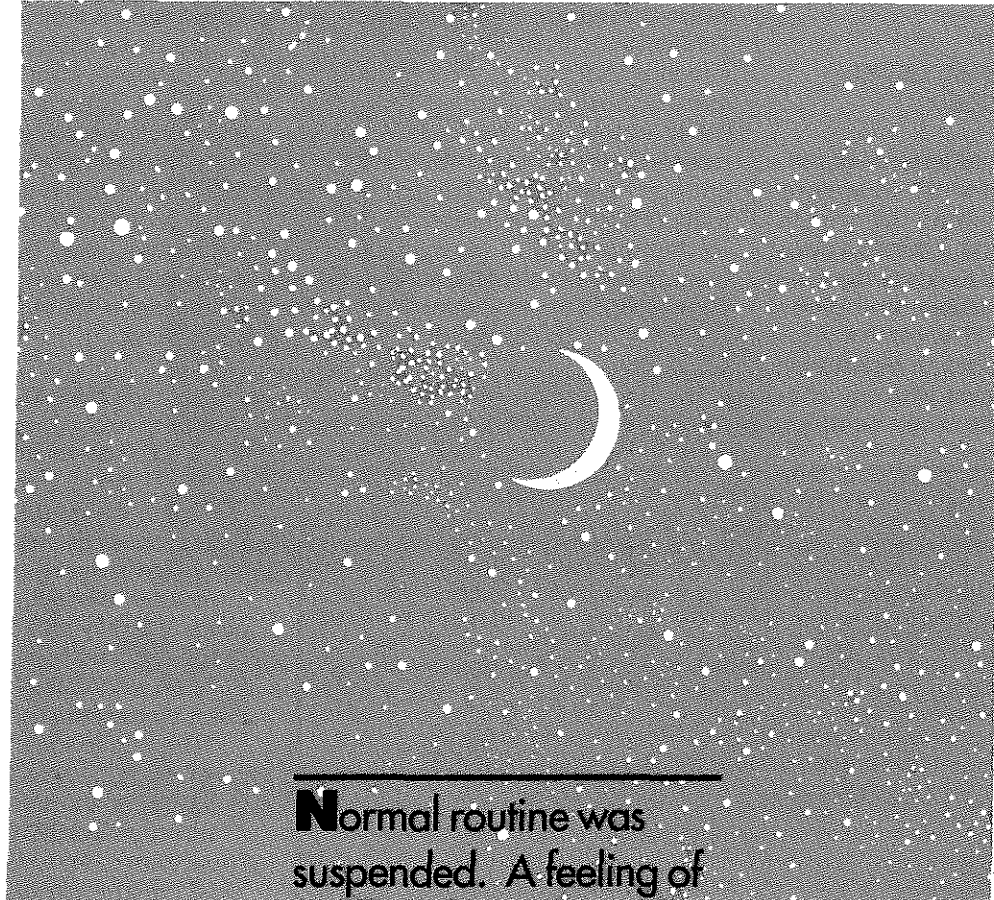
morning of yeshiva student Elhanan Atali in the Old City.

My twelve-year old daughter, busily preparing *mishloach manot*, looked up from the floor where she was surrounded by colored paper, baskets, ribbon, bomba bags and bars of halva. She must have seen my worried face because she asked me what was wrong. "I don't know," I replied. "Nothing, really, I guess. It's all right."

"But Mommy!" she beseeched brightly. "Be happy! It's Purim!" And it struck me that this indeed is what it's all about: to simply rejoice as we are commanded to. To be exuberantly grateful. If Haman's plans against us have once again been thwarted against all odds, can't I believe we'll be saved next time, too? Amidst all the dangerous uncertainties of life in the Middle East, we've been found worthy, evidently, of being miraculously spared.

Go ahead, rejoice freely, in spite of the overcast skies. ■

After the War



Normal routine was suspended. A feeling of anticipation thickened the air while unknown dangers lurked in the darkness beyond the starlit sky.

ALL UNIFIED

It's true that my bedroom was airless for six weeks; that its small size was further reduced by the *mamat* (baby's protective crib against chemical attack) upon two mattresses and the fan to keep it cool. The trunk of emergency supplies, the diaper-pail with ready-to-seal-the-bottom-of-the-door wet rags that doubled as a makeshift toilet, the box of masking tape and, of course, seven boxes of gas-masks all added to the chaos of eight people in one sealed room. Yes, my kids were suddenly "on vacation" for two weeks and,

Mrs. Parker lives in Kiryat Telshe Stone, near Jerusalem. This is her first appearance in these pages.

thereafter, took gas-masks to and from school each day. I'll admit that our sleep was interrupted by wailing sirens that merged with our dreams, and that I jumped at any sound resembling that siren. There is no question that I never felt more vulnerable or frightened than on that first memorable night of attack. Our lives had changed. Normal routine was suspended. A feeling of antici-

pation thickened the air while unknown dangers lurked in the darkness beyond the starlit sky.

And I miss it.

At two a.m. the whole nation was unified—every kind of Jew—in their sealed rooms awaiting verdict from heaven. (We even touched souls with the emergency-radio broadcasters who calmly and patiently led us through the procedures for possible chemical attack.) Our family was a microcosm of this unity, as I watched each member flow in a rhythm of cooperation, prayer and—yes—excitement. Cooperation and good-will abounded in our small community as neighbors accommodated one another to meet the physical and spiritual needs brought on by the war. We

shared a common bond of war experiences in an amazing time in history. We all related to that feeling of vulnerability that penetrated our daily lives and knew that *Hashem's* hand was hammering and shaping the course of history for the Jewish People.

ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, I SOARED

On a personal level, I soared. I *davened* with an urgent intensity, and the words took on new meaning. I gained a deep appreciation for the words of *Tehillim*, marveling at the artistic and pious mastery of *David Hamelech's* supplications and praises to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. I danced with my children to the words from *Tehillim*:

"*Aileh ba-rechev v'aileh basusim...* Those with chariots, and those with horses, and we invoke G-d's Name...." This was our theme song.

My children changed before my eyes as this one *davened* twice daily without prompting; that one recited *Tehillim* with great fervor; all of them knowing that though we must make our *hishtadlus*, ultimately everything is in G-d's hands. We witnessed *nissim* together and exchanged sources in *Tanach* seemingly related to the events at hand, to the approach of *Moshiach*. The mundane was relegated to the back seat while the spiritual took the wheel and carried us through the days.

Never did I feel *Hakadosh Baruch Hu's* presence as in those days.

Never did I feel such *chessed* bestowed upon *Klal Yisroel*—the opportunity *Hashem* served us on a sterling platter to bring us closer to Him. The story of Purim was no longer ancient history but alive and vibrant in our midst.

And then it ended.

Two days later I spoke with a friend about—what else?—the war.

"Do you have a recording of the emergency siren?" she asked.

Not knowing where this would lead, we ventured further, and then I said, tentatively, "I miss it."

"Me too," was her wistful reply, and then I knew I was not alone; that there were a lot of others out there just like me.

WHAT TO DO?

What to do? My spiritual level had already been dropping slowly since the first weeks of the war, and now I was once again freely involved in the mundane, as well as spiritual, aspects of family and community life. I despaired over losing my gain.

My husband felt I was missing the point by missing the war.

"The whole idea is that what we saw during the war we must also see every day of our lives," he suggested.

In other words, we must shift to "peacetime" and see the same *Yad Hashem* in every aspect of our lives now. The war was, for us, a boost from *Hashem*, the seeming chaos of the world kindly brought into focus for a few weeks.

"Yeah, but that's the difficult part," I replied.

I knew that what he said was true—that we must harness this spiritual intensity for all time. But the war made it so much easier. For who doesn't crave a parent's exclusive attention? *Hashem's* mighty Hand showed itself in the long stretch of *Galus* directly in my line of vision. I know I must continue to seek *Hashem*, in every facet of my life and thank Him for including me in His great *chessed*. And, *B'ezeras Hashem*, I will succeed.

But somehow I miss the spine-tingling tension that the war would inspire....

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Saying Goodbye to Raphael Yehuda....

While I cannot pretend to speak for all 750 people in attendance at the *levaya* (funeral) of Raphael Yehuda ben Shmuel Nachum, I would venture that my words reflect the sentiments of most of them.

I did not know the child, but I knew his name as "Raphael Yehuda ben Bracha Rachel." It was on my lips as part of the special prayer inserted in "*Rapha'einu*," to beg G-d to heal him "among the rest of Israel's ailing." At least three times a day. His name was on the "*Mi she berach*" list wherever I *davened*, and I heard it intoned after *Tehillim* in *yeshivos* across the country—even at the *Kosel Maaravi*, in Jerusalem. In fact, it appeared monthly in a small box in *The Jewish Observer*, asking

people to pray for his speedy recovery. But no more.

Actually, I did meet him once, on the pediatric oncology floor of NYU Hospital a bit over three years ago, but that was only fleetingly. True, the impression the little two-year-old made on me was a strong one: his coal black eyes, expressing curiosity and intelligence; his clearly spoken comments and questions; his shaven head, testifying to recent brain surgery, to remove the tumor that was crowding out his young, stubborn life. (When he opened his eyes after the twelve-hour operation, his first words were: "*Modeh ani lefanecha*...Thank you, G-d, for restoring my soul....")

But that brief encounter did not compel me to come to his funeral.

Nor—I believe—did similar random meetings bring the other mourners. We were unaware of other remarkable aspects of the ailing child's unique potential, evidence of which surfaced during the *hespeidim* (eulogies)—his love for *Shabbos*...his excitement over going to yeshiva when he could, running ahead of his father on that last block...his joy when his hair grew back after chemotherapy: "I have *payos*!" We did not *know* of these strains of remarkable sensitivity. We could only guess.

MORE THAN "GOODBYE" TO A CHILD

Yes, there was an element of saying "Goodbye" to this little child who was so full of

promise and hope. But there was certainly more. Whenever I met his father, Shmuel—usually once every few weeks at 84 William Street, where he comes to *daven Mincha* on occasion—he reported about the latest therapy being explored, the newest drug that was discovered, and a picture emerged: how Raphael Yehuda's parents ignored doctors' pessimistic prognoses ("He only has a few weeks...leave him alone.") and focused their investigative skills on every new development in the field of fighting cancer; how they aggressively, relentlessly pursued every lead, forged every possible connection, traveled the continent to exploit it; and doggedly launched every method of spiritual assistance to bring a *refuah sheleima* to "Raphael Yehuda ben Bracha Rachel"—the extra *Tehillim*, the additional *zechus* of studying Torah or saying *tefillas* and *berachos* with added *kavana* (concentration) in Raphael Yehuda's merit...prolonging his life by three extremely difficult but incredibly joy-

filled years.

Here was a young couple that fully appreciated the rewards of bringing a child into the world and nurturing it toward maturity, a couple that had some measure of understanding of

A part of us died that day, and we did not want it to leave us....And if we will it, perhaps it will not leave us, after all.

the awesome responsibility this entails—the implication of caring for a *pikadon*, a deposit left in their care; and the ability to accept with good faith the painful obligation of relinquishing the *pikadon* to the Depositor Who had entrusted it with them five years ago....So my presence at the funeral was a testimony to my

respect for parenthood as personified by Shmuel and Bracha Rachel.

There was one more reason, and—again—I suggest that this is not a sentiment peculiar to me, but one shared by others. Raphael Yehuda lived in my *tefilla* for three years. His name was on my lips, his luminescence glistened in my occasional tear, his pure "*Modeh Ani*" found resonance in my enhanced *kavana* when I surrendered to the dawning day, with his recovery in mind. In this, I venture, I was not alone.

The funeral, then, was a farewell to this important part of my life, and an appreciation of my sense of kinship with 750 others who had been similarly involved, and thousands of others who were not rubbing elbows with us there, blotting tears with me then, on that frigid March afternoon; but had been with us until then.

A part of us died that day, and we did not want it to leave us....And if we will it, perhaps it will not leave us, after all. ■

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Moscow Joins the Jewish World Again

HISTORICAL BACKDROP

For years...for generations... the Jews of Russia have been the focus of the prayers and discreet efforts of their brethren in the free world. Open, large scale activity did not reach Russia until a few months ago, as part of the spirit of Glasnost.

The only exception in this otherwise bleak landscape was a period of ten years or so, beginning with 1906, when Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski organized Knesses Yisroel (a forerunner of Agudath Israel) as a supra-

This historical account is based on an essay by Rabbi Elchonon Sorotzkin of Israel, which appeared in a book issued in honor of the 6th Knessia Gedolah (World Congress) of Agudath Israel in 1980.

national *Kehilla* of sorts, to serve as the voice of organized Torah Jewry. This was part of a general expansion and consolidation of religious Jewry's communal activities, in response to the threat of burgeoning secular movements and the growing development of world-wide communications. The Russian Jewish involvement, however, was shortlived. Ever suspicious of organizational strength, ever intolerant of Jewish vitality, the Czar soon outlawed Knesses Yisroel. The same concept reappeared as the Agudath Israel World Movement in a planning meeting in Bad Hamburg, Germany, and then in a founding conference in Katowicz, Poland, in 1912. A handful of Russian *Rabbonim* participated at Katowicz with the begrudging ap-

proval of the Czar's government.

With the widespread upheavals of World War I, major changes took place. The Jews of Poland and the Russian Western frontier feared the advance of the German armies, and fled eastward into Russia. At the same time, the Russians suspected the Jews of that region of German sympathies, and ordered further population shifts into the hinterland. As a result, tens of thousands of Jewish refugees swelled the cities of Byelorussia. Minsk, for example, became the temporary home of Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik (of Brisk) and Rabbi Avraham Duber Kahane-Shapira (Kovna Rav), as well as hundreds of yeshiva students. Reb Chaim Ozer found shelter, first in Gornel, and then in Yekaterinaslav



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(now, Dnepropetrovsk). Most major Lithuanian *yeshivos* relocated in the Ukraine: Slobodka in Kremenchug, Mir in Poltova, and the Chofetz Chaim and his Yeshiva in Smilovitz.

During the war, two severe crises developed, and through organized efforts, both were resolved. First, these tens of thousands of refugees were without money, food or shelter. Wealthy Jewish merchants (as well as some professionals), primarily in Moscow and St. Petersburg, orga-

During the war, two severe crises developed, and through organized efforts, both were resolved.

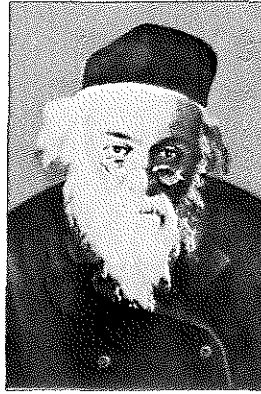
nized Vaad Ezra laPleitim (Refugee Relief Committee) and raised millions of rubles on their behalf.

Soon afterwards, the Russian government abolished all exemptions to the military draft for anyone under 45, subjecting yeshiva students, *kollel* fellows, and many *Rabbonim* and *Roshei Yeshiva* to having their studies and other sacred activities interrupted. Intervention at the highest levels in St. Petersburg only succeeded in freeing the "*Rabbonim mitaam*" (those that were officially recognized by the government for their secular knowledge, but lacked genuine requirements for *rabbonus*). The Torah leaders feared for the spiritual future of Russian Jewry, and decided to approach the Czar's defense minister on their own. They summoned Rabbi Zalmen Sorotzkin (later, the Lutzker *Rav*)—a relatively young man at the time—to serve as their spokesman. He held a position in Zhetel, a small town, which would not impress the minister. He had been offered the rabbinate of Irkutsk, the capital of Siberia, a city of over a million inhabitants. The *Rabbonim* insisted that he formally accept the position, to enable him to speak from the vantage point of leading a pres-

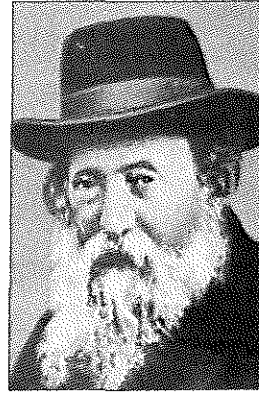
They campaigned for a united Orthodoxy in Russia:



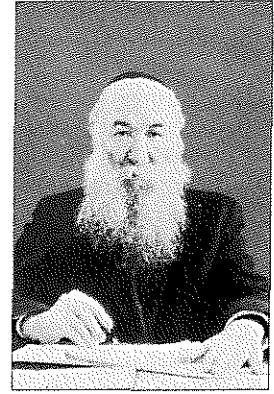
The
Chofetz Chaim



Rabbi Chaim
Soloveitchik of Brisk



Rabbi Chaim Ozer
Grodzenski



Rabbi Zalmen Sorotzkin
(Lutzker Rav).

tigious city—more impressive in the Russians' eyes than even Vilna or Kovna. Reb Zalmen succeeded in convincing the minister that it was vital for the moral strength of the Czar's Jewish subjects that their spiritual leaders continue to serve them, without interruption. The exemptions were restored, to be submitted at the discretion of the communities that required rabbinical leadership. In other words, all concerned were spared service in the Czar's army.

ELECTIONS UNDER KERENSKI

A subsequent need for organizational efforts on the part of the Torah community took place immediately after the February Revolution (of 1917) which overthrew the House of Romanov, which had ruled over Russia for more than three bitter centuries. The new government, under Social Democrat Alexander Kerenski, granted autonomy to all ethnic and religious communities. A Pan-Russian Jew-

ish Federation was planned, which would include elected delegates from each region, representing various groups—Zionist, Labor, and Bundist as well as religious. The rabbinical leadership realized that no splintered subgroups could ever garner sufficient votes to elect any delegates to the conference. The only possibility for protecting religious interests was by uniting under one banner.

Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, who had been a key figure in organizing Knesses Yisroel and then

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Agudath Israel, issued a call: "We no longer are limited by legal barriers. In light of our newly won freedom...all groups will coalesce in accordance with their respective ideologies; thus all 'Shlomei Emunei Yisroel, those who are totally committed to the Jewish faith'—that is, the majority of our nation—must unite to protect our religious heritage, our Divine Torah, our very soul....In accordance with our spiritual legacy from earlier generations, we must endeavor to spread Torah and *Yiras Shomayim* among the broad masses, and resolve all problems in our day-to-day lives in the spirit of the Torah."

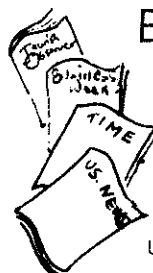
In Menachem Av 5677 (August, 1917), a national conference to fur-

Many of the people reached by the *shlichim* of the Vaad are currently leaders of outreach efforts and educational programs in Israel, America, and—yes—now, in the Soviet Union.

ther this undertaking was held in Moscow, with the participation of the outstanding *gedolim* of the time that were in Russia: Reb Chaim Ozer, the Kovna Rav, the Slutzker Rav (Reb Issur Zalmen Meltzer), and the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Shalom Duber Schneerson), among others. They elected a steering committee that included Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, the Rogotchover Gaon, the Chofetz Chaim, the Kishinever Rav (Rav Y.L. Zirelson), the Moscow Rav, and the Skvere Rebbe, among others.

A branch of Agudath Israel was organized in Minsk, and in a short period of time, over 10,000 members were registered. It purchased a six-story building in Moscow, which

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housed its national headquarters as well as a religious girls' school. From this building, an *Achdus*/Religious Unity ticket was organized for the Jewish Federation elections. In Minsk alone, eleven of the seventeen Jewish delegates were on the *Chareidi-Achdus* ticket—and virtually all were members of Agudath Israel. It had been decided to have the *Rabbonim* run for delegate slots, because of their widespread recognition—and indeed, those elected included Reb Chaim Brisker, the Chofetz Chaim, Reb Zalmen Sorotzkin and the Kovna *Rav*. Later they were to assign their seats to suitable deputies to the Federation Convention. But the Pan-Russian Jewish Federation never convened. In October, 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution overturned the Social-Democratic experiment, and Kerenski was replaced by Lenin and Trotzky. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat ruled instead, outlawing all religious expression.

The lessons learned in this brief and exciting episode were applied to the post-World War scene when the same rabbinical leaders took the helm during the crucial founding years of Agudath Israel in the rest of Europe, and subsequently in other parts of the globe. And now, after a period of 74 years, organized Jewish life is returning to Russia on a national scale.

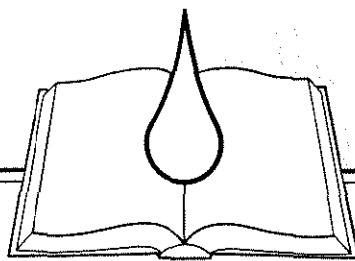
THE MOSCOW BRANCH

This past March, a branch of Agudath Israel opened in Moscow, to serve the Jews of the Soviet Union. It may not seem any more significant than planting the flag of one or another nation at the North Pole—a gesture of pride, with little ramifications. But it is actually much more. This public declaration comes after ten years of intensive low-profile assistance, in the form of more than 400 *shlichim* (emissaries) that traveled on behalf of Agudath Israel's Vaad Lehatzolas Nidchei Yisroel to teach Torah and *mitzvos* and offer encouragement to hundreds of Soviet Jews. Many of the people reached by these *shlichim* are currently leaders of outreach ef-

forts and educational programs in Israel, America, and—yes—now, in the Soviet Union. More recently, these *shlichim* organized and led schools, seminars, *yeshivos*, and summer camps for Jewish youth—primarily in Kiev, Moscow, Kishinev, and Riga. These efforts will be expanded and coordinated by the director of the Agudath Israel branch, Sender (Sasha) Rubinovitz—born in Moscow, where he lived until twenty years ago, when he moved to Israel.

He then came to America, where he embraced a Torah way of life. He is now back in the city of his birth to participate in this new chapter in Jewish life in Russia.

Who knows but what we are witnessing the ultimate fruit of the labors of the Torah giants of seventy five years ago, following the mandate of Rav Chaim Ozer: "To spread Torah and *Yiras Shomayim* to the broad masses, and to resolve all problems... in the spirit of the Torah." ■



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Impressions Upon Visiting Jewish Moscow



At the Agudath Israel office in Moscow: Rabbi Pinchos Goldschmidt, from Zurich, Av Beis Din of Moscow (right); next to Rabbi Moshe Sherer, President of Agudath Israel of America and Co-Chairman of the Agudath Israel World Organization; and Rabbi Yaakov Bleich, from New York, the Rav of Kiev/Ukraine; standing next to Reb Mordechai Neustadt, chairman of Agudath Israel's Vaad L'Hatzolas Nidchei Yisroel.

*Based on an interview with **Rabbi Moshe Sherer**, president of Agudath Israel of America and co-chairman of the Agudath Israel World Organization, as told to Nisson Wolpin*

Last month, I spent several days in the Soviet Union, to participate in three momentous events: a Congress of the Union of Jewish Communities (*Agudas Hakehillos*) of the U.S.S.R. on March 12 and 13, with 200 representatives from close to 100 far-flung Jewish communities; the dedication of a new yeshiva founded jointly by the *Agudas Hakehillos* and Agudath Israel in Moscow; and the opening of a fully-staffed office in Moscow of the Agudath Israel World Organization.

Despite my involvement with the dispatch of *shlichim* to Russia for over a decade, I was visiting the Soviet Union for the first time, and found myself beset by two very different senses of awareness. One cannot help but feel that every minute is unique, a fleeting moment in a very dynamic situation. At the same time, one is overwhelmed by a keen sense of earlier history resonating through contemporary people and situations, as though the past is somehow coming to life through them.

I was reminded of a story regarding the *Arizal* told by the *Chiddushei HaRim* (the first Gerer Rebbe): Reb Shmuel deUzeda, of *Midrash Shmuel* fame—a young boy at the time—entered the room where the *Arizal* was sitting. The *Ari* rose to his full height in the young man's presence.

"Who is the young man, that you honored him so?" asked Reb Chaim Vital, the *Ari*'s disciple who had witnessed this singular show of respect.

"Who he is, is of no consequence," replied the *Ari*. "But he came to fulfill

a mission in keeping with the teachings of a revered *Tanna* (rabbi of the *Mishna*), Reb Pinchas ben Yair. When one performs a *mitzva* originating from a great man, his soul is bound up with that spiritual giant whose tradition he is continuing, and that presence is actually here in the room. Thus, I stood up for the *Tanna* who accompanied this young man, not for him."

This story reverberated through my mind at our opening ceremonies for the new national office of Agudath Israel of Russia. I looked around at

All of our efforts seemed aided by the deeds and *mesiras nefesh* of the *gedolim* who had preceded us and of the *kedoshim* who had perished....

the people in the room with me—people of outstanding dedication, to be sure, but there was no Chofetz Chaim, Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, or Lutzker Rav among us, by any stretch of the imagination. And yet I shuddered as though they were standing there in the room, for the people in that room were carrying out their *mitzva* and their mandate: to build a *koach harabim*, a coalition force for Torah Judaism in the U.S.S.R.

It is 74 years since there was any sort of an active presence of Agudath Israel in Russia. How far removed the Jews of this country are from the original Agudah motto of "resolving all day-to-day problems in the spirit of Torah"! The overwhelming majority of them have no idea as to what the word Torah means.

Yet, ten years ago, Eliyahu Essas, leading an underground Torah study group, managed to send a tape to the American office of Agudath Israel saying that he was looking forward to forming a branch of Agudah in

Moscow. And eight years later—two years ago—a group of *baalei teshuva* in Moscow presented the man through whom he sent that tape, Reb Mordechai Neustadt, the indefatigable chairman of the Agudah's Vaad Lehatzolas Nidchei Yisroel, with a petition to form such a branch in the Soviet capital. And here we have the fruition of those tentative beginnings. Not only are the Jews of Russia thereby linking up with fellow Jews committed to Torah in other parts of the globe; but this tiny group, riding a tempest of change, is also casting an anchor deep into the past. They

are being held steady by the founders of the movement that they are joining—the Chofetz Chaim, Reb Chaim Ozer, the Kishenever Rav, and the Skverer Rebbe, no less. Should one not rise in their presence?

When *davening Shacharis* in the new Moscow Yeshiva we dedicated, I was deeply moved by the intensity with which a 24-year-old *talmid* of the yeshiva was reciting the *Shma*. Would I but muster up such *kavana* (concentration) during *Shma* on Yom Kippur! I later inquired as to his background. Only

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Shacharis in the new Yeshiva in Moscow.

four months earlier, after a "Seminar" we had sponsored in Kiev, this young man decided to commit himself to a life of Torah, and divorced his non-Jewish wife. Looking at him with admiration, we realized that he symbolized the complexities of the problems we face in reaching out to Soviet Jewish youth, at the same time that his "success story" represented a ringing challenge.

At the *Chanukas Habayis* ceremonies of the yeshiva, Rabbi Moshe Eisemann (*mashgiach* of Yeshiva Ner Israel, Baltimore), the "father" of our

Vaad's Seminars in the USSR, spoke of the stark contrast between the fervor of these Jews' dedication, and the spiritually void background from which they come....Having just returned from a Seminar in Kishinev, he related: After hearing an explanation of the prohibition against owning *chometz* on Pesach, and how one must ask a *Rav* to sell it to a non-Jew, one young fellow confided to Rabbi Eisemann, "I have no problem. I'll just sell my *chometz* to my father."

The more dismaying the back-

ground and the more formidable the obstacles, the more vivid is one's awareness that we are witnessing the miracle of Jewish survival. And the more awesome is history's call to our conscience.

The Yeshiva of Kishinev, which had been under the leadership of the Gaon Rabbi Yehuda Leib Zirelson, had been housed in a large, impressive building. Today, all that remains is a large bombed-out shell. But the yeshiva is being revived, and is slated to eventually return to its former home, now that it is the property of Agudath Israel of America. Rabbi Eisemann told how the Prime Minister of Moldavia informed him that he has seen to it that in the interim the yeshiva should be housed in a *shul* that had been

One cannot help but feel that every minute is unique, a fleeting moment in a very dynamic situation. At the same time, one is overwhelmed by a keen sense of earlier history resonating through contemporary people and situations, as though the past is somehow coming to life through them.

seized by the government and converted into an office building. Partitions would be removed, and a *beis midrash* would function there again. When the government official sensed Rabbi Eisemann's curiosity—why should a Communist Minister restore a *shul* building to a religious func-

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tion?—he offered this explanation:

"I recall how, during World War II, the Nazis rounded up the Jews of the region in a field across from this synagogue building. The Germans informed them that they would have a few minutes grace before they would be shot. Do they have any request? 'Yes,' replied the Jews. 'We'd like to go to the house of worship across the road for one final afternoon prayer.' And they did. Then and there I decided that should it ever be in my power, I would return this building to its original purpose."

All of our efforts seemed aided by the deeds and *mesiras nefesh* of the *gedolim* who had preceded us and of the *kedoshim* who had perished.... The Moscow and Kiev *Rabbonim*, Mr. Neustadt and I met with the Soviet Minister of Religion, Yuri Christaradnov, and asked him to grant exemption from military service to the yeshiva students, in order to properly continue their studies and develop into the quality religious leaders Russian Jewry needs. At that meeting, we felt ourselves speaking the words of Reb Zalmen Sorotzkin to the Russian authorities 76 years before...carrying out the mandate of Reb Chaim Brisker, the Chofetz Chaim, and Reb Chaim Ozer. I felt their presence in the room.

The mere convening of the Second Congress of the *Agudas Hakehillos* of the U.S.S.R. in Moscow was remarkable, an indication of rapidly changing times. But I continued to hear echoes of history—not only of the planning of the ill-fated convention of the Pan Russian Jewish Federation of 1917, which never took place. I also heard reverberations of a remark by the Kamenitzer *Rosh Hayeshiva* זצ"ל, told to me by Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky זצ"ל. The *Rosh Yeshiva*, Reb Boruch Ber Lebovitz, had just returned from a visit to the United States in 1929, and was asked whether he thought that the American *Rabbonim* were smaller as compared with their European colleagues. He replied: "It's not that the American *Rabbonim* are smaller. The problems they face are larger...."

Russia today suffers both from a



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surfeit of problems and a dearth of *Rabbonim*. The problems are immense, and on an undreamed-of scale. Marriages are clouded by questions of *yichus*—whether the principals are actually Jewish, and if so, if they are not products of halachically questionable unions. Moreover, ignorance of Judaism is abysmal and just about universal. The people do not know of Torah nor of its Giver.

There is, however, a genuine curiosity and thirst for knowledge about Judaism among some of the people. And today, the government is not



At the chanukas habayis of the Moscow Yeshiva: (r.to l.) Bostoner Rebbe of Boston and Har Nof, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz; Rabbi Pinchos Goldschmidt; Rabbi Avraham Shayeivich, official Rabbi of Moscow; and Rabbi Yitzchok Aaron Fischer, mohel, of Monsey, N.Y., who during the week Congress was held, performed 97 brissim, following a Vaad LeHatzolas Nidchai Yisroel Seminar.

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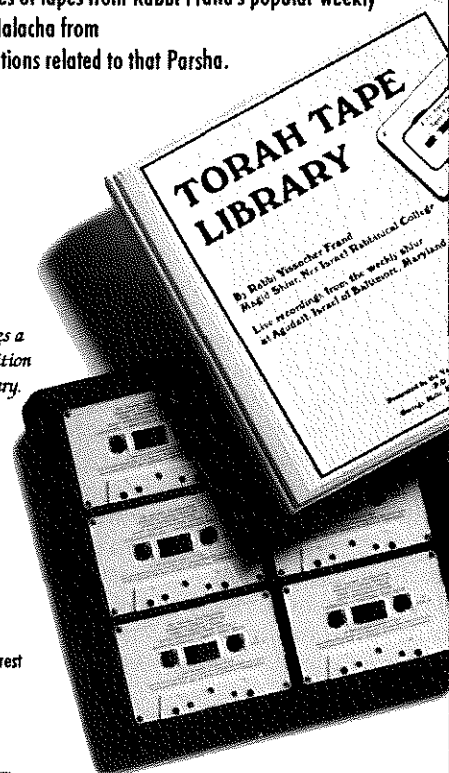
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only tolerant, but even cooperative with religious education.

Clearly, this is a situation that calls for a corps of *Rabbonim* of stature. But there is no basis for such people to appear on the *current* barren Russian landscape; it will take years for the seeds being planted today to produce quality crops of spiritual leaders. The *Rabbonim* must hail from the first group of *baalei teshuva* now learning in *Eretz Yisroel*, or from non-Russian volunteers willing to serve in a milieu foreign to their upbringing.

There are two notable examples of such non-Russian rabbis who won my admiration, two young men who addressed the Congress last month in a Russian that was both fluent and eloquent (judging by the faces of the audience): Rabbi Pinchos Goldchmidt of Zurich/*Eretz Yisroel*, who is the *Dayan* of Moscow; and Rabbi Yaakov Bleich, a Karlin-Stoliner *Chassid* from Brooklyn in his late 20's, who serves as *Rav* of Kiev/Ukraine*. Their dynamism, compassion, knowledge, and *mesiras nefesh* is already making a difference. And our new Yeshiva in Moscow is headed by three other gifted and dedicated young *Rabbonim*: American-born Rabbi Yosef Amsel of Lakewood, N.J., with Rabbis Shlomo Narat and Baruch Ludmir, formerly of Moscow and now returnees from Jerusalem, delivering *shiurim*.

The need for more such dynamic *Rabbonim* from the United States and Israel must be put on top of our agenda, not only to continue broadening our spiritual horizons in that region, but also to make sure that this virgin territory is not captured by the Reform/Conservative groups, who have already proclaimed such intentions. If through our neglect of these barren communities these dissident groups succeed in exporting their deleterious brand of pseudo-Judaism to Russia, it would be a crime for which history would never forgive us.

The Orthodox Jewish world has in the last ten years worked with great energy, even when infiltrating Rus-

*Rabbi Bleich's impact on Kiev is briefly described in Yeshoshua Weber's article, "From Kiev, With Hope," JO Nov '90.



Two of the three Roshei Yeshiva of the new yeshiva in Moscow are Russian-born Torah scholars who studied for years in Israel and have now returned to bring Torah to their native land (r. to l.): Rabbi Shlomo Nachat and Rabbi Baruch Ludmir. At left is Rabbi Yosef Amsel of Lakewood, New Jersey, an American-born Rosh Yeshiva.

sia in the pre-Glasnost period meant undergoing numerous fears and hardships, in order to restore the Jewish *neshama* to one of the oldest Jewish communities that had suffered so harshly from Communism. We now have the opportunity to broadly expand this spiritual life-saving work among those Jews still remaining in Russia, and at the same time infuse the potential *olim* to *Eretz Yisroel* with a life-saving taste of authentic Torah spirit and knowledge. It is clearly the call of the hour.

But as I left Moscow, it struck me that we are not dealing with "an hour," but with centuries. I was haunted by the story of the saintly Chofetz Chaim who once set out to the train station in Radin to travel to Warsaw, accompanied by some of his *talmidim*, to attend a major confer-

ence of *Rabbonim* which was held every four years. He missed the train by one minute. The Chofetz Chaim turned to his entourage and said, "There is an important lesson to learn from this mishap: sometimes a minute is not sixty seconds, but four years."

In this instance of coming to the aid of our fellow Jews in Russia, missing the "call of the hour" is more than sixty minutes lost; it could *chas v'shalom* mean the loss of entire generations.

Those who will be toiling in the vineyard of Russia should take courage, for they will not be alone. They will be in the presence of the giant *Rabbonim* of the previous generation who are their predecessors, in whose gigantic footsteps they are treading. ■

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Rabbonim and Psychotherapists: Allies or Adversaries?

While some *Rabbonim* and psychotherapists view each other as adversaries, there are some notable exceptions. This article will explore the basis for the adversarial relationship between some members of these two groups and then highlight several unique, hitherto unpublicized experiments in collaboration, which are quietly making history.

To clarify at the outset, the term "*Rabbonim*" is meant here to include all practicing *musmachim*—*Rabbonim*, *Rebbes* and *Roshet Hayeshiva*. The term "psychotherapists" refers only to professionally trained and licensed Orthodox Jewish clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical social workers, and psychiatric nurses.

THE NEED FOR CAUTION

Many *Rabbonim*, as well as laymen, see within the theoretical field of psychology and the practical field of psychotherapy some serious conflicts with Torah values. The question of psychology's compatibility with Torah has already been debated within these pages.¹ The only consensus to emerge is that one must exercise extreme caution in reading, studying,

or entering into the field of psychology. For some, the caution is even extended to consulting with psychotherapists, regardless of their religious credentials.

This attitude leads some *Rabbonim* to discourage, or at least avoid, making referrals to psychotherapists in all except the most extreme cases of mental or family breakdown.² Why so much caution?

Perhaps the best explanation for the concern of these *Rabbonim* comes from Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. of Pittsburgh, a *Rav* who is also a practicing psychiatrist:

"People heard (Freud) say that the answer to many problems is a release from repression and inhibitions; and as any religion does, Orthodoxy imposes strict inhibitions. So there has been a fear that Orthodox patients will throw off all their religion. There has been a great deal of hostility toward us (i.e., psychotherapists) and we're still dealing with that."

The New York Times, April 25, 1988 p. B2

Unfortunately, cases have been documented where non-religious therapists have, in fact, encouraged more "libertine behavior."³

BEING ORTHODOX IS NOT ENOUGH

Other *Rabbonim* have been concerned about more subtle but nonetheless critical potential areas of conflict between Torah and psychology, such as the attitudes and *hashkafos* of the

therapist. Some of these *Rabbonim* have acknowledged that an Orthodox therapist would probably not direct his patients to do anything clearly proscribed by the Torah. But for these *Rabbonim* to discard their suspicions, a therapist must be a *ben Torah*, in the sense that his personal priorities are truly in line with *daas Torah*.

Today, we are witnessing a development in the mental health professional community that certainly would have shocked Sigmund Freud and his colleagues—the emergence and swelling of the ranks of Orthodox Jewish psychotherapists.⁴

It should be noted that Rabbi Twerski made his remarks at the first National Conference for Orthodox Jewish Psychotherapists, held in New York City, which attracted over 200 participants.⁵ So while *Rabbonim* had good reason to feel cautious in the past, there are today enough Torah-loyal professionals in this field to warrant at least a re-evaluation of this caution.

THE RESISTANCE OF PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

Many psychotherapists, for their part, are resistant to consulting *Rabbonim*. They hear from their patients how some *Rabbonim* discouraged them from seeking professional help, which leads some psychotherapists to view the *Rabbonim* as barriers ל"7, to mental health!⁶

Dr. Wikler is a psychotherapist and family counselor in private practice. He lives in Brooklyn, New York. The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Dr. Aaron D. Twerski and Yaakov Salomon, C.S.W., in the preparation of this article.

Besides, some psychotherapists overestimate their own Torah knowledge, and identify far fewer halachic questions than they should regarding their clinical work. *Rabbonim* view this lack of halachic consultation as the psychotherapists' unwillingness to accept the ultimate primacy of Torah values over professional values. This stand-off can cause *Rabbonim* and psychotherapists to view each other as adversaries. When that occurs, each group is deprived of much that the other has to offer, but the ultimate deprivation is suffered by the Torah community-at-large.

What psychotherapists can gain from *Rabbonim* is so obvious, it hardly needs to be stated. It should be clarified, however, that psychotherapists need help not only in resolving halachic questions regarding their work,⁷ but they also must learn to be sensitive enough to the myriad of halachic considerations to know when a *she'eila* should be asked in the first place. This kind of benefit can only flow from long-term, ongoing contact between *Rabbonim* and psychotherapists.

While the notion of close collaboration between *Rabbonim* and psychotherapists may sound overly idealistic or unrealistic, the experiences of a few groups have proven otherwise.

¹ Rabbi Moshe Friedman's "The Nature of a Torah Psychology," December '87; Rabbi Yaakov Luban's "Neshama in Golus," February '76; Dr. Jacob Mermelstein's "An Orthodox Jewish Psychologist Confesses," December, '75; and the letters-to-the-editor that appeared following each article.

² See *Bayis Ne'eman b'Yisrael: Practical Steps to Success in Marriage*, Feldheim Publishing Co., 1988, p. 115-116, for documentation of this attitude.

³ See for example, "Fine-Tuning Diagnostic Techniques Used by Orthodox Jewish Clients," *Journal of Psychology and Judaism*, Spring 1979, p. 184-194.

⁴ For the historical roots of that development, see "The Recent Rise of Professional Orthodox Jewish Social Services," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, March 1979, p. 279-285.

⁵ This conference was co-sponsored by the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists and the Robert Beren Center for Psychological Intervention at the Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, Yeshiva University.

⁶ *Bayis Ne'eman b'Yisrael: Practical Steps to Success in Marriage*, op. cit.

⁷ See "Halacha and Psychotherapy—Conflict or Compatibility?" *J.O. May*, '82, p. 8-11.

TORAH AWARENESS GROUPS

About six years ago, a group of therapists in private practice—all *bnei Torah*, some even *musmachim*—got together to discuss their professional concerns. One issue that seemed to trouble all of them was the unmet need to ad-


dress the interface of Torah and psychology more aggressively. Instead of waiting for halachic questions to arise in their practice, they wanted to anticipate potential *she'eilos*.

As a result of that initial group awareness, they decided to conduct weekly clinical meetings, which

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Rabbi Menachem Gold, *Menahel*

would begin with some Torah study, followed by a discussion of its application to their work. They chose the Chofetz Chaim's *Shemiras Halashon*, dealing with the laws of *lashon hora*, as their first text. They have since completed that and have gone on to study other texts, as well.

In addition, the group decided to present *she'eilos* that would emerge in their clinical case discussions to leading rabbinic authorities. So far, there have been a number of such consultations with *poskim* (halachic authorities), after which the entire group pored over the *psak* (decision) rendered. The members of this group, however, are not entirely sat-

isfied. Some feel that they should approach a Torah personality to give a *shiur* in *halacha* or *mussar* geared for psychotherapists, similar to the successful *shiurim* being offered to physicians and other medical professionals.

This group is not unique. Here are some other notable examples.

• The Orthodox branch office of a large non-sectarian mental health agency sponsored a series of open forums on issues of potential conflict between psychotherapy and *halacha*. The forums were originally designed by the clinical director of the office to heighten the professional staff's sensitivity to the *halachic* implica-

tions of their work. The forums were so successful that they were later opened to Orthodox psychotherapists not on the agency staff.

• A group of over two dozen psychotherapists who provide a free mental health service, the Yitti Leibel Helpline—thus far having served over five thousand individuals and families—recently met with a well-known *poseik* to discuss a long list of diverse *she'eilos*.

• Perhaps the best and certainly one of the oldest examples of halachic consultation by psychotherapists is the family service agency that provides mental health and social services all under Orthodox auspices. This agency has engaged one of the most prominent halachic authorities in the New York Metropolitan area. The *poseik* has been serving "on staff" for over ten years. In addition to being available to all professional staff for halachic consultation on an emergency basis, he also meets with the entire clinical staff periodically, to discuss more general or less immediate *halachic* questions.

In addition to these groups, *bnei Torah* in the mental health field are also increasingly consulting *poskim* on an individual, one-to-one basis.

OUTREACH BY RABBONIM

The willingness to learn works in both directions. Groups of *Rabbonim* are also reaching out to gain insights and practical techniques from psychotherapists. One such group began over eight years ago and is still active.

A well-known Orthodox psychotherapist, visiting a major, urban Torah center, was approached by one of the local *kollel Yungeleit*, who was working on a *sefer* of Torah-oriented pre-marital guidance and wanted any input that the psychotherapist could offer. "Why meet with me?" the psychotherapist protested. "*Rabbonim* and *Roshei Yeshiva* are much more qualified to answer your questions about the Torah view of marriage."

"I want to meet with you," the *kollel* fellow countered, "because you deal with the marital failures. I want to learn what goes wrong."

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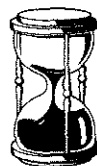
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So the meeting was arranged for a few days later. In the interim, the psychotherapist received a call from another kollel fellow active in *kiruv* work, which often involved pre-marital counseling; he too wanted to attend the meeting. The session finally took place with four kollel *Yungeleit* in attendance, together with one *Rav*, one *Mashgiach* and three tape recorders. The psychotherapist covered many problem areas in marriage that could be avoided through effective pre-marital guidance, and the single half-hour meeting mushroomed into three separate, two-hour meetings. "

As the *Rabbonim* continued to meet with the psychotherapist on subsequent visits, the group—which meets by invitation only—has grown to include close to twenty participants at any one meeting. Over the past eight years, the group meetings have focused on a wide variety of

When a stand-off occurs, each group is deprived of much that the other has to offer, but the ultimate deprivation is suffered by the Torah community-at-large.

urgent issues—some suggested by the senior *Rabbonim* of the group, some suggested by the psychotherapist. The topics discussed have included: how to respond to someone threatening suicide, how to differentiate between problems requiring professional help and those that can be handled by *Rabbonim*, how to build a relationship with a withdrawn student, how to successfully refer someone for professional help, how to know when someone is on the verge of a nervous breakdown and what to do about it, how to recognize chronic personality disorders, how to differentiate between various forms of engagement anxiety, and how to

build confidence in children with low self-esteem.

While the format of the meetings has been open-ended, and varies from session to session, strict confidentiality—even to the identity of the participants—has been a binding condition.

At one meeting, a kollel fellow raised a personal question: His seven-year-old son suddenly, without apparent reason, refused to go to *yeshiva*. Neither bribe nor punishment succeeded in getting him to attend

even one day in the last month. Both father and mother were completely baffled and, understandably, at their wits' end. An intense discussion followed and concluded with some practical suggestions from the psychotherapist and some of the *Rabbonim*. Before the psychotherapist returned home, the kollel fellow called to report that his son had gone back to *yeshiva*.

At a different meeting, the psychotherapist made a thorough presentation of the symptoms and clinical

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course of one of the more unmanageable and inscrutable mental disorders, the "borderline personality disorder."⁸

The following day, a Mashgiach who had attended that meeting came over to consult the psychotherapist regarding one bachur who was taking up over 50% of his time and was responsible for almost 100% of his agmas nefesh (anguish). After a detailed review of the bachur's history in the yeshiva, it became clear to the therapist that this bachur was displaying symptoms of borderline personality disorder.

The psychotherapist then predicted what the Mashgiach should anticipate from this bachur, and the Mashgiach smiled: the bachur had already displayed the "predicted" behavior. The two went on to discuss how the Mashgiach could best help this bachur in the future.

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MEETINGS FOR MECHANCHIM

Another group of *Rabbonim*, formed under the auspices of a large association of yeshiva principals, regularly holds more structured meetings with a variety of psychotherapists. These meetings are open to all of the association's members. A professional coordinator engages the guest lecturers and dis-

Today, we are witnessing a development in the mental health professional community that certainly would have shocked Sigmund Freud and his colleagues—the emergence and swelling of the ranks of Orthodox Jewish psychotherapists.

cussion leaders, who are always Orthodox psychotherapists.

One series of workshops sponsored by this association, led by the same psychotherapist, focused on three consecutive topics related to a *Rebbe's* or teacher's role in helping children who are depressed, learning disabled, or suffering from low self-esteem.

A few years ago, this same association sponsored a two-day public conference designed for *mechanchim* (educators) of all levels, and drew a large crowd of yeshiva *Rebbeim*, Bais Yaakov teachers, and laymen. The workshops were led by psychotherapists, *Rabbonim*, or panels with members of both groups. Although the conference has yet to be repeated, it was extremely well received.

⁸ See *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Third Edition—Revised. American Psychiatric Association, Washington, D.C., 1987 p. 345-347.

⁹ See "Halacha and Psychotherapy: Conflict or Compatibility?" *op. cit.* for a fuller discussion of this topic.

Generally speaking, both the *Rabbonim* and the psychotherapists who have attended these meetings have appreciated them. But the greatest beneficiaries of these meetings undoubtedly are the patients, *talmidim* and *talmidos* who were taught, counseled and guided more successfully as a result of their therapists and *Rabbonim* having taken advantage of these learning opportunities.

NON-PARTICIPANTS

There are plenty of *Rabbonim* who have not been involved in these groups. And there are many Orthodox psychotherapists who do not have the same kind of Torah study and intimate contact with halachic authorities that some of their colleagues enjoy. Why have they chosen to remain on the sidelines?

Some *Rabbonim* have stayed away from such programs because they were not sponsored by Torah institutions, but rather by secular or irreligious agencies. In such cases, the concerns articulated by Rabbi Twerski may well be justified.

Other *Rabbonim* have acknowledged that they may have much to learn from the mental health field, but unless the therapist presenting the material is a *ben Torah*, they would choose not to attend. Of course, not every Orthodox therapist qualifies as a *ben Torah*, but there are still enough who do meet such standards to provide ample learning opportunities for these *Rabbonim*.

Even when meetings are arranged on an individual basis with Orthodox psychotherapists who are *bnai Torah*, however, still other *Rabbonim* are concerned that their participation at such meetings could be misconstrued by their *talmidim* and the community. But as the experiences described here have demonstrated, confidentiality can be fully safeguarded.

Psychotherapists have mainly not "joined" because of unawareness: they are just not cognizant of how much they don't know and how vital it is for them to maintain close ties with *Rabbonim* and *poskim*.⁹

Other psychotherapists are aware of the need, but do not know whom to consult, since not every *Rav* is qualified to *pasken she'eilos* related to the practice of psychotherapy. To do so, a *Rav* must not only possess a vast knowledge of *Shas*, but also of *Shulchan Aruch*, *poskim*, and what is referred to as the "Fifth *Shulchan Aruch*," which encompasses sensitivity to personal feelings coupled with practical understanding of the dynamics of family relationships and human behavior.

Baruch HaShem, there are many *Rabbonim* today who not only have these essential qualifications, but also are surprisingly familiar with the intricacies of the therapeutic process.

Hopefully, the experiences described here will encourage other *Rabbonim* and psychotherapists to follow the examples set by their colleagues and initiate similar dialogues with each other, to the ultimate advantage of the Torah community-at-large. ■

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The Nearly Missing Child

WITNESSING THE RITES OF PASSAGE

I live in the suburbs of a major American city. We have five Orthodox *shuls* in an eight-square-mile area, serving over seven hundred families. Nearly all these families are *Shomer Shabbos* and all but a few of their children attend Orthodox day schools and *yeshivos*. Every year there are twenty-five to forty Bar Mitzvas in these *shuls*. At the *seuda* that typically takes place on *Erev Shabbos* or *Shabbos* lunch, all the Bar Mitzva age boys sit at the head table while the adults and the family's younger and older children are at other tables. The Bar Mitzva year is usually defined by grade, so these boys find themselves together for a celebration on *Shabbos* about twice a month for fifteen to eighteen months.

I love watching these rites of passage—the camaraderie of the boys, their pride in each other's accom-

plishments and pranks, the relief of all the boys when the Bar Mitzva finishes his obligatory *D'var Torahs*—usually the signal to start the real fun that such celebrations hold.

I love watching these rites of passage—the camaraderie of the boys, their pride in each other's accomplishments and pranks. Soon my son will be thirteen....But I fear he will be missing from all those semi-monthly events.

Soon my son will be thirteen....But I fear he will be missing from all those semi-monthly events.

NO CLASS FOR MY SON

My son is multi-handicapped, with mental retardation the most obvious characteristic. He needed physical, occupational and speech therapies unavailable in nursery schools and kindergartens sponsored by our Orthodox *shuls* and schools or even other Jewish institutions. So he attended public and private special education classes all week. There was no Jewish content and, at most, only one other Jewish child in these classes. For a year, my son attended a community-wide, Jewish special education program on Sunday mornings. This program emphasized Jewish identity with introduction to basic symbols and traditions. But my son received a much larger and more personal dose of these symbols and

traditions in his own home. While I was instrumental in initiating this pre-school-age program, we did not continue with it beyond the first year or even re-enter its school-age version.

On *Shabbos* our son would go to the *shul's Shabbos* groups, which was fine as long as the group's activities were limited to playing with toys. He quickly became lost as *Shabbos* groups spent more time on verbalized quizzing about what was learned in day schools and *yeshivos*, about *berachos*, the *Parsha*, and *halachos* of *Shabbos* and *Yomtov*. For about four years, we simply kept him back, essentially staying five years with the kindergarten and first grade *Shabbos* group. On a more positive note, he attended a local day school for an hour each day prior to going to a later-starting, public school special education program. For two years, the primary emphasis of this part-time day school attendance has been on joining in morning *davening*. His *davening* is *b'al peh* and is based mostly on listening to those around him. He last attended third grade *davening*, since most of their *davening* is said aloud. His age-appropriate grade, fourth and fifth, would have been much too fast or said silently. This year, his public school starts too early, so I *daven* with him 25 minutes every morning, saying *b'al peh* about nine pages of the *davening*.

WHOM WILL HE INVITE?

At his Bar Mitzva, whom will he invite to sit at the boys' table? Will they be inviting him to sit at their table? The obvious answers are not encouraging. Nor is there anyone to fault or blame. Our son is not being ostracized or purposely excluded. These other boys are children of our friends and we are not being excluded from their social occasions, including their sons' Bar Mitzvas. There is no unfriendliness. Yet, these boys his age barely know him as a peer. When they see him they do not perceive him as a classmate or friend. He is, at best, much "younger" or, more likely, he has a difference difficult to understand.

There is no unfriendliness. Yet, these boys his age barely know him as a peer. When they see him they do not perceive him as a classmate or friend.

These boys are usually unwilling to become involved with him on the several aspects where there are shared interests or abilities. Or even to become involved with him as an act of *chessed*.

My son is a person reared in a home with the same values for *Yiddishkeit*, of learning, and of caring, as these other boys. These boys know that the values are the same because when they see my son in *shul* and elsewhere, he dresses like them (from *kippa* to *tzitzis*) and wants to be involved in the *davening*. My son wants to be like them and with them, but he often doesn't understand what they are talking about and they rarely understand even the simple things he is saying. He hasn't been invited to any of their birthday parties since they were five-years old, and we stopped giving "one way" birthday parties for him by the time he was seven.

Three or four years after Bar

Mitzva, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, many of these boys will be looking for specific acts of *chessed*. They will be reaching out to help, to favor, to offer emotional support to children like my son. I see this attitude in the older boys in our *shul*, in boys serving as camp counselors or youth group leaders. Activities my son attends. But during the Bar Mitzva years, boys are still not ready to do what they desire to do as they gain in maturity, to practice the true meaning or performing *mitzvos*. Their readiness to accept the responsibility for performing *Taryag Mitzvos* is still at the "I will do" stage rather than "I will understand."

WILL HE BE MISSED?...WILL HE MISS OUT?

So my son will probably be missing from these Bar Mitzva celebrations. Will he be missed? No. Will he miss out? Yes, at his Bar Mitzva he will probably not *lein* the *Parsha*. But he will be called up for an *aliya* and will be able to say the *Berachos* properly. He will get his own *tefillin*, a new suit, and what passes for the modern equivalent of the standard Bar Mitzva gifts. We will have a *seuda* and other celebratory events. He may even say a *D'var Torah* which, like for many boys, someone else will write.

It would be nice to have more. To see him at the head of his table with twenty plus Bar Mitzva age boys. To see him sitting at other Bar Mitzva's tables. Should we just do the ceremony and the *seuda* in Israel, at the *Kotel*? In anonymity? Despite the thrill that would provide, it would not satisfy us and, probably, not satisfy him. ■

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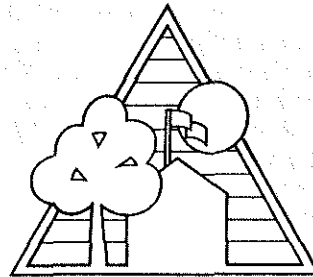
Postscript

Ezra Greher's article on the conventional Bar Mitzva that his son will never experience casts a pessimistic pall on the plight of Down Syndrome children. It would seem that parents of a pre-adolescent or young teenage "special child" cannot expect the child's peers to reach out to him in a meaningful way. Only older teens have the resources of altruism to do so.

Dr. Greher's experience is unfortunately typical. There are, however, several notable exceptions that demonstrate that younger children can be guided to a greater sympathy and compassion that embraces their lower-functioning peers. We offer two examples: One is a short comment by a camper in Camp Bnos—one of the two Agudath Israel summer camps that have programs for integrating a bunk of high-functioning, Down Syndrome children into the regular camping program.

The other is an account of a sports events between boys in a conventional yeshiva and students in a special school, by **Michele Gross**. Both articles illustrate that with a concerted effort, younger children can be prompted to grow in sympathy and compassion.

Something Special



(Reprinted from the Camp Bnos Newspaper)

Coming to camp, I at least expected to spend a summer free of any form of mental pressure, a summer rich in adventurous experiences. Yet soon after arriving in camp, I heard about the special children who were due to join us for the summer. My first reaction was that I would not be affected. In other words, I did not foresee that there would be any intermingling between any of the special girls and my own group. They would just be another bunch of girls, here for a "good time" while I went on my own way with my friends.

All that changed, though, the minute the first girls arrived. My primary emotion was one of pity—look at all I could do, yet they couldn't. The simplest operations—talking, clapping—which I took for granted, were difficult or impossible for some of the girls. Who could ignore the pain of some of the girls who consistently fell while trying to carry on with the seemingly "simple" task of walking?

Yet, I was still convinced that I could keep my distance—maybe play with them occasionally, but otherwise, form no emotional connection with them.

Then I saw Rena—or maybe I should say, Rena saw me. I had been at Rena's house before to occupy some of her time on *Shabbos*

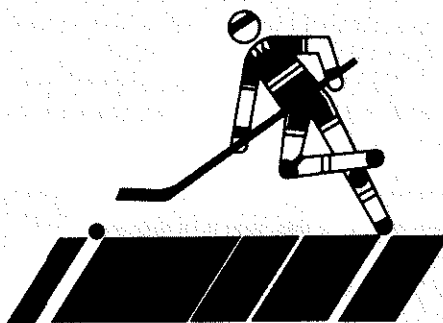
afternoon. Well, Rena recognized me and came over and demanded my name. Who could resist the intensity with which she posed her question, and the many following ones? Who could turn away from her, desert her, ignore her?

Arm-in-arm, we went off together for a tour of her bunkhouse. We were hardly separated for more than one minute that first day.

That night, I lay awake thinking. It took so little to make these girls happy—and that little bit I was capable of providing. Was it fair to hold myself back just because I felt that the girls were not regular or average? It was not a feeling of pity that gave rise to these thoughts, but rather one of love. These girls were not objects to be pitied and soothed. They weren't children who could not reciprocate feelings or treasure close friendships. Rather, they were girls who needed to be loved, cared for, and patiently understood.

Since that day, the girls, especially Rena, have affected me greatly, along with everyone else in Camp Bnos. They have taught me, personally, that one must learn to understand everyone, however unique they may appear at first. There is something to love in everyone, and it is our obligation to work on ourselves until we can recognize it in each person. ■

Losing At Sports, Winning in Life Experience



GO FOR THE SILVER!

Go for the gold! Play to win! Be number one! Each cheer applauds an "all-American" spirit of healthy competition. But some students at a Yeshiva Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, Queens, think it is important sometimes to go for the silver, and to be number two—especially when their opponents are boys with learning disabilities. They know that it's not whether you win or lose, but how everyone feels after the game.

For the past three years, seventh grade boys from Darchei Torah have been joining boys from Yeshiva Bais Lemudai Hashem (CHUSH) in Williamsburgh, Brooklyn, in a day of sports and goodwill. All the boys who attend CHUSH suffer from a variety of learning disorders such as dyslexia, dysfunctional behaviors, or comprehension difficulties.

The sky was the limit for the yeshiva boys who were charging across a long and narrow lunchroom floor in the Williamsburgh school where this year's meet was held. The stark, institutional-looking facilities were a far cry from even a modestly equipped neighborhood playground, but nobody on either field-hockey team could have cared less.

The teams, almost indiscernible from each other thanks to an absence of uniforms, formed a striking collage

of different backgrounds and traditions—all within the realm of Orthodox Judaism. Knitted yarmulkes played alongside those of suede and velvet. Some boys wore payes (earlocks) down to the chin; others were without. Some tucked their tzitzis in; others had theirs dangling.

"Winning the game this year is a real confidence booster for these boys. For a few minutes out there on the field they feel mainstreamed," the coach said.

But despite these differences in dress (and the lifestyles that they represent), sports and a desire to be good sports brought these boys together.

Brandishing a blue hockey stick with the fierceness of a boy possessed was CHUSH's Avraham S. He was looking to seize a ripe opportunity. There, only a few feet from Darchei's goal, lolled the little red puck. In a flash, two Darchei defenders ap-

peared on the scene and a scramble for the puck began in earnest. But everyone got more than they bargained for. A supervising teacher from Darchei Torah found his toes embroiled in a heated skirmish. A blast from the referee's whistle gave him just enough time to leap for cover over the lunch tables that had been set up as barriers. CHUSH captain, Sender B., took advantage of the break in the action to put his concentration-cum-gum-chewing strategy to the test. Split seconds later he had control of the puck. SMACK! The sweet sound of plastic clacking against the floor filled the hall as the energized puck hurtled toward the back ropes of a goal cage.

The final score: CHUSH 5; Darchei Torah 2.

POST-GAME ANALYSIS

While in past years the scoreboard may have read the same, this is the first year that CHUSH's victory was authentic.

"We planned to let them win. We thought they'd be bad. But they were really good," explained Darchei Torah captain, Eli H., between bites of pizza during the post-game analysis.

"Baseball's really our game, you know," said one sour-graper, adding the old home-turf-advantage gripe: "Besides, they know the place."

Joking aside, most of the Darchei Torah students agreed: "They earned it."

On the other side of the table sat the victors, basking in their hard-earned glory. "We are the best," beamed Avraham. "We got the best gym teacher and Rabbi Weiss [CHUSH's principal] is the best, too," he gushed.

A more dispassionate Sender chalked the win up to practice, and had a few instructive words for Darchei Torah: "I feel if Darchei

would just have tried a little harder, there could have been a tie."

"Winning the game this year is a real confidence booster for these boys. For a few minutes out there on that field they feel mainstreamed," the coach said.

According to Rabbi Weiss, that feeling of "normalcy" lasts more than just a few minutes. "You can be sure that this will be the talk of the school for weeks to come," he said.

Yet much of the excitement generated by the games has little to do

While the value of one isolated incident may be arguably limited, if events like this one become a regular part of the educational program, benefits can be long lasting.

with winning or losing. "A lot of these boys have no friends and feel very much like outsiders," explained Rabbi Weiss. "When Darchei boys come to play sports with them, they feel like they are something special."

The good feelings are hardly one-sided, though. In fact, students and faculty at Darchei Torah would argue that where benefits are concerned, they are the big winners.

"I always emphasize to the boys how important it is to give to others and not just live for yourself," explained the Darchei faculty member. "This program helps the boys internalize that lesson by experiencing the gift of giving, first hand."

It also helps them see their lives in perspective.

"When we walk in here and look around, we count our blessings," said 13-year-old Baruch Aryeh.

A classmate added: "I want to thank G-d for making us normal and that helps me pray better."

"These kids at CHUSH are born with the deck stacked against them," commented the Darchei teacher, "and they are making the best of things. They are basically happy individuals despite their limitations and we can all learn from them."

While the value of one isolated incident may be arguably limited, if events like this one become a regular part of the educational program, benefits can be long-lasting. ■

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Hello There, Erma

*At the nursing home, on the sixth floor, the east side
A population of special people there reside...*

*Authors and doctors, professors and cooks
Boys handsomely groomed, charming girls with good looks
Lawyers and firemen, on occasion a baker
All of them made a bit aged by their Maker.*

*They were all children once with bells on white shoes
They all threw temper tantrums during their terrible twos
They all went to school and shared secrets with a best friend
They also all thought that youth would never end.*

*They all yearned to get married and meet the right one
They all loved a new outfit and to only have fun
They all looked in the mirror and curled their shining hair
They all measured their waists and kept their skin fair.*

*Those of us who bother to visit and pass by
Barely mutter "Good Morning" without blinking an eye
But do we ever take out a minute to think
That between youth and old age there is a strong link?*

*Even though Erma sitting there isn't aware of a thing
In her heart there are cherished memories and lullabies that sing
Stories of good times, of merry Simchas and laughing smiles
An accomplished lifetime; of love topping piles.*

*So next time you feed her, barely pretending to care...
Remember that someday, you may sit in that wheelchair.*

Author's note: The night this was written, our friend "Erma" passed away. We found her chart the next time we visited and realized that her passing was merely a few hours after this poem was made for her.

Blimie Friedman lives in Brooklyn, N.Y. Her poem "Different or Similar?" appeared in the June, '90 JO.

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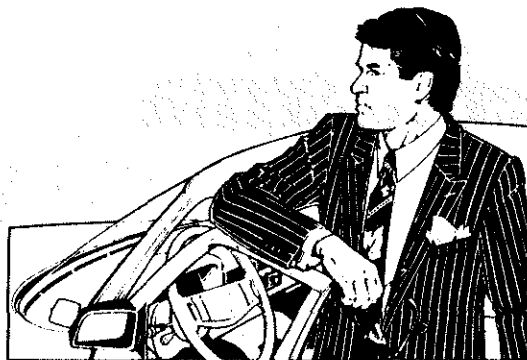
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Second Looks



When Fashion is Eloquent, What Does It Say?

THE DEFINITIVE ILLUSION

Fashion is an illusion of sorts. Well-crafted phrases, using emotionally charged words—like artfully shot photographs—play an important part in projecting this illusion. From “dramatic entrance” to “this year’s power tie,” there is little hard-edged realism in the lexicon of fashion.

One phrase in the dressing-up dictionary, however, does have a degree of integrity to it: “fashion statement.” First, and just about always, when someone’s clothing reflects the latest trends, it says something about the wearer. He (or she) is willing to spend the extra dollar it takes to look *au courant*...with it. One should pay attention to the wearer.

In addition, style and quality of clothing testify to an individual’s professional standing, as well as his/her place on the social scale or the corporate ladder. There’s a whole schedule of do’s and don’t’s, ranging from color and make of fabric to size and style of buttons, which tells all about a person’s status to the otherwise uninformed. Clearly, details of fashion do convey a message.

BACKDROP TO DIGNITY

A person’s “fashion statement” also transmits another message—not so subtle, yet not

always meant to be communicated by the wearer. But first, a step back to the beginnings of it all:

The entire concept of clothing is an after-thought of sorts to man, for until Adam and Chava ate from the forbidden fruit, they had no need for clothing. From that point on, however, when they became aware of their nakedness, G-d Himself fashioned clothing for them. It was a Divine act of *chessed* through which He “personally” provided their exposed flesh with covering. Perhaps that is why Rabban Yochanan, in the Talmud, referred to his clothing as “*mechabdai*—my source of dignity,” a perpetuation of the *chessed* that G-d had extended to the first man.

Using clothing as originally intended can go beyond dignity to *kedusha*—sanctity. And, indeed, when the *mitzva* of “*kedoshim tiheyu*—And you shall be holy” was proclaimed in a gathering of the entire Jewish people—men, women and children—there was a message in the format that defined the words: Every Jew has a role, and a responsibility, in exemplifying the distinctive Jewish trait of sanctity...each one individually, all together in composite, forming a nation of priests, a holy people.

In a conversation with the author, Rabbi Shimon Schwab (K’hal Adath Jeshurun, Manhattan) pointed out the singular opportunities for

achieving *kedusha* inherent in judicious dress, especially for women: A person striving for spiritual growth might admire the *kohein*, who wears his special *begadim* (raiments) *lekavod uletiferes*—for honor and glory in service of his Creator.... And imagine the special standing of the *kohein gadol*—the High Priest—who had eight special garments, including the *choshen* (breast plate with twelve gems) and *tzitz hazahav* (golden plate on his brow) with G-d’s name engraved on it....By the same token, there are the *men’s tefillin* containing sacred parchments, which can endow the wearer with such an aura of G-dliness that “all the nations of the earth will see the Name of G-d hovering over you, and they will be in awe over you.” *Is there some way that I, too, can achieve that type of special awe?* asks the spiritually ambitious woman.

In truth, she has her own distinctive approach to this awe. And it is available to her, and *only* to her, on a constant basis....Not so with the *kohein gadol*, who only wore his garments when serving in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Or the ordinary *kohein*, who generally was scheduled to wear his *begadim* on perhaps two days of the year....Not even men; because of their inability to be impeccable in body and pure in thought for any length of time, they generally wear *tefillin* only when they *daven*...a half

hour, forty minutes, or an hour a day.

By contrast, a woman who wears clothing in a manner consistent with *halacha* and in the spirit of *tzenius* (modesty), radiates a *kedusha* that testifies to her fulfillment of her role as a *Bas Yisroel*. She inspires respect, and creates a distance from the profane, even as she sits on a bus, works at her desk in her office, pushes the kids in a carriage on the avenue, or otherwise strolls the roads of her life.

Can any man equal that achievement, any day...every day...all day long?

LOST TO THE WINDS OF FASHION

Sometimes the sense of dignity meant to be endowed on a person by virtue of his or her clothing, the distinctive aura of sanctity that every Jew carries, is lost, scattered and dispersed by the winds of fashion. This is particularly the case with women—the more fashion-conscious gender, the one more charged with *tzenius*. (According to the *Midrash* in *Bereishis*, woman's each and every limb is charged with a command implicit in the source from which she was fashioned, the rib: "As I was discreet, so should you be discreet.")

Thus, feminine followers of the latest fashion fad just might find their choice of clothing making statements on their behalf that they hardly knew existed; that they surely would not identify with, if they only "heard" what their clothing was saying. Fashion designers are not shy about creating clothing that, by virtue of cut, length, color and accentuation, proclaim all sorts of messages—messages regarding attraction as

opposed to privacy, promiscuity versus restraint, shouts of "look at me" in contrast to an unequivocal "mind your own business."

In her very touching address at the Felt Forum gathering marking the fiftieth *Yahrzeit* of Sarah Schenirer ז"ל, the late Rebbitzin Vichne Kaplan ז"ל, founder of the Beth Jacob High School and Seminary in America, commented on how she often had difficulty recognizing young ladies when she met them at weddings just a year after she had taught them in the Seminary. Their highly fashionable manner of dress projected a message that surely did not speak for them. They, in all innocence, were responding to the siren call of fashion, which the designers were issuing in accordance of an

agenda all their own...a far cry from what these young ladies would want to say. "Don't let your mode of dress convey ideas so foreign to your true self," she pleaded.

Rebbitzin Kaplan issued this call six years ago. The seasons since then have witnessed a shifting of emphasis and a redefinition of propriety in terms of hemlines, fit, and so on. When clothing makes a "fashion statement," the wearer would do well to bear in mind that it speaks in accordance with the manufacturer's designs, not necessarily those of the purchaser. And all protests to the contrary notwithstanding, the designer has the last word. When choosing to make a fashion statement, one would be well advised to see who is saying what for whom. ■

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The Empty Seat

*I walked right in and looked around,
And saw an empty place.
I thought and then I asked myself,
Where was that familiar face?*

*Mr. Shain would always smile
And pat me on the back,
Where has he gone, I asked someone,
And when will he be back?*

*He had a secret hideout which
I searched for everywhere.
He kept all kinds of candies
That he plucked out of the air.
He waited for my brocha first,
Then popped one in my mouth,*

*And said, "This flew from way up north,"
Or, "This one's from the south."*

*He used to sit, a trifle sad,
A Tehillim in his hand,
Thinking of a long lost son
Who died in a foreign land.*

*I think they call it "Holocaust,"
Where many others died.
Whenever people mention it,
They cannot help but cry.*

*I asked him very softly, once,
If at home he had a wife.
He sighed and said, "Oh, yes, I did,
But in another life."*

*I did not know just what he meant
But Father squeezed my hand*

*And said, "Hush now. When you
grow up,
You'll know, you'll understand."*

*He'd tilt my chin and smile at me,
A smile all full of sorrow,
And say, "My son, I am the past,
But you are the tomorrow."*

*I miss the sight of the bowed back
Of gentle Mr. Shain.*

*I hope that wherever he's gone
He'll see his son again,
And that he will be happy there,
As happy as can be,*

*And whenever I remember him,
He'll smile and think of me.*

Mrs. Weinbach, a published author and poet, lives in Mattesdorf, Jerusalem. She is a frequent contributor to these pages.

Nightwalk

Chaim Feinberg

*Late at night,
when the moon hangs red and guttering, cradled in the West,
when my wife and children are fast asleep
like the folded white buds of the drowsy flowering fig,
and the dew is sprinkling its dream glitter
over the misty countryside;
late each night
I walk alone down the sleeping sidestreets and lanes,
past the drowsy vegetation and the restless cats,
with the moon my last companion,
guttering like a smoky candlebutt,
sinking to the West.*

*Late at night,
on those lonely walks,
I become acquainted with myself:
I see a man is more than gathered dust,
more than the measure of grief.
Alone with the night,
with the silence overrun with stars,*

*I become immersed in who I am.
I sink like the moon
in the depths of myself,
in the very soul Heaven kindled in me.
I see there is no present,
only the future flowing from G-d;
like a long blue river it curls till it meets the past,
embracing it as its bride.*

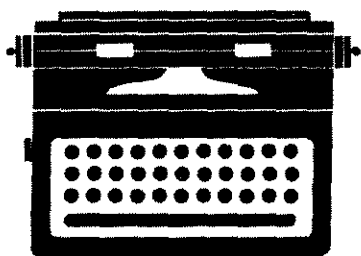
*Let the dark lanes drowse,
steeped in lemon trees
and the dew that quivers and gleams;*

*Let the pines toss
like a wave from the heart
of a single dreaming seed;*

*Let darkness rule the countryside,
let dawn be far away;*

*Let the soul of a man
flood the night
like a flowering lilac tree.*

Chaim Feinberg is a published poet who lives in Spring Valley, N.Y. His "Ezekiel In The Garden" was featured in JO, Oct. '90.



Letters to the Editor

RABBI KOKIS: "OUR GEDOLIM" —OR EVERYBODY'S GEDOLIM?

To the Editor:

The views expressed by Rabbi Ben Tzion Kokis ("Striving for Zion") are his own; yet he uses such expressions as "our *gedolim*" to illustrate a point. He should have said "my *gedolim*."

Actually, I was unaware that there was such thing as "my *gedolim*" and "your *gedolim*." *Gedolei Yisroel* belong to all of us and we must respect them regardless of their political views. Is Rabbi Kokis saying that a great *posek* who disagrees with his views about the State of Israel is not considered a *gadol* in his eyes?

After summarizing a certain view that he disagrees with, he writes: "How different this is from the approach of our *gedolim* whose words reflect the extreme complexities and subtleties of the situation." Ridiculous! All the *gedolim* understand the extreme complexities and subtleties of a situation. It is just that they come to different conclusions. One is certainly permitted to disagree with them, but to imply that they have not investigated the matter thoroughly just because they differ with you is a degradation of their *gadlus*. All through history the *gedolim* have had different views on issues of politics and *hashkafa*. Of course, everyone must pick one *derech*, but that does not give us the right to criticize the other *gedolim* as Rabbi Kokis has done.

After referring to the approach of "our *gedolim*," Rabbi Kokis cites the

view of the *Chazon Ish* that our era is not *as'chalta d'Geula* (the beginning of the redemption) but rather *seifa d'Galus* (the end of exile). The *Chazon Ish*'s view is well known, and Rabbi Kokis's explanation is certainly not the view of "our *gedolim*" (assuming that by "our" one means the readers of *The Jewish Observer*). "Our *gedolim*" have differed on this matter. Among the many *gedolim* that regarded the founding of the State of Israel as *as'chalta d'Geula* include Rav Yitzchak Herzog, Rav Ben Tziyon Uziel, Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlap, Rav Zvi Pesach Frank, Rav Shlomo Dovid Kahane, Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, Rav Yechiel Michal Tukachinsky, Rav Shlomo Dovid Kahane, Rav Zalman Auerbach (see their letter published in Rav Menachem Kasher's *Ha-Tekufah ha-Gedolah*, p. 330). Maybe Rabbi Kokis would disagree but I know that the readers of *The Jewish Observer* consider these great sages to also be "our *gedolim*" even if we may differ in some matters of *hashkafa*.

BINYOMIN MARKS
Brookline, MA.

STRIVING FOR ZION"— THROUGH PASSIVE FAITH OR ACTIVE DEFENSE?

To the Editor:

In his article "Striving For Zion" (Jan '91), Rabbi Ben Tzion Kokis compares Gush Emunim with the Baryonim; it is a halachic and historic distortion to call idealistic Jews

with the praise of the L-ord in their mouth and a two-edge sword in their hands "Baryomin." More need not be said on that.

I shall confine my retort to the Torah imperative of self defense (not standing idly by our brother's blood, killing a murderer before he kills you, and showing mercy when cruelty should be shown) versus restraint or *havlaga*.

The first rule of warfare is to know your enemy. Nowhere in Rabbi Kokis's article does he speak of *hishtadlus* (human acts incumbent on us). The belief in G-d or *Hashgacha Pratis* and repentance can become mere lip service without at least an intention of *hishtadlus*. Territorial concessions in the name of *havlaga* only make it easier for the Arabs to complete the dismembering of a militarily weak Jewish state abandoned by its so-called allies.

The Arabs in general and the "Palestinians" in particular were avid supporters of Hitler before, during and even after World War II. Today's "Palestinians" cheered with glee as Saddam Hussein's Scuds rained death on Jews.

How can Rabbi Kokis say: "The course of action that our *gedolim* prescribe often seems to be closer to that of the secularists"? Rabbi Kokis must certainly realize that the secular left and the anti-religious Reform Movement are the ones responsible for destroying the righteousness of the Jewish cause and not those who show *bitachon* and *emuna* in an *Eretz Yisroel Hashheleima*.

MAX KESSLER
Los Angeles, CA.

RABBI KOKIS RESPONDS:

I welcome the opportunity to clarify some points which apparently weren't clear, or were misconstrued, in "Striving for Zion."

Mr. Marks takes issue with what he felt were my personal leanings regarding the *gedolim's* attitudes towards the State of Israel. However, the issue with which I dealt was not if the *Medina* is the *as'chalta d'Geula* or not, but a more subtle, yet far-reaching, question: Does the sense that we are living in a unique period, hopefully on the threshold of *Geula*, legitimize a new agenda for our conduct? Or must we acknowledge the very real *Galus* aspect of our condition, which means that the anticipation of *Geula* must exist alongside traditional modes of behavior, and not replace them? I described the militant position as "an extension of the belief that we are living in a *Messianic Age*," meaning that a one-dimensional conviction that our era is *Messianic* creates the context for this strongly assertive orientation. The only point that I sought to clarify was the untenability of the specific position that the advent of this "new era" justifies deviations from traditional approaches.

I am not aware of any *gedolim* who endorse this militant agenda. At best, its vocal proponents have supreme confidence in their own interpretations of the "spirit" of earlier sources. Therefore it was in all innocence that I used the term "our" *gedolim*. No, not "my" *gedolim*, and not even "The Jewish Observer readership's *gedolim*," but *Klal Yisroel's gedolim*, who truly have the vision and judgment to form a balanced perspective on the complexities of our age.

Citing a "letter" in which eminent *Rabbonim* supposedly declare that *Medinas Yisroel* is *as'chalta d'geula* is an example of the uncritical thinking that my article was hoping to replace. (To a great degree, the fault lies not with Mr. Marks, but with the presentation in *HaTekufa HaGedolah*.) From Mr. Marks' de-

scription, it sounds as if these nine Rabbis sat down together and formulated a serious statement of basic belief; in reality, there simply is no such letter. Rather, the document in question is a campaign poster that was issued in 1949, apparently by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, to which were affixed the signatures of 196 rabbis from all parts of Israel. At that time, the first elections since the War of Independence were being held, and the Rabbinate was urging that voters cast their ballots for religious candidates. The text of the poster begins with the phrase: "Let us thank *Hashem* that we have been worthy...to see the first buds of the *as'chalta d'geula*, with the founding of *Medinas Yisroel*." It then proceeds to exhort Jews to insure the religious character of the state by voting wisely.

Is one supposed to believe that there was a major Synod of the close to two hundred signatories, who

succeeded in formulating a definitive statement of their precise convictions on a most delicate and volatile issue? Obviously, such a meeting never took place. Rather, the text—or the general concept of the circular—was most likely circulated quickly for signatures after being drafted, and has little historical, and even less religious, significance. In context, this was never intended to be an ideological declaration.

The Dear Brothers Account

Since working on the article, I had the opportunity to read Haggai Segal's book *Dear Brothers*. This is a description of the West Bank Jewish "Underground," written in an Israeli prison where Segal was serving time for his role in the attempted murder of several Palestinian militants. One of the recurring themes in *Dear Brothers* is the frustration and guilt which these undoubtedly

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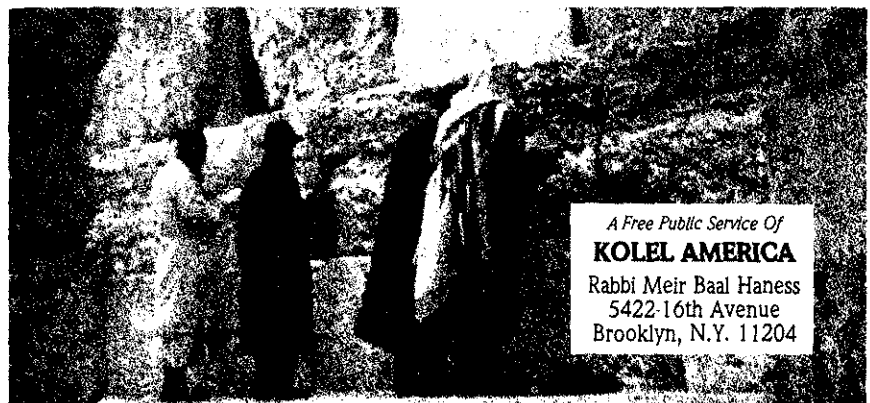
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sincere and idealistic men felt over not having any clear Rabbinic guidance.

For example, Segal writes that their group's general zeal for the Redemption crystallized into an active program of terror activity largely through the writings of one Shabtai Ben-Dov. Not a Rabbinic scholar by any means, Ben-Dov worked as a legal adviser to the Israeli government. But in his several books, he argued that a "revolutionary *geula* movement" should attempt to recast the State's secular self-image, and set the nation on the path toward Redemption. In a dramatic episode, a dying Ben-Dov exhorted a young disciple to proceed with the first step toward Redemption: "cleansing" the Temple Mount by dynamiting the Mosque that now occupies it. A determined group of West Bank settlers set about the complicated preparations, which only were thwarted when others were arrested for revenge attacks on Arabs, and word leaked about the Temple Mount plan.

It is easy to dismiss the "underground" as a few "crazies" who should not be regarded as representative of any responsible movement. I argue that such a position is inaccurate: the seeds of these extremes lie at the core of the religious activism of groups such as Gush Emunim. The difference is one of degree. A response to the central point of Mr. Kessler's letter will, I hope, help to clarify this point.

In my article I attempted to demonstrate that *gedolei Yisroel* have an articulate position that is fundamentally distinct both from the stands of the militant religious community, and of course from the secular camp. In noting that "superficially, the course of action that our *gedolim* prescribe often seems to be closer to that of the secularists," I certainly did not mean to say that *daas Torah* emanates in any way from the same sources as secular thought, or even that it overlaps with secular thought. There is indeed surface similarity in specific instances, but the basic approach of our *gedolim* is far, far removed from the secular approach.

The Place For Human Initiative

I don't know where Mr. Kessler saw in the article any tendency to downgrade *hishtadlus*, in the sense of resolute and appropriate action. As I clearly stated, acting responsibly to preserve Jewish life is a foremost halachic priority. But this is a far cry from saying that since the Israeli Army captured the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan Heights, it is therefore a *mitzva* to settle every square foot of Greater Israel regardless of the dangers to Jewish life such a policy might engender. Such a position—which is clearly articulated by Gush Emunim and the settlement movement—is based on the bestowing of a Messianic status upon the *Medina* and its armed forces. If the *Hashgacha* gave us more of *Eretz Yisroel*, they maintain, we must even lay our lives on the line to establish settlements, in order to thwart the attempts of the secularist Israeli government to think about exchanging land for peace. To refer again to *Dear Brothers*, Segal states that more incidents of bloodshed and loss of Jewish life resulted from the Gush Emunim insistence on their "right" to settle in the traditionally Jewish section of Chevron than would have occurred otherwise.

Which *gadol paskened* that this is appropriate *hishtadlus*? It is one thing to be firm in holding on to territory for defensive purposes, and to place the total burden of proof of peaceful intent on the Arab aggressors. But when jeopardy to Jewish life will result from settlement activity, then this is the painful reminder that we are still in a situation of *Galus*—made obvious by the fact that we can't yet live in every corner of *Eretz Yisroel*. To attempt to force the issue is merely a *frum* version of "*Kochi ve'otzem yadi*," a pietistic arrogance.

This distinction was brought into focus last year, when Rav Ovadya Yosef, שליט"א expressed publicly a *psak* that it would be permitted to yield some territory if we could be sure that this would result in a saving of Jewish lives (of course, this is a large "if"). This was not a statement of naive *havlaga* or appeasement, but of rigorous halachic priorities. Yet recall the attacks that were heaped

upon this *psak* from the militant religious sector! It is anathema to the "messianic mind" to even think of saving lives at the expense of our presumed mission of saving territory.

Gush Emunim and the Essenes-Baryonim Connection

Mr. Kessler expresses indignation over my associating the sincere men and women of Gush Emunim with the Baryonim. In using the Essenes-Baryonim connection as a parable for current events, I meant to show that the Baryonim were not just common thugs, but were motivated—albeit wrongly—by idealistic religious impulses. In the same sense, the conviction that we have a new, *Geula*-focused mandate creates a distorted climate in which many errors of judgment become legitimized. The comparison to our own age that I was seeking to spotlight was to the role of the Essenes, whose profound impact on the rebellion against Rome has usually been overlooked. The lesson of that time is that one can be deeply religious, idealistic, and wrong—dead wrong.

As a closing thought, may I add: For the Torah community, one of the most profound casualties of the Zionist movement is the fact that, in order to avoid the confusion that has been promulgated in Zion's name, the genuine role which the yearning for *Geula* should play in one's *avodas Hashem* has remained largely undeveloped. We can only reintegrate classic *D'rishas Tzion* into our lives if we go beyond superficial sloganism, and delve into the issues themselves with honesty and depth.

BEN TZION KOKIS

RABBI BICK, YESHIVA, AND ACCURACY IN HISTORY

To the Editor:


Shmuel Kessin's biography of the late Rabbi Moshe Bick (Jan.'91) contains a factual error. The article mentioned that he studied with Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at a time that Yeshiva College did not yet exist. Yeshiva Col-

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lege was opened in 1928, while "Rav Moshe" arrived in the United States in 1929 to become its senior Rosh Yeshiva. Until today, so many decades later, the senior Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshiva University continues to be a member of the Soloveitchik family.

(RABBI DR.) AARON RAKEFFET

Professor of Responsa Literature, Gruss Kollel of Y.U. Jerusalem.

Editorial Response:

When the young Rabbi Bick enrolled in the yeshiva, in 1926, the college did not exist; during his later years there, when he learned under Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik זצ"ל, college attendance was not yet mandatory. No other implication was intended. — N.W.

HAYSEED AT THE ROYAL FEAST: AN OUT-OF-TOWNER'S VIEW OF THE N.Y. WEDDING

To the Editor:

I live in a large metropolitan center with a sizable Orthodox Jewish population. Yet, whenever I come to New York for a wedding, I feel like the classical hayseed at the royal feast. When I return home, all my friends want to hear all about the latest

pichifkes of the New York Wedding.

For the record, my celebrations have been at Manhattan hotels and as well as at suburban country clubs, converted bowling alleys and brightly lit school lunchrooms. I will not criticize corner-cutting or excesses. I leave that to social commentators and *Rabbonim*. But I do have several sore-points that I feel should be aired before they become *de rigueur* in De Moines. May I use your columns to share my observations?

- I love photo albums, but must every-which permutation and combination of principals, *mechutanim*, in all possible poses, be shot while the guests while away the time between the Garden Veg. Soup and *le Grand Entrance*?

- After such care is taken to erect a light-proof *mechitza* to separate stomping boys from whirling girls, does it make sense for videos to switch back and forth between the two, for all to see? I know girls who stop rejoicing with the *kalla* when the camcorder aims their way; and I've seen men walk out of a screening when the dancing comes on. And then, I've seen some men not walk out. Can the girls' dancing be left on a separate section, or be optional?

- I resonate to the sound of Jew-

ish music. But at many a wedding, Arabic yodels alternate with an urgent disco beat, and suddenly our best and brightest lose all restraint. I've seen parents of the couple blush, and then shrug. "It's the band." Or: "The kids like it—I guess."

If the hosts like it, I have no argument with them. They paid for it. They can hire a rap artist, too, if they so choose. (I'll stay home.) But why do money-paying adults fancy themselves as captives of the professional service corps—caterer, musicians, photographers, etc.? Can't one stipulate tastes and preferences in advance? Can't one "stop the music" mid-beat? In our village, somehow we muster up "New York-assertiveness" on these items.

• One last point: If a wedding really starts at 6 p.m. Sunday, and the main course is served at 8:15, do all non-relatives over 26 still leave at 8:32? Are *Sheva Brachos* only for tardy rabbis who missed their *chupa* honors?

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST
(The writer of the above still wants to be invited.)

LOTS OF GOOD WISHES BUT NOSHIN' DOIN'

To the Editor:

The following note was delivered to us on Purim morning by my neighbors' children.

ארייליכען פֿרדיום

WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL UNDERSTAND

We were very moved by the recent article appearing in the *Adar* 5751/February 1991 issue of *The Jewish*

Observer (Vol. XXIV, Num 1) written by Dr. Bernard Fryshman entitled "The Russians Are Coming, Let's Go Hide." He makes a very clear point about our priorities, and in our opinion he is right on target. We have therefore decided this Purim to cut down considerably on our mishlo'ach manos list and donate the money we would normally spend for mishlo'ach manos to help Russian children attend yeshivos. We hope that you will understand, and in this zechus you also will be joining in this mitzva.

Yanki and Sarah and Family

I would sign my name, but do not wish to violate my neighbors' request for privacy.

Kensington, N.Y.

CUTTING BACK FOR MITZVOS, NOT FROM MITZVOS

To the Editor:

Dr. Bernard Fryshman's "The Russians Are Coming" (Feb. '91) was very timely and contains many things that need to be said. May Hashem grant that we rise to the challenge and ten years from now not look back at yet another opportunity missed.

I would, however, like to take issue with the thrust of some of the solutions that he suggests to raise more money from the Torah community. While I can agree on his calling for less vacation trips, more simplicity in our living, less cultivating of our lawns, his call for reducing our spending on mitzvos would seem to be at odds with the way Chazal taught us to prioritize our expenditures.

The Torah tells us *Zeh Kaili v'anveihu*, which the Gemora explains to mean "beautify Him with mitzvos." In Tractate *Bava Kama* (Daf 9) Chazal tell us that for a mitzva, one can spend additionally up to a third of a value of the mitzva itself to beautify the mitzva. Throughout history, we have seen cases of *Gedolei Torah* who spent vast sums of money to beautify mitzvos. Many Chassidic tales are told of Rebbes who went far beyond their means to spend extra money on mitzvos. (Interestingly, many of these stories focus on *esrogim*, the very "luxury" that Dr. Fryshman has chosen to discuss.)

It would seem that there are very few of us who cannot find ways to make cuts in their personal lifestyles. Let us cut back by all means to have money for the critical needs of *Klal Yisroel*. But let us cut back on our personal needs, not on Hashem's mitzvos.

ARYEH L. COOK
Brooklyn, N.Y.

CORRECTION:

In the review of "The First Seven Days: A Practical Guide to the Traditional Jewish Observance of Shiva for Mourners, Their Families and Friends," by Dr. Meir Wikler. (JO, Dec. '90), the reviewer failed to mention that this pamphlet, published and sponsored by the United Hebrew Community Of New York, Adas Yisroel of New York, has been made available free of charge.

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Yitzchok Kasziner of Antwerp, recipient of the Rav Aharon Kotler Memorial Award.

The unity that prevails within Agudath Israel of America's broad coalition of Torah Jews will be the dominant motif Sunday, May 12, as some 1500 rabbinic leaders and lay activists representing diverse segments of American Orthodox Jewry join in the movement's annual dinner, this year celebrating 69 years of Agudah activism on the American scene. The event takes place at the New York Hilton in midtown Manhattan.

The dinner caps a year of extraordinary activity by Agudath Israel of America in a time when sweeping historic events were being played out. As the crisis in the Persian Gulf heated up over the year and eventually broke out into war, Agudath Israel of America was at the forefront of an unusual outpouring of prayer and expression of solidarity with the Jews of *Eretz Yisroel*.

It brought to Jews throughout the world the fervent calls of the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* for increased *tefillas*, which rose to a pitch with the *Yom Kip-*

pur Katan on the eve of the deadline for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. Agudath Israel was also charged with the mission of disseminating and helping implement throughout the country the call of the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* for across-the-board improvement in the quality of Jewish spiritual life as a *zechus* for *Eretz Yisroel*.

At the same time, even as conditions in the Soviet Union were becoming more frightening, Agudath Israel was expanding its reach-out efforts to Jews not yet able to leave, drawing on ten years of experience in Russia going back to the pre-glasnost era.

The formal opening of the Agudath Israel Moscow Office in March and the *chanukas ha-bayis* of the new yeshiva in Moscow established by the Union of Jewish Communities of the USSR in conjunction with Agudath Israel were

indeed among the highlights of the year for the movement.

The work of the Agudath Israel Washington Office will also be feted. Among its successful efforts this year was the inclusion of provisions in the new federal child care package that should spell millions of dollars in aid for religious families. Other major foci of its work have been legislative efforts for the restoration of religious freedoms struck down by the Supreme Court, and for the first federal kosher consumer bill.

Other highpoints to be celebrated include the introduction of Agudath Israel's "halachic living will," enabling observant Jews to ensure that if they are incapacitated, medical decisions made for them will follow the principles of *halacha*; a vast increase in the numbers of Jews studying *Daf Yomi*; and the mushrooming of projects initiated by Agudath Israel's Shoroshim division for Soviet Jews arriving in America.

ON THE DAIS

The dais at dinner will be graced by the presence of some of the foremost *roshai yeshiva*, Chassidic *rebbe*s, and rabbinic figures in the country, representing the guiding spirit behind Agudath Israel's Torah action coalition. Greetings on behalf of the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* will be brought to the assemblage by Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, Novominsker *Rebbe*.

Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel of America, will present the 1991 Humanitarian Award to the Attorney General of the United States, the Honorable Dick Thornburgh.

Mr. Yitzchok Kasziner of Antwerp, Belgium, a world renowned philanthropist on behalf of Torah causes, will be honored at the dinner as the "International Torah Ambassador of the Year," and presented with the HaGaon Rav Aharon Kotler Memorial Award.

Mr. Ephraim Chaimovitz of Boro Park will be presented with the Reb Elimelech Tress Memorial Award, as Shearis HaPleita "Man of the Year." Mr. Eli S. Hirsch of Monsey, New York, will receive the Moreinu Yaakov Rosenheim Memorial Award for outstanding service to Agudath Israel.

Nine prominent Orthodox activists will receive the organization's Avodas Hakodesh Community Service Awards: Mr. David Brodie, accepting the William K. Freedman Memorial Award on behalf of Ahavas Yitzchok - Agudath Israel of Wesley Hills; Rabbi Akiva Chill; Mr. Mayer Gewirtzman; Rabbi Pinchos Goldberg; Rabbi Yosef Handler; Rabbi Mordechai Mehlman; Mr. Max Proforske; Rabbi Gershon Tannenbaum; and Mr. Menashe Weissman.

Chairing this year's dinner is Mr. Avi Fishoff. Co-chairmen of the event are Abraham Tikotsky and Mendy Pollak. Shlomo Chaimovitz and Yaakov Spitzer are chairmen of the commemorative journal to be published for the occasion. ■

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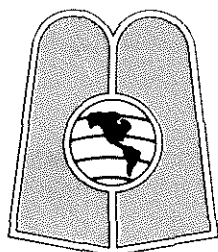
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