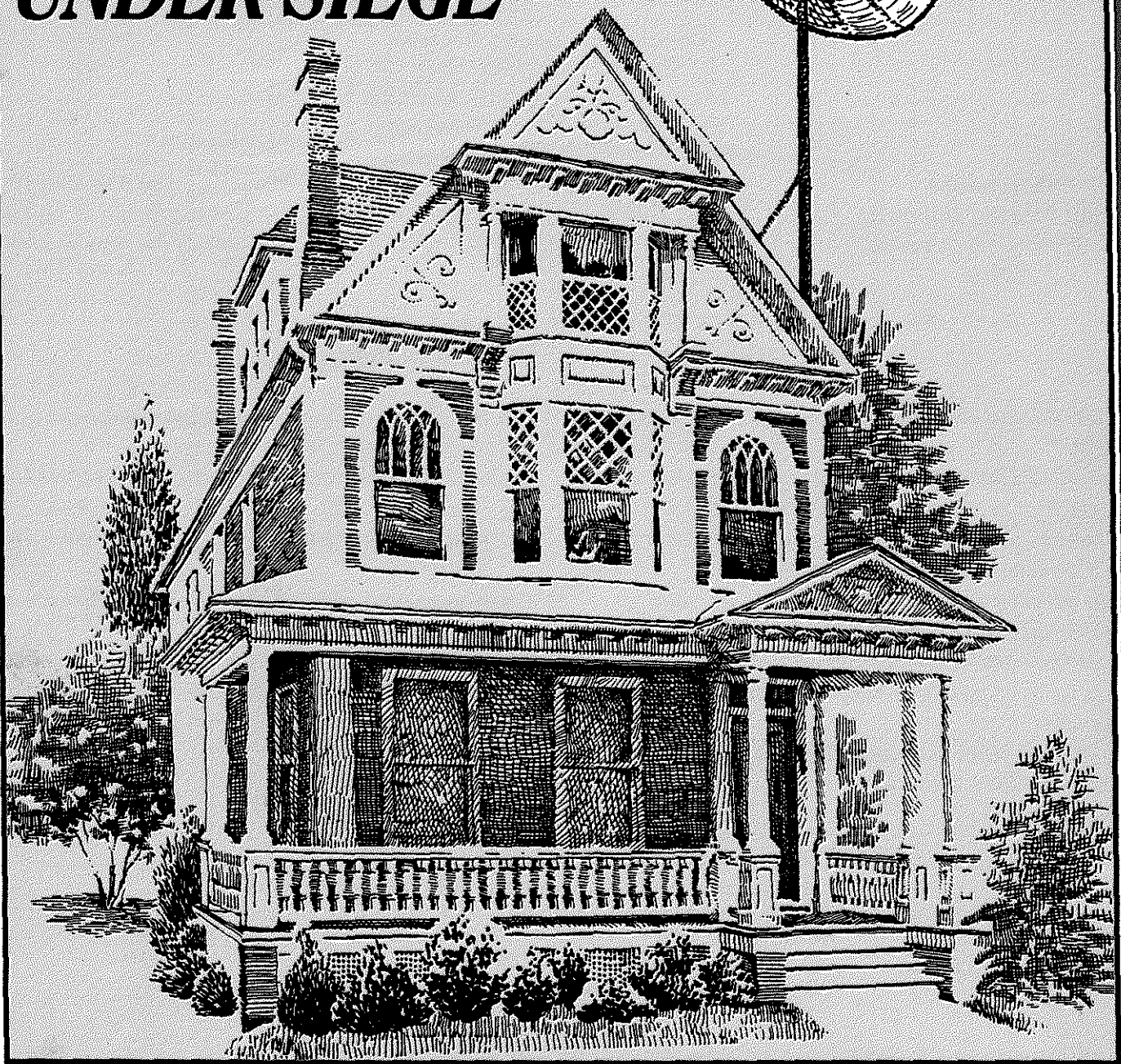
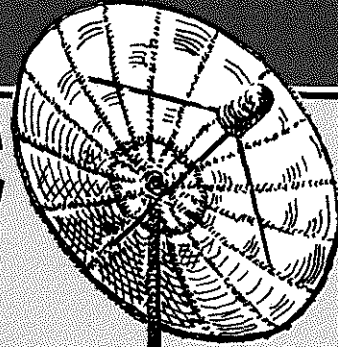


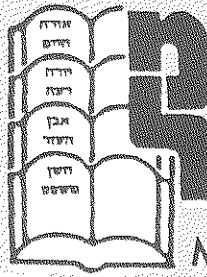
THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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THE JEWISH HOME *UNDER SIEGE*



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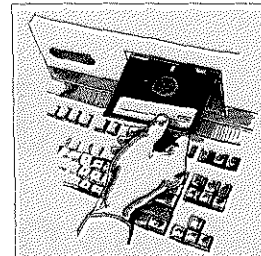
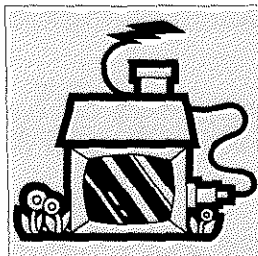
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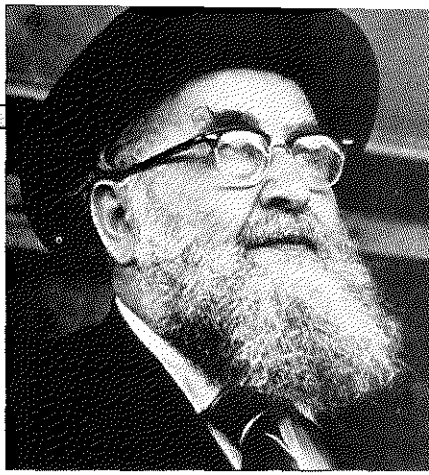
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The Jewish Home Under Siege

Fighting Off The Forces of Cultural Assimilation

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Invasive influences threaten the sanctity of our community. We may take comfort in that, as a community, we number some six million Jews in the United States. Less than 7% of them, however, consider themselves Orthodox. As such, then, we Torah Jews are a group under siege, with the vast majority of our brethren estranged from our heritage, undergoing a spiritual Holocaust of catastrophic proportions. Let us bear in mind that this is not happening under some atheistic dictatorship, but right here in the United States, within the framework of a benign democracy with full religious freedom for all. Nothing should play heavier on our minds than the concern over how to save our lost brothers and sisters from oblivion, and bring them back into the fold.

The classical case of thoroughly assimilated Jews are the *Misyavrim* of the time of the Chanuka miracle—the Hellenists, who worked hand in hand with *Yavan* (ancient Greece), helping them carry out their evil designs.¹ Jewish collaborators were highly influential, politically and socially, and

propagated the slogan: "We have no share in the G-d of Israel" *אין חלק לנו באלהינו*, with full cooperation of the Greeks.

Ultimately, of course, the oppression of *Malchus Yavan harsha'a* collapsed together with its Hellenist collaborators, and the Jews were treated to a glorious display of Divine miracles, which spelled a decisive victory of light over darkness—a victory without which *Klal Yisroel* would no longer exist *אין*.

A CONTEMPORARY COUNTERPART

We have, in our time, experienced seventy years of a similar, almost-fatal *gezeiras hashmad* in the former USSR. We

are also aware that Soviet oppressors included quite a few *Misyavrim*—the so-called *Yevesehtsia*, who out-did their non-Jewish Communist comrades in their merciless suppression of religion and belief. And we also are witness, in our day, to the total bankruptcy of the system that they initiated. At the same time, we see how the grandchildren of those *Misyavrim* of seventy years ago are coming back in droves to the *chadorim*, to the *beis hamidrash*, in keeping with the prophecy: "And the sons will return to their boundaries." However, let us beware of a gross mistake. The atheistic power structure of Communism has not collapsed. Only in the former USSR can one behold the miracle of *yisporu kol po'alei aven*—the disin-

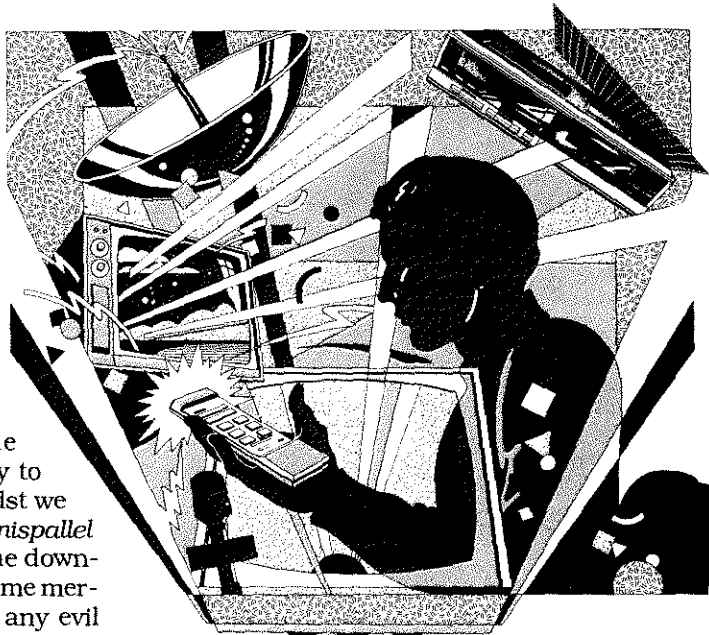
¹The Greeks were not always characterized as evil. In the time of Alexander the Great, when Shimon HaTzaddik was the leader of the Jews in Israel, Greece was living up to the *beracha* bestowed by Noach on its progenitor. Yefes: "Yaft Elokim layefes...May G-d extend Yefes' [boundaries] but He will dwell in the tents of Sheim" (*Beretshis* 9,27). During this glorious era, *Hashem* granted the Greeks special wisdom, imbuing them with a keen sense of beauty and esthetics, opening their minds, as it were, to acquire scientific insights into nature. The ancient Greeks developed important discoveries in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and government, and *Chazal* considered it befitting that the beauty of the Greek language dwell in the "Tents of Sheim"—a reference to the *Makom Hamikdash*. But then came a transition period when the glorious Greek empire gradually turned into *Malchus Yavan harsha'a*, as their preoccupation with the pursuit of this-world's pleasures eventually brought them to the worship of the animal aspects of the human body. The long-term result was a cultural atmosphere that fostered artistic projections of fantasies of the *yeitzer hara*—a fascination with physical lust in all its various aberrations. This was followed, historically, by the cruel persecution of the *kedusha* (sanctity) of the Jewish way of life, beginning with the prohibition of *Shabbos* observance, *Rosh Chodesh* and *mila*, subsequently developing into a *gezeiras hashmad*—aimed at totally alienating the Jews from Torah and *mitzvos*.

The above article is based on excerpts from an address by **Rabbi Shimon Schwab**, א"י ש"ש, Rav of K'thal Adath Jeshurun of Washington Heights, N.Y., delivered at the 69th National Convention of Agudath Israel of America.

tegration of the perpetrators of evil. But in China, for instance, with its population of one billion souls, Communism is still very much alive. The *malchus harsha'a* there is still in full control.²

Hakadosh Baruch Hu endows us with the ability to think, and so we come to recognize that just as we are witnessing the total defeat of the former *Misyavnim* in Russia, the same will happen eventually to the *Misyavnim* in whose midst we are now living. We are only *mispallel* with our entire heart that the downfall of our *Misyavnim* shall come mercifully, peacefully, without any evil befalling them; rather, we hope for a complete reversal of their stance, initiated by our modern-day *chaltuzim*—the steadily developing army of *baalei teshuva*—who are finding their way back to the *Ribbono Shel Olam* before our very eyes.

So here we are, drowning in almost a bottomless swamp of assimilation. The vast majority of our people are fast losing their identity as Jews, and they are aided and abetted by our modern-day *Misyavnim*, self-appointed spokesmen and spokeswomen who hasten the process of radical spiritual extinction ל"ר.³ We are all aware that "in those times, in



If we but have the courage, the commitment to *emes* and love of Torah, to follow the Torah leadership of our generation, we too can merit an overwhelming victory over the forces of darkness in our time.

these days," the victory was won not by human strength and ingenuity, but by *mesiras nefesh* and *kiddush Hashem borabbin*, which made our forefathers worthy of extraordinary Divine intervention, providing us with a light, which still guides our steps. If we but have the courage, the commitment to *emes* and love of Torah, to follow the Torah leadership of our generation, we too can merit an overwhelming victory over the forces of darkness in our time.

SELF-EXAMINATION, TO MERIT "YESHUOS"

We would like to be worthy of such *yeshuos*, but this calls for some painful self-examination. Instead of returning to our practice of whipping, again and

again, the dead horses of Reform and Conservatism, let us take a close, candid look at ourselves. This must also take precedence over our protestations against the outrageous proclamations of the more militant "centrist" leaders, who in any case seem to be deaf to our cries of protest.

The *halacha* states that an *avuka*—a torch, which is a combination of many wicks, like the candle we use for *havdala*—is unfit for the pre-Pesach search for *chametz*; a single flame, coming from one wick, is more suitable for a close search. Similarly, our own spiritual inventory to determine whether we are truly worthy of the *nissim* and *yeshu'os* for which we are *mispallel* calls for a private self-examination, by pin-point illumination, quite apart from the public, fiery responses to the constant public attacks against *kavod haTorah* and basic *emuna* in *Misyavnim* newspapers and journals. Let us first make a *bedikas chametz*, so to speak, in our own homes, so as to sweep out any traces of assimilation from our own private corners. Otherwise, we may not merit the enormous *siyata diShmaya*—Divine assistance—which we need so desperately to withstand the onslaught of the two-fold dangers that threaten our physical and spiritual existence. Perhaps it is because we unknowingly harbor the germs of assimilation within ourselves, that we have not been too successful in convincing others to change their wrong ways and attitudes.

² Why is China flourishing while the USSR has disintegrated? For us Torah Jews there is one simple answer: In contrast to the USSR, China never interfered with the observance of Torah and *mitzvos*. In China, they never closed *yeshivos* and *chadorim*. In China, they never prohibited *shechita*, *mila*, *mikva*, and so forth. The reason, of course, is simple; there were no Jews there for the Chinese to persecute. Certainly, one day, China's downfall will come, in *Hashem's* own time...when the *Malchus Shomayim* will be revealed in the world. But in Russia, which had unleashed a spiritual war to the finish against millions of Jews, there is today a state of political chaos bordering on anarchy, and the once powerful leaders of this accursed country are now begging for financial handouts from capitalistic European and American governments for their hungry citizens.

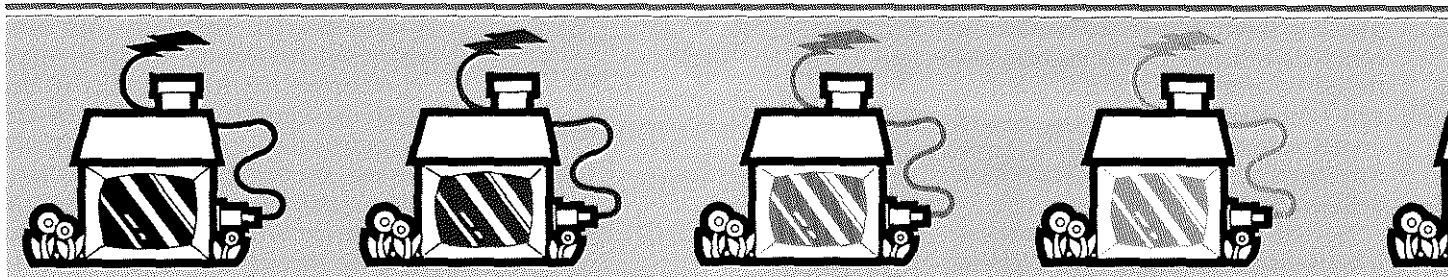
³ Just two examples: The majority of all Jewish marriages are mixed, bringing together Jews and gentiles, performed jointly by Jewish and Gentile *galachim*. Furthermore (please forgive my lack of delicacy), gay and lesbian synagogues and clergy people are being legitimized, and given full recognition in the *Misyavnim* Temples and by the *Misyavnim* media. All this is shadowed by the almost total indifference of the Jewish establishment.

A DECLARATION OF WAR

It is my conviction that the most subversive influence is the presence of television sets in our homes. Unfortunately, a great many of otherwise Torah observant Jews, whose children are enrolled in *yeshivos* and Bais Yaakov schools, are regularly *kove'a ittim le* television, night after night, and they do not see anything wrong with it. We must face the incontrovertible fact: television is a dangerous object of the first magnitude. When the set is turned on, the Jewish home, which is supposed to be a *mikdash me'at*—a miniature sanctuary—loses this distinction, because the *Shechina* is no longer present from that moment onward.

We must face the incontrovertible fact: television is a dangerous object of the first magnitude. When the set is turned on, the Jewish home, which is supposed to be a *mikdash me'at*—a miniature sanctuary—loses this distinction, because the *Shechina* is no longer present from that moment onward.

try into the Jewish home, and drive out the *kedusha*. For instance, Jewish "children" curious to witness a Catholic Mass on December 25 in a cathedral, need but turn a knob, and—presto!—indelibly imprinted onto their young, impressionable minds is a form of foreign worship, in which they participate as enraptured onlookers. But not every child is going to sit through the seasonal pageantry. So one just turns the knob a bit more, and is treated to a potpourri of murder, torture, sadistic violence, spilled blood—the whole ugliness of crime, with all horrid details graphically displayed....And then one turns the knob a little further. This time, we are exposed to an explosion of *pritzus* and *znoose* (promiscuity and licen-



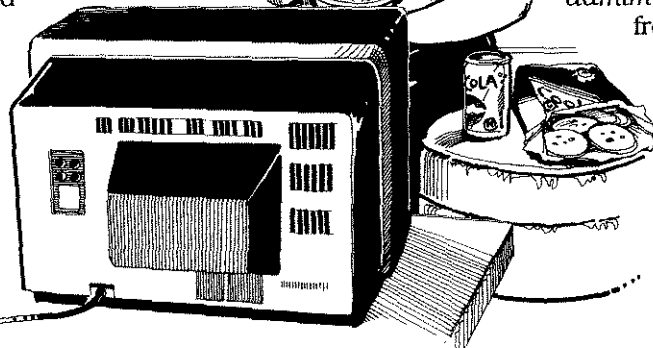
Some decades ago, when television was in its infancy, some people considered it harmless because no hint of filth or smut was allowed on the screen. Actually, programming was not so harmless even then, primarily because it was a cause for widespread *bitul Torah* for men; in addition, it was a medium for slowly and gradually introducing non-Jewish concepts, foreign ideologies, as well as non-Torah modes of behavior into the minds and hearts of the viewers—men, women and children alike.

Television leaves a much deeper impression than reading a newspaper or a book does. Sitting in front of the screen, you no longer think for yourself; the thinking is done for you. You simply absorb, uncritically, whatever your eyes see and your ears hear. The assimilatory influence of television is thus much more insidious than that of

other media, when our critical faculties are in full function.

A WIDE-OPEN WINDOW TO IMMORALITY

All this was already true years ago. But today, how blind can one be not to realize that television is a wide-open window, letting in to our homes the foul odor of the immoral and amoral atmosphere that prevails outside? The full range of *avoda zara*, *gilui arayus* & *shefichas damim* have free en-



tiousness), normal and abnormal, the whole arsenal of the *yeitzer hara*, in full realistic color....Fascination just might give way to revulsion, so we'll turn the knob again, and now we may see a harmless advertisement for a new product. But watching the commercial, one is again subjected to a lethal dose of *pritzus*, which penetrates deeply into the core of a sensitive Jewish *neshama*. Gone is the sense of shame, gone is the sense of *busha*—our precious legacy from our forebears. Nobody blushes anymore. No wonder the newest fashions, which violate basic considerations of modesty, gain entry into our homes without too much resistance!

By the same token, the mind becomes poisoned ever so slowly by an emphasis on power, wealth, and the relentless pursuit of gratification of the senses. Slowly, even seeds of doubt in the veracity of *emuna peshuta* may be creeping into us, creating a blase' attitude towards the sanctity of *Hashem* and His Torah.

The excuses are well known, and

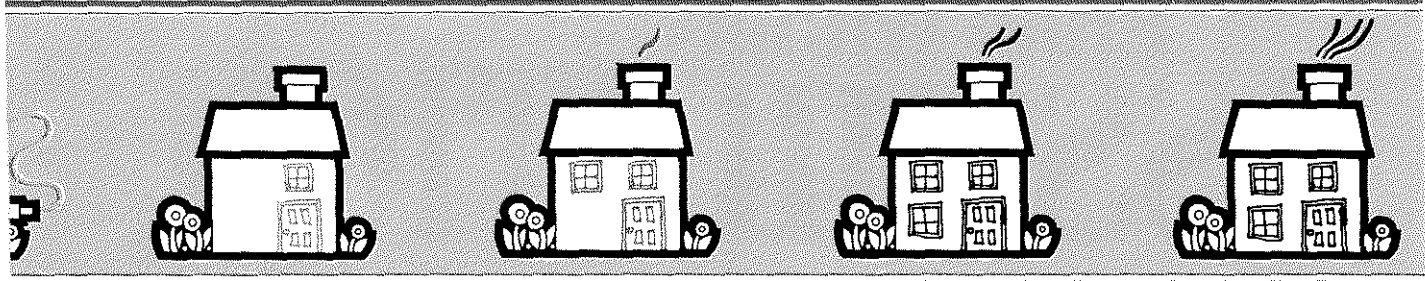
worn out:

Some programs are very educational, others only deal with science, or politics, or sports, or finances, and so forth. But we all know that the same information is available on the radio or in the newspapers, without exposure to the filth that is projected on the screen. In brief, a television set is just as harmless as having a loaded gun in the house. Sometimes it may not go off, but the risk is one of life-threatening proportions. How else can we explain the paradox of *frum*, faithful, Jewish wives and mothers, with modest coverings on their heads, sporting the latest fashions, which were created by famous designers to arouse the *yeitzer hard*? The nobility of Jewish daughters is likened to

The excuses are well known, and worn out:
Some programs are very educational, others only deal with science, or politics, or sports, or finances, and so forth. But we all know that the same information is available on the radio or in the newspapers, without exposure to the filth that is projected on the screen.

without the sights and sounds of a decaying civilization in their homes, and will continue to grow in the spirit of *ma'alin bekodesh ve'lo moridin*—one must endeavor to grow in sanctity rather than backslide.

We may be few in number, we may be weak in influence and power. But in the world of *nisstn*, political, military, financial and economic strength does not count. Purity and devotion to Torah do. These past few decades, Agudath Israel of America has made such impressive progress that it borders on the incredible—due to its commitment to Torah values, not because of numerical or financial strength. But to belong to the few calls for courage. There's a natural tendency within all of us,



Bnos Melachim, and the concept of *tzenius* in clothing was not only meant to protect females from embarrassment, but also to protect males from *hirhurim ra'im* (indecent thoughts).

The outrage of television is closely related to pornographic cassettes, easily available in video stores. These stores have been aptly described as "*Pis'cha shel Gehinnom*—the Gateway to Gehinnom." Enough said.... What are we men and women going to answer when we will have to give an accounting of our lives and our actions one day before the *beis din shel ma'ala*—the Heavenly Tribunal? Let us identify Agudath Israel of America with the banishing of television from the *frum* community! Imagine how many hours of *limud haTorah* will be gained for us! How many hours of *kiruv rechokim*, how many hours of *askanus be'tzorchel tzibbur*, how many hours of *ahavas chessed* this will gain for us! And imagine for a moment the newly found light of *kedusha* that will illuminate the

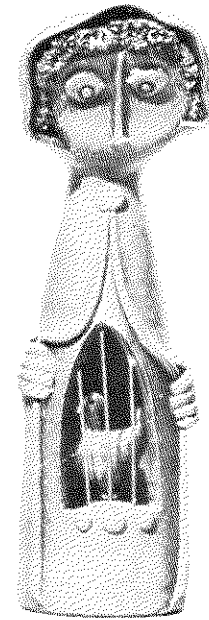
mikdash me'at, resulting from the darkening of the TV screens in the Jewish homes!

NEEDED: PATIENCE, DIPLOMACY, AND COURAGE

We must admit that it will require an abundance of patience, a strong dose of good taste, and a good measure of consistency to overcome potential hurdles which might emerge by considerations of *Shalom Bayis*. One must proceed with respectful caution rather than take a sledge hammer and smash the box into smithereens. The first step is to just turn the set off. Should somebody insists on turning it back on, leave the room. All that counts is the firm resolve not to watch under any circumstances. Eventually it will fade out of your life by itself. But our community must go on record that we have declared a war against television, that we are extending encouragement to all those who will do

even in Orthodox circles, to want to be part of the mainstream. People would rather follow the rule: "Look and think as the others do." Nobody wants to be pointed out as an exception or an extremist or to be labeled a fanatic. Far from fanaticism, our pride stems from the fact that we do not deviate from G-d's Torah; we are Torah Jews, living in consonance with the *Shulchan Aruch*. We are guided by *daas Torah*, the *p'sak halacha* of our *Gedolei Torah*, who are themselves the faithful *talmidim* of the *Gedolei Torah* of yesterday, and so on, upward, generation to previous generation, back to Sinai. We may be a minority, but we take deep pride in that ours is a very forceful and very idealistic minority, inspired with *mesiras nefesh* for *emes*, and driven by compelling dedication to *harbotzas haTorah*, with a keen sense of love and *achrayus* for *Klal Yisroel*. Being that kind of minority, we live with the *bitachon* that *Hashem* will let us ultimately be victorious. ■

FIGHTING From Within ASSIMILATION



MITZVA OBSERVANCE AND EVIL CONDUCT: NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

The theme of combatting the forces of assimilation carries the implication of "us versus them." Perhaps it would be more accurate to characterize the conflict as "us versus us." This insight was pithily summarized in a comment I once heard from my late *Rosh Hayeshiva* זצ"ל, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman: *Rashi* cites Yaakov Avinu as saying: "Im Lavan garti, v'taryag mitzvos shamarti v'lo lomadeti mi'maasav hara'im—I lived with Lavan, I kept the 613 mitzvos, and I didn't learn from his evil deeds." The

The above article is based on a speech delivered at the 69th National Convention of Agudath Israel of America. **Rabbi Yissochar Frand** says a *shiur* in Yeshiva Ner Israel in Baltimore, as well as a weekly *shiur* in the Agudath Israel of Baltimore (see JO February '87). Rabbi Frand's article, "Where There's a Rabbinic Will, There's a Halachic Way: Fact or Fiction?" was featured in JO, Oct., '90.

My children are receiving a vastly superior education to that which I received in a day school, a generation ago, but the America that I grew up in was safer than the America our children are growing up in.

Rosh Hayeshiva noted that the assurance that he learned no evil was not a superfluous statement; apparently one can be a *shomer Torah u'mitzvos*, and nonetheless learn from Lavan's evil ways. Let us see how this might describe our contem-

porary situation:

Without a doubt, my children are receiving a vastly superior education to that which I received in a day school, what with the proliferation of intensive *yeshivos ketanos* and Bais Yaakov schools. One might add, however, that the America that I grew up in was safer than the America our children are growing up in. There was a survey done in the 1940's in regard to the discipline problems plaguing America's schools. They were noted in descending order: Number one: talking; #2: chewing gum; #3: making noise; #4: getting out of turn in line; #5: wearing improper clothing; #6: not putting paper in the waste baskets. The same study done in the 1980's, elicited the following list of problems: Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, robbery, and assault. That should be a fair indication of what has happened to America in the last forty years. The problem underlying all these

changes, a leading sociologist wrote, is that America has lost its sense of shame, and people are no longer ashamed of what they do. If one had any doubts regarding this, then the Thomas Supreme Court hearings should have dispelled them. If foul-mouth confessionals can be uttered in our Senate, for men and women and children across the entire country to hear, is there any vestige of shame left in the national psyche?

Many years ago, when Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky זצ"ל was in Baltimore, visiting his children for the Succos holiday, a friend invited him to tour Washington D.C. It was a miserably hot and humid day, and Reb Yaakov took off his *kapotte*. When they came to the gallery of the U.S. Senate, however, Reb Yaakov put his *kapotte* back on. He explained that the Senate represents "*shpitz malchus*—the epitome of sovereignty—of America, and we must respect the dignity of America's sovereignty."...I wonder: after the Thomas hearings, would Reb Yaakov still have put on his *kapotte* to enter the Senate?

LOST: AN INNATE SENSE OF SHAME

Unfortunately, we are learning from the ways of Lavan, and we, members of *Klal Yisroel*, are losing our sense of *busha*. This loss should not be underestimated. The *Gemora* (Yevamos 69b) identifies the three character traits of *Klal Yisroel* as *rachmanim*, *bayshanim*, *v'gomlei chassadim*—they are compassionate, they are kind, and they have an innate sense of shame. The *Maharal* of Prague explains that we have each of these traits as a legacy from the *Avos*: Avrohom imbued us with his selfless *chessed*. We are *rachmanim* thanks to Yaakov. It was Yitzchok, who represents *yira*—awe before G-d—who gave us *busha*, because the prelude to *yiras Shomayim* is *busha*—the capacity to know and to feel one's utter insignificance in the presence of a Greater Being. And what is the prerequisite of *busha*? The first *R'ma* in *Shulchan Aruch* tells us that one must feel a sense of "*Shivisi Hashem l'negdi samid*—I pic-



A society without a sense of shame, says the *Maharal*, is an immoral society. Its members must sin, because when there are no inhibitions and people are indifferent to society's standards of decency, a person can act on any impulse.

ture G-d before me at all times." From that point of awareness, continues the *R'ma*, one can embark on one's *avoda*, one's Divine service, "with awe before G-d, and a constant sense of *busha*." Not only must we be on guard to protect our innate *busha*, we must be wary of the alternative,

which comes in its absence. The alternative? *Azus*—brazenness. And Rabbi Yehuda ben Taima says: "*Az panim l'Gehinnom*—the brazen one is destined for *Gehinnom*" (*Avos* 5,24).

The famed *mussar* personality of the previous generation, Rabbi Elya Lopian זצ"ל, highlighted the extra risk involved in being an *az panim*. He asked, "How can a character trait sentence someone to *Gehinnom*? Can't he recognize his failings and repent?" To which he answered: "It's not that the *az panim* cannot do *teshuva*. He won't do *teshuva*. In his view, he's always right."

In a society where people lack *busha*, there is a tremendous amount of *azus*. And when *busha* is replaced by *azus*, a person feels *I can do whatever I want, I can wear whatever I want, I can transgress any laws I don't agree with*. Anything—and everything—goes. Indeed, the *Maharal* says that a society without a sense of shame is perforce an immoral society. Its members must sin, because when there are no inhibitions and people are indifferent to society's standards of decency, a person can act on any impulse. Does "a society that can utter anything, write anything, sing anything, wear anything" sound familiar? That is a telling description of Western culture at the end of the 20th Century.

Even the non-Jewish world has found the situation catastrophic. To quote the Chaplain of the U.S. Senate:

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HITTING HOME

The problem of *busha* leading way to *azus* is cropping up in our sheltered community. There is a crisis in many of our schools, a lack of *derech eretz*. Children are insolent, disrespectful, and cynical—*mevatlim*. In some classes, everyone wants to be the comedian, the “star” that has the one-liner to tell the *Rebbe* in front of the class. Schools like these become a *moshav leitzim* rather than a *makom Torah*.

We try to shut out the ubiquitous

influence of the market place, yet children do pick up this attitude of *azus*—because they often do not have the opportunity to see us acting with *derech eretz*. In earlier, less mobile times, grandparents lived close by. There was a built-in *limud*—a vital object lesson—when a forty-year-old father listened to the *Zaide* and the children witnessed that inspiring, instructive lesson in respect for elders. Today the *Zaides* are distant and our children do not see us listening to our parents.

Nor do they see us listening to our

Rabbonim, *Roshei Yeshivos*, and *Admorim*. Periodically, the *Rabbonim* mount the *bima* and give us *mussar*, but we don't listen. Do our children hear us say: “We can't do this because the *Rav* told us that we shouldn't”? In many *minyanim*, the *baale battim* say, “We don't need a *Rav*. I can look up the *halacha* myself, thank you.” But we do need a *Rav* if only to enable us to tell a child—“The *Rav* says we must do this...The *Rav* forbids that”...if only to teach our children *derech eretz* by example. A gross manifestation of this loss of *busha* (as *Rav Schwab* mentioned) is that we are suffering in our *middas hatzenius*. The lack of *tzenius* in women's fashion is not only the fault of the women. If a husband expresses disfavor over improper clothing, his wife will probably not want to displease him, and she will not pursue the latest brazen fashion. *Dayan Dunner* of London tells of a group that had approached *Reb Moshe* regarding a particular mode of dress. When *Reb Moshe* answered that it was unequivocally forbidden, they asked, “Why don't you write it in a *Kol Koreh* (public proclamation)?”

Reb Moshe answered, “*Vos zei zogen in Paris iz shtarker fun mein psak*—Edicts from Paris carry more weight than my halachic decision.” It is time to stand up and be counted: who will determine our dress? *Reb Moshe Feinstein*, or *lehavdil* some decadent designer in Paris?

GROPING FOR A SENSE OF KEDUSHA

One ramification of our lack of *busha* is that we are in danger of becoming a *Klal Yisroel* without a sense of *kedusha*—a desire for sanctity. If we cease to be the *Am Kadosh*, *prishus* (abstention from excess indulgence) will become a lost art.

The message of “*Kedoshim tihiyu*” is: Abstain. The late *Mashgiach* of Ner Israel, *Rabbi Dovid Kronglas* זצ”ל, was keenly aware of the enormous contrast between the spartan “*Europsh*” life and lax American society. To his finely-tuned sense of *prishus*, drinking soda on *Rosh Hashana* was totally inappropriate. Even ketchup was an indulgence.

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Trends in our milieu have been in the opposite direction. How far have we strayed from the sensibilities of a Reb Dovid! Indeed, as a community we are wallowing in excesses. Excess in food, cars, houses, home furnishings, vacations, just to name a few.

Unfortunately, should we not be an *Am Kadosh*, Hashem would not want to dwell in our midst. The Chofetz Chaim, in his introduction to *Sefer Geder Olam*, writes: "The *pasuk* says: 'Ki Hashem Elokecha mis'halech bakerev machanecha lehatzilcha—v'lo yireh becha ervas davar. G-d walks within your camp to save you—and He should see nothing shameful in Your midst.' By the same token, when there is no *kedusha*, *hester panim* prevails (G-d conceals His Face from us)."

We try to shut out the ubiquitous influence of the market place, yet children do pick up this attitude of *azus*—because they often do not have the opportunity to see us acting with *derech eretz*.

This comment of the Chofetz Chaim may offer us an insight into the reason that we might suffer *tzaros* when there is no apparent reason for us to be so afflicted. We do not have a *navi* or *kohain* (prophet or priest) to explain the causes for our suffering. Yet G-d states clearly that He does not want to walk or remain within *Klal Yisroel* when it lacks *busha* and a sense of *tzenius*.

So what can we do? Should we throw up our hands and conclude that the situation is hopeless? I suggest perhaps a two point counter-attack. Firstly, let us — as Rabbi Mattisyahu Solomon pointed it out—take an indelible image from the Gulf

War and employ it, at least psychologically: the *cheder atum*—the sealed room. We must create our own *cheder atum*—a spiritual barrier that filters out the poisonous environment that surrounds us. We have to realize that it can be hazardous to breathe the outside air without analyzing its toxic potential.

Secondly, we must depart from our complacent acceptance of the *status quo*, and begin to yearn for the *Ge'ula*. To be sure, these United States are a precious haven for us. My parents, for example, had no

where to turn when they fled the Nazi onslaught in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1939—no where but this blessed land. The U.S.A., indeed, has been most hospitable, but our true salvation must be one of a spiritual nature. We must feel it and we must crave it, rejecting the brazenness of a shameless, materialistic society. The next time we take *Siddur* in hand to daven *Shemoneh Esrei*, and pray for *Ge'ula*, our words should reflect an inner thirst and express our desperate need for the complete spiritual redemption. ■

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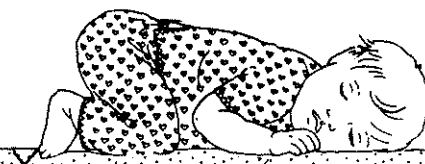
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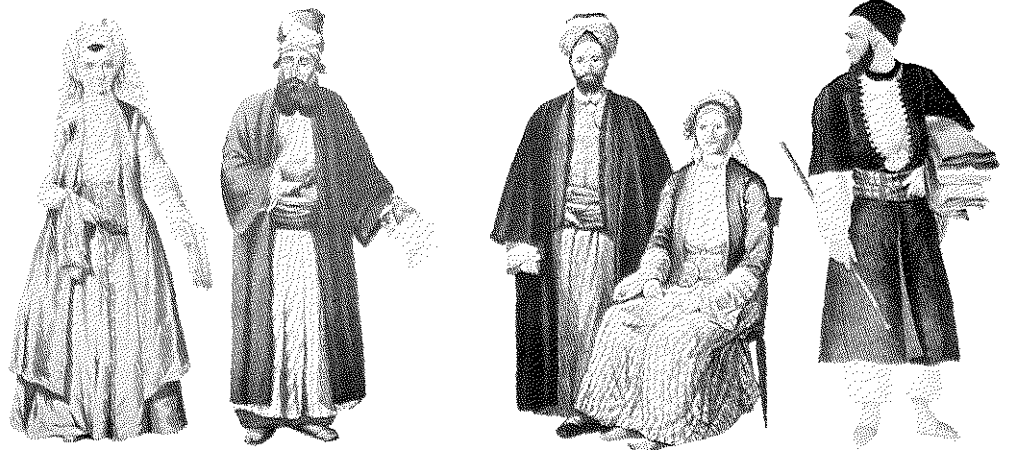
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The Majesty of *Tzenius*— Where Spirituality and Nobility Meet

CLOTHING: MORE THAN A PROTECTIVE BARRIER

The concept of *tzenius* assumes a major place in Jewish life. The first mention of *tzenius* in the Torah is in the account of how originally Adam and Chava were not wearing clothes, without any sense of shame. *Rashi* explains that they had not yet partaken of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and therefore did not possess within themselves any negative inclinations. Because of this, they had nothing to be ashamed of. It would seem from this interpretation that *tzenius* (in the way of clothing) is a response to the emergence of negativity in Man, and Man's need to protect himself from encounters that would arouse within him any element that might taint or confuse an otherwise pure perspective.

While this is truly a concern and an important dimension of *tzenius*,

This essay is based on a speech given by **Rabbi Yitzchok Kirzner** at a gathering sponsored by the Beth Jacob Teachers' Seminary of America. He serves as Director of the Citywide Outreach Educational Program of the Jewish Renaissance Center, in New York, and Rav of Congregation Kol Yehuda in Brooklyn. His article, "Parents to Child: Conveying Values, Attitudes, and Understandings," was featured in JO, Oct. '89.

we also find that the concept of *tzenius* is expressed as a general way of life, even when we are involved in activities such as Torah study and the performance of *mitzvos*, when one is certainly less subject to falling victim to negative inclinations. Indeed, the Prophet exhorts *Klal Yisroel*, "What does G-d demand from you other than to do justice, love kindness, and *hatzne'a leches*—conduct yourself with G-d in modesty" (*Micha* 6,8). Moreover, *Chazal* (the rabbis of the Talmud) underscore *tzenius* as an inherently positive value, aside from its function as a barrier against negative tendencies. In what way is *tzenius* a value unto itself?

According to the *Malbim*, Adam and Chava's lack of a sense of shame prior to their eating from the Tree of Knowledge, was a result of their clear perception of Man's soul as his true identity, while his physical existence was seen as a garment that clothed within it his true being. Hence Adam and Chava at their pristine, ideal state were truly garmented—their physical dimension, their bodies, served as their clothing. It was only after partaking of the forbidden fruit that a subtle shift occurred whereby man began (at least in part) to per-

ceive his physical presence as an expression of his identity—no longer merely a garment for the soul. It was at this point that Man became clothed and required some kind of covering, to make certain that his physical presence not be dominant. Man's clothing, then, redirected his focus back to his *neschama*, his spiritual essence, as his core identity.

We find a parallel to this concept in how prophecy—a Divine contact between *Hashem* and Man—was achieved. The prophet had need to "shed his physical garments" before being able to receive G-d's message. (See *Shmuel I* 19,24.) That is, the prophet related to his physical being as one does to a garment, and not as to an essential part of his true identity. His flesh, so to speak, was the garment of his soul.

SEPARATION OF BODY AND SOUL: MAN'S INTRUSIVE INNOVATION

The *Malbim's* interpretation can lead us to a deeper understanding of *tzenius*. When G-d created Man, this creation took place on both physical and spiritual levels. However, it was not G-d's intention to create two distinct realms of exist-



ence, each with its own natural laws...with Man scrambling to and fro between them. When G-d created Man's body, it was in the form of "a garment tailored" for his spiritual being. *Hashem* is one, and in essence, the world He created is meant to possess this characteristic of oneness. It is for this reason that our great teachers speak of transgression as the misuse of the physical, with Man—not G-d—creating two *reshuyos*—treating his physical needs and pleasures as though they constituted a realm unto itself. This *reshus*, this physical sphere of concerns and activities, excluded G-d, as though to isolate a block of time, space, and energy from Him, to use only for Man's indulgence.

Man in his ideal state views all physical resources as a means of serving G-d, and to the extent that they serve holiness, they become sanctified and, in a sense, unite with the spirit to which they are subservient. Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (hereafter, *Ramchal*) explains that the principal method of generating holiness in this physical world is by disavowing this dangerous illusion: the attitude that there are "de-spiritualized zones"—activities and concerns not touched by spirituality, a "recess" of sorts from serving G-d. By contrast, through rejecting the two-realm notion, Man can fill the single realm, encompassing body and soul, with *Hashem's* holiness and presence.

Before Adam sinned, it was absolutely clear to him that Man's physical being was but a garment of the

soul. It was only afterwards that his physical presence began stealing the limelight, so to speak, assuming for itself some degree of identity in Man's self-perception. It was then that *tzenius* became required: a covering, so that Man might not lose the focus of his identity and then begin to build a two-realm perspective in life.

The concept of *tzenius* is expressed as a general way of life, even when we are involved in activities such as Torah study and the performance of *mitzvos*, when one is certainly less subject to falling victim to negative inclinations. Obviously, *tzenius* must be an inherently positive value and not merely a barrier against negative tendencies.

THE CROWNING DISTINCTIVENESS OF MODESTY

As we proceed in our discussion of *tzenius*, it may help to refer to the Chofetz Chaim's *sefer Geder Olam*, wherein he refers to modesty in demeanor and dress as a

"crown" of sorts. This would suggest that just as a crown serves to highlight the uniqueness of a king as a solitary ruler, so too does adhering to the guidelines of *tzenius* proclaim G-d's rule over us. That is, through *tzenius*, we proclaim that every sinew of our being is meant to serve G-d alone. This can be compared to the coronation—the very crowning—of G-d as our King.

Ramchal teaches us that the ultimate goal of Man is to comprehend this oneness of G-d and to live a life attached to Him alone. Little wonder, then, that the guidelines of *tzenius* are the source of holiness of our people, for through its laws we return G-d's world to an integrated oneness that bonds all things to Him.

It is also important to note that *tzenius* does not denigrate the physical body, as is often misconstrued. The greatest beauty that exists in a person's physical dimension is his capacity—his willingness—to use it in service of G-d. By contrast, isolating one's physical aspect from serving the soul is its greatest denigration. Simply stated, *tzenius* is Man's effort to find G-d's royalty, and by doing so, discover his own majesty, as well.

THE SAVING GRACE OF *TZENIUS*

We can now understand more fully a comment by Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk in his *Meshech Chachma*, that *tzenius* always played a central role in the course of Jewish history. He demonstrates this point by observing that

some of the greatest persecutions of *Klal Yisroel* took place only after we had sought to eliminate those aspects of Jewish life that identified us to the outside world in a discernibly Jewish way. When the Jew tries to avoid projecting a Jewish identity, the very existence of *Klal Yisroel* becomes threatened. G-d then enlists various other nations to remind us that we will forever be seen as Jews, regardless of how we may attempt to deny our distinctive identity....Then, there is the other side of the coin: We Jews merited redemption from Egypt even though we had been guilty of idol worship, because we had retained our own distinctive language and names, and our unique way of dress.

On the surface, it seems difficult to comprehend how such seemingly simple aspects of daily life could actually help us merit surviving Egypt. More puzzling, one wonders how these trivial factors saved us when the Angels of Prosecution had argued, at the Splitting of the Sea, that we did not deserve to be protected from the pursuing Egyptians, because in essence, we were no different from them in that both had worshipped idols. However, *Hashem*, who is the ultimate Judge, recognizes those elements that constitute a true threat to *Klal Yisroel's* eternity, and those that are only superficial. The fact that the Jews had worshipped idols was not an indictment; they did so because of

Tzenius does not denigrate the physical body, as is often misconstrued. The greatest beauty that exists in one's physical dimension is one's capacity—one's willingness—to use it in service of G-d.

environmental influences, not because of any deep, essential drive. By contrast, distinctiveness in dress and other seeming externals actually testified to an incorrigible uniqueness and internal nobility of the Jews. More specifically, their clothing reflected *tzenius*, which projected *Am Yisroel's* capacity to strive for an integrated life, where soul-values of *kedusha* inform the flesh and pulsate through the blood—*Klal Yisroel's* true purpose and its ultimate *Yeshe'u'a*.

Interestingly, the *Meshech Chachma* alludes to a *Midrash* that indicates that *Hashem* had instructed the Prosecuting Angels to rather punish Job who was a righteous person, but did not observe the ordinances and protective "fences" in the areas of *tzenius*. We are certainly familiar with the great salvation that *Klal Yisroel* experienced, on the one hand, and the great suffering that Job endured, on the other. This study in contrasts underscores the great dangers in which we place ourselves and *Klal Yisroel* when we compromise the distinctive mode of dress that projects our Judaism. *Tzenius* always was and will forever remain the way that G-d will see the awesome differences that divide *Klal Yisroel* from the rest of the world.

The *Meshech Chachma* explains that this is the deeper meaning of G-d's instruction to us on the night of Pesach: "Do not leave your homes until morning" (*Shemos* 12, 22). *Hashem* is imploring us to hold on to our laws of *tzenius* (exemplified by the Jewish home) until the morning of redemption has arrived. At that time, the singular realm and sovereignty of G-d will be clear to all the world, and it will finally be proclaimed, "You are one, Your Name is one, and Who is like Your People *Yisroel*, One nation upon Earth!"—exemplifying a oneness that reflects the supreme Oneness of G-d. ■

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P.S.

Some Thoughts on "SELLING" TZENIUS

One must, at times, object vociferously to *kefira*—heresy. There may be a place for shouting "Shabbos!" at a deliberate violator of the Sabbath in *chareidi* Jerusalem neighborhoods. And one might well publicly denounce a purveyor of *traife* food under a kosher label. But how does one respond to *pritzus*—brazen violation of basic decency? Is it effective to loudly berate the violaters and scream "Tzenius!"? Is it *tzenius'dik*—in keeping with the guidelines of modesty—to do so?

This question comes to mind as one encounters incident after incident of people reacting as individuals and as spokesmen for institutions, decrying the lack of decency in the media—both entertainment and informational. Yet crying out "foul!", with elaborate documentation, is not always in full keeping with decency in expression.

The principal of a respected mesivta high school in the New York area contacted *The Jewish Observer* after he had heard Rabbi Shimon Schwab's speech, condemning the pernicious influence of television on the Jewish *neshama*, at the recent convention of Agudath Israel of America. He assumed (correctly—see pages 4-7 in this issue) that JO would publish the speech and he offered some corroborative material: reprints of various articles decrying the immoral influence of TV and other popular entertainment. This principal has mailed copies of these articles to parents of students that own TV sets, to spell out clearly, candidly, explicitly, the situations, words, and attitudes that their children are exposed to on a daily basis. "You may

want to quote them alongside Rav Schwab's article," he offered.

The enclosures were undoubtedly powerful arguments against indiscriminate radio-listening, and even owning TV sets—to those who have them. Maybe the rough language they included have a place in shaking up uninformed or indifferent parents, and alerting them to what their children hear and see. But verbatim quotations—especially on these pages—would surely prove offensive to the unsullied eye or unpolluted ear. To give the reader a very general idea of their content: On the *US News and World Report* editorial page (May 20, 1985), columnist David Gergen calls parents to arms against "X-Rated Records":

"We just listen to the beat, never the words,"...insisted [my 14 and 11 year old kids]. My wife and I backed off for 24 hours and then snuck up from behind: "Have you ever heard of the song '_____'?" we asked sweetly. Spontaneously, they both broke into the number performed by Frankie Goes to Hollywood, a group that advocates... [deviant behavior].

Some sociologists say the music doesn't make an impression on teenagers. Others think nothing can be done. Nonsense.

In *Newsweek's* "My Turn" column (Aug 6, '85), Kandy Stroud quotes generously from the lyrics of what she



calls "Pornographic Rock," and reports:

...My 13-year-old, rock-crazed son muttered, as he inadvertently tuned [the car radio] to [a]...loud and crude song, "I hate this song." My own Mr. Cool was visibly embarrassed. Embarrassed? I almost drove off the road.

I confess to being something of a rock freak...since the 50's....But innuendo has given way to the overt. And

vulgar lyrics supported by uncomfortably provocative sound effects result in musical pornography.

Enough said. Or perhaps too much.

Another angle: *The New York Times* featured an article in its Sunday Business Section (Dec. 6, '91), where Stuart Elliot reports on trends in TV and print advertising, which are progressing from what he terms "naughty" to the "shocking," demonstrating that

America is taking its cues from Europe, where attitudes are much more "liberal." "As advertisers push the boundaries to find risks," Elliot says, "some in the industry fear, they risk polluting the entire advertising environment."

Indeed, nowadays, evening, prime-time commercial spots are far more shocking than after-eleven, "adult" programs were fifteen years ago.

If folks think that they can be more relaxed about the content of family shows, or popular film fare, they



Tznius is a very fragile commodity

should subscribe to the National Coalition on Television Violence's *NCTV News*. TV shows, movies, performers, songs, and videos are described and evaluated for unwholesome (a very mild term!) content. In many cases, the mere descriptions deserve an "X" rating.

The cautionary note being sounded here, then, is deliberately focused exclusively on descriptions of the offensive material. No direct quotations of the offensive material are offered here. We wish others would follow the same practice. In its full-page ad on the last page of the Finance Section of *The N.Y. Times* (Jan. 7, '92), the *Wall Street Journal* touted its comparatively high standards of decency by reprinting an editorial from the previous December, decrying the sorry state of journalism, exemplified by a front page *Newsday* report on the William Smith case, which had featured verbatim quotes from the trial

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transcript. Samples from the *Newsday* story were quoted, to demonstrate the *Wall Street Journal's* virtue and discretion...all on the back page of my *N.Y. Times* (no paragon of discretion either, for that matter). Nothing like screaming expletives to restore a little peace, quite and decency to the print media.

Perhaps we should not expect too much restraint from secular sources.

But what are we to make of a popular Modern Orthodox rabbi who decided that the best way to campaign for a life of *kedusha* among Jewish singles and adherence to *Taharas Hamishpacha* in Jewish families is by appearing in a dialogue with "Dr. Ruth" on a public forum?

Titillation can fill the bleachers, but it leaves the soul empty.

He had wanted his message to be heard—and apparently he calculated correctly, in that they drew an overflow crowd. But he seems to have forgotten that Dr. Ruth's frank, uninhibited talk shows earned her an FCC ruling barring her coarse language and bold clinical discussions from the airwaves.¹ To his credit, the Rabbi did admit to the audience that he could not help but blush at some of the Doctor's declarations, but otherwise he was unrepentant. When one's sensibilities rebel at being affronted with indelicate talk, one would have been well advised to have stayed home, in the first place—and thus to have spared the audience gratuitous exposure to its worse elements, rather than having them serve as an unwitting party (or witness) to a shocking breach of decency. Titillation can fill the bleachers, but it leaves the soul empty.

Tzenius is a very fragile commodity. One can teach it by talking about it. One can imbue people with it through example, by demonstrating it. But one cannot succeed in impressing others with its value by violating it. N.W.

¹ See *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Dec., '91.



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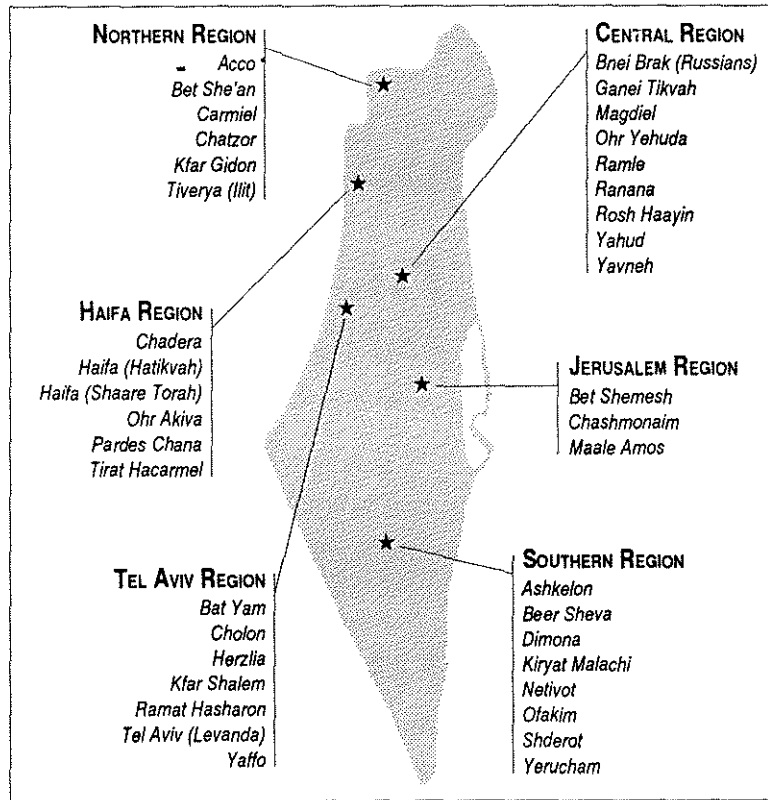
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The invention of printing was a unique event in the history of *Klal Yisroel*. A fundamental change in information technology, which happened outside the Jewish world, had a profound effect on the study of Torah. The Responsa of succeeding generations are filled with questions concerning *kashrus* of printed *gittin* and *Sifrei Torah*, the printing of G-d's name, *sifrei kodesh* printed by non-Jews, the need to put printed pages in a *geniza* and more. The general enthusiasm which the *gedolim* of those generations showed for printing was almost universal. The printing press was likened to the Altar. Many *Acharonim* tried to find a precedent for it in the Torah and *divrei Chazal*. The *Get Pashut* won-

Rabbi Yaakov Rosenes, formerly of Ottawa, Canada, is the director of the Judaica Archival Project in Jerusalem. The Judaica Archival Project was founded in 1987 in conjunction with the Torah Microfiche Library under the sponsorship of the late Mr. Joseph Rudman ז"ל of Far Rockaway, N.Y. It is designed both as a preservation program and a working reference system for *talmidei chachamim*, rabbis and educators.

ders if the stones on the *Kohein Gadol's* breastplate were engraved by a printing process, and the *Marits Chayas* surmises that the secret of the Bar Kamtza family, which allowed them to write all the letters of G-d's name simultaneously (*Yoma* 38), was the discovery of printing!

One can take a longer, historical look at the introduction of the printing press as well as other technological advances in written communication. Interestingly, the first Hebrew book, a *Chumash* with *Rashi*, was printed in Rome about 1470, only 14 years after Gutenberg printed his Bible. Within a decade, Hebrew printing had spread from Spain to Constantinople, with the press of Gershon and Yehoshua Shlomo at Soncino near Cremona being the most productive. With the scattering of Spanish Jewry across Europe and to various countries around the Mediterranean Sea in 1492, *Klal Yisroel* suffered a traumatic break in the smooth flow of the *Mesorah* from generation to generation, effectively closing the Era of the *Rishonim* (Early Commentators and Authorities).

How fortunate—what a magnificent act of the *Hashgacha*—it was to provide *Klal Yisroel* with the means for consulting the great leaders of the earlier epoch through their writings, thanks to the printing press, during the new Era of the *Acharonim* (Later Commentators), whose great leaders were of comparatively diminished stature. The thoughts of the towering leaders of earlier times were still accessible to the people of the 16th, 17th...and 20th centuries.

A traumatic break with the past of even greater proportions came in the wake of World War II. Entire communities, outstanding Torah leaders and scholars, thriving institutions—a vital link with the past and a primary means of reaching the future—were eliminated...vanished. Even the written legacy—entire libraries and storehouses of *seforim*—was gone. Setting type anew to reprint the missing *seforim*, to enable budding scholars to study, would have been a task of impossible proportions. At this vital juncture, the photo-offset process was invented, which makes it economically feasible to reprint hun-

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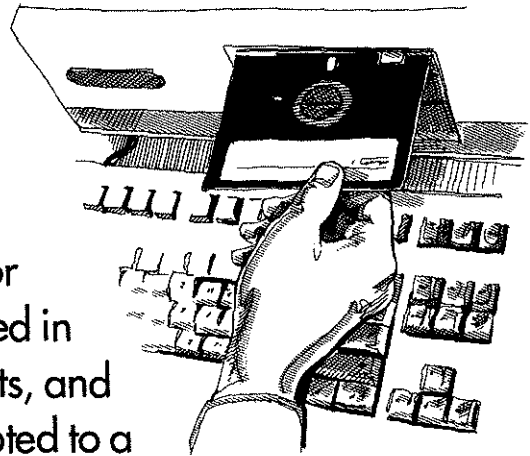
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The computer has been put to work for the service of *limud HaTorah* in several projects which have for the most part originated in university environments, and which were later adopted to a greater or lesser extent by the Torah World.



dreds upon hundreds of different *seforim* in limited quantities, replenishing our personal and communal libraries.

Today, technological innovations for the storage, processing and dissemination of information has created as radical a change in society as the printing press did 500 years ago, and the photo-offset process 50 years ago. This new means of storing and accessing information must have some implications in the Torah perspective. However, the proliferation of these innovations has not necessarily been greeted with enthusiasm among Jewish educators (See J.O., Feb., '83). It is interesting to examine why this is the case.

AND NOW, THE COMPUTER

The computer has been put to work for the service of *limud HaTorah* in several projects which have for the most part originated in university environments, and which were later adopted to a greater or lesser extent by the Torah World. These programs, which work (or will work) on a home computer, can find phrases, words and juxtapositions of words with blinding speed. When used correctly, these search programs can find the source for any statement of *Chazal* as though one had a tremendous *talmid chacham* at one's side. Vast *bekius* (encyclopedic knowledge of Talmud and Codes) is

unfortunately in short supply these days.

The computer generally converts all information into data, which is then searchable, but which is no longer a faithful representation of the original document format. As indexes to texts and responsa, these programs do very powerful things. Yet they were primarily intended as aids to learning and not a substitute for learning itself. When the search for information becomes motivated more by a desire to see "what the computer can do" than by a sincere desire to answer a question, then the machine becomes the center of attention and the learning process becomes secondary.

In fact, many thinkers and social critics have suggested that over-involvement in technology can undermine the learning process. A Time Magazine article on the topic, quoted in the Feb. '83 JO article cited above, asks: "Does the computer really stimulate the brain's activity or, by doing so much of its work, permit it to go slack?" These reservations would recommend a different focus on the use of computers for *limudei kodesh*. Less powerful but more "Torah-friendly" aids such as micrographics and digital image processing (computerized pictures of text), rather than standard (ASCII) computer storage and retrieval may be more suitable equipment for the *talmid chacham* of the future.

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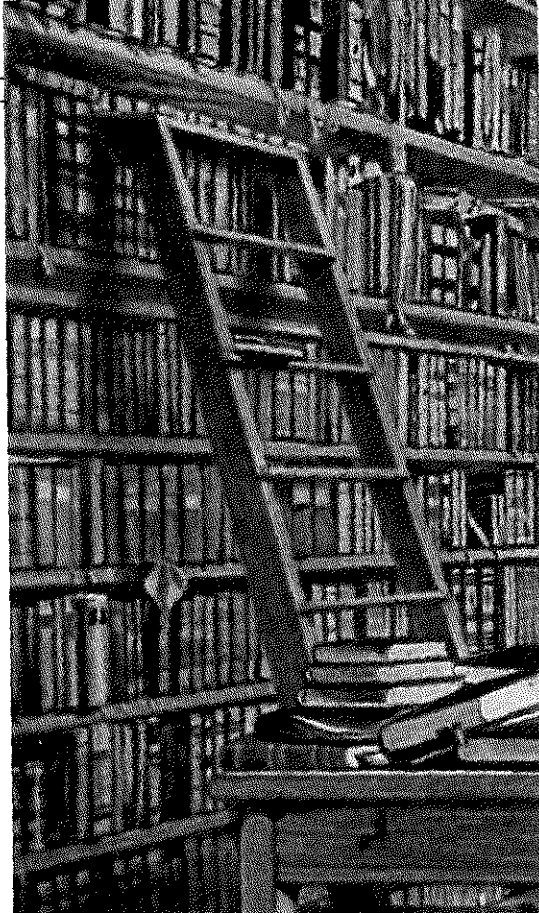
A word of explanation is in order, then, to explain to the reader how Micrographic and Digital Image Processing are indeed more "Torah - friendly" than the standard and more powerful computer technologies available. Here non-conventional (i.e. non-paper) means, such as microfiche film cards and digitalized images of text on computer screens, at least present text in its original form (*tzuras hadaf*) in a way where large quantities or difficult-to-obtain information can be placed at the students' fingertips. Rabbi Yochanan says (*Yerushalmi Brachos* 5,1) that a covenant is made with anyone studying Aggada from the text itself, that he will not quickly forget. Since originally *Torah She B'al Peh* was only written to prevent it from being forgotten, the *Sefer Charedim* explains that Rabbi Yochanan had learned his *halacha* from *Torah She B'al Peh*. Just as the image of the letters of the Torah should become engraved in one's memory, similarly today, *Torah She B'al Peh* should be learned "from inside the *sefer*." Later authorities strengthened this principle. *The Migdal Oz* (on the *Rambam: Ishus* 4,9) was the first one to coin the phrase "Letters make wise (*Osios machkimos*)." The *Ridvaz* (quoted in the *S'de Chemed*) points out that Hebrew letters have a *kedusha* and power of their own, apart from the content of their message. (Similarly, we would contend that the choice of Hebrew typography in a particular *sefer* becomes an integral part of the content of that *sefer*.) And in our generation, the *Pachad Yitzchak* (Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner l"xz) often admonishes his readers to specifically look inside the original source of his citations, and not to rely on his quotation of a passage.

Micrographics has already put thousands of volumes of both rare and reference texts on the scholar's desk, so he can "look inside" faster and more easily. Also, by not having to interrupt his train of thought in order to find a *sefer*, the reader is en-

couraged to check references and quotations much more frequently. However, the learning process remains the same. Books appear on the screen and are used just as regular books are, only the compactness and low cost of such a library makes it a super-library, which is in reach of an average Torah student or low budget collector.

**A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH
OF THE CONTENT**

For a specific group of material, microfilming is not only a matter of availability, but a matter of "life and death." Thousands of *seforim* and Torah journals are in danger of being lost to *Klal Yisroel* because of paper acidification. Since the mid-nineteenth century, printers started using papers composed of wood pulp instead of the more expensive rag based papers, over a period of a few decades the natural resins in wood plus the acids used to break it



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down into pulp cause these papers to turn brown and brittle. Many important works from the last generation are no longer usable; they have simply disintegrated into piles of brown flakes.

Similarly, a great deal of *Divrei Torah* is being lost because of ignorance and lack of care. Yesterday's yeshiva journals contain articles written by students who are today's *Gedolei Torah*. Today's journals contain Torah of tomorrow's leaders, but there is no central archive or library that consistently gathers these journals and preserves them. Many of the pre-war journals were printed on the poorest kind of paper and survive in very limited numbers.

The Orthodox Jewish Archives of Agudath Israel, in Manhattan, has collected print-runs of several of the well-known Orthodox newspapers printed in Europe and the U.S., and has obtained others on microfilm. In Israel, the Hebrew University Library (J.N.U.L.) has extensive collections of pre- and post-war newspapers on mi-

For a specific group of material, microfilming is not only a matter of availability, but a matter of "life and death." Thousands of seforim and Torah journals are in danger of being lost to Klal Yisroel because of paper acidification.

crofilm, including many Orthodox dailies. These are systematically filmed because newsprint quickly becomes fragile and disintegrates. As opposed to newspapers and other "mass media," the Institute for Micro-filmed Manuscripts at J.N.U.L. in Jerusalem microfilms manuscripts (which are necessarily unique items) from Judaica collections all over the world, and makes the copies available to the public.

SAVING TORAH JOURNALS

Surprisingly, there is no body which is collecting and preserving printed *divrei Torah* in an organized fashion. *Divrei Torah* are generally considered by most librarians to be permanent if they are in books, and to be unimportant if they are in Yeshiva or Kollel journals. Unfortunately, neither is the case. *Seforim* printed after 1850 have a shelf-life of 60-150 years, and only a portion of *divrei Torah* is judged commercially worthy of being periodically reprinted. As for Torah journals, we have found articles printed in extremely rare, low circulation publications from the 1920's-30's by such young "unknown *avreichim*" as the *Chazon Ish* and יב"ח Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach!

The Judaica Archival Project, operating a microfilming unit at the National Library in Jerusalem, has started filming some of these small-format *chiddushei Torah* journals. The first Torah periodical in this project (which was the first Torah periodical ever printed) is the *Pri Ets Chaim* of the *Ets Chaim Bet Midrash* in Amsterdam. It is now being micro-filmed, with the assistance of a grant from the Diena Family Foundation. Of the 953 issues (all of which were responsa) appearing between 1691-1808), several have been entirely lost and others can only be found in a single copy anywhere in the world. Responders include Rav Yaakov Sasportas, Rav David Mildola, and Rav Yitzchak Aboab. The first *teshuvos* (halachic responsa) sent to the New World are in this collection and many unique questions of commerce, family law and *minhag* are discussed by the *chachamim* of the leading Sephardic Yeshiva in the West. Twelve of the thirteen volumes of *Pri Ets Chaim* have been out of print for 300 years!

Just as computers can aid the learning process by providing indices to entire bodies of information, Textual Storage Technology promises to add new breadth and depth, by making new research resources readily available. In the future, the combination of both technologies may create a whole new dimension in resources for Torah study. ■

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Labor Acts Out...



...Its Internal Contradictions

THE IDEOLOGICAL FLIP-FLOP

By a vote of 390 to 302, delegates to the November convention of Israel's Labor Party passed a resolution accusing representatives of religious institutions of "abusing the values of democracy" and demanding "religious pluralism and tolerance, ensured by a constitution based on principles of equality and freedom of choice."

The resolution was widely described in the press as calling for the separation of state and religion. And indeed the call for religious pluralism and equal access to religious services seemed impossible to reconcile with a continuation of the Chief Rabbinate's monopoly over marriage and divorce.

Rabbi Rosenblum, a member of a Kollel in Jerusalem, is a frequent contributor to these pages, most recently with "Kulturkampf in the Holyland," in the Oct. '91 issue. He also serves as an editor for the ArtScroll Mishnah Series.

Yet just a month later, another party convention was convened for the express purpose of rescinding the earlier resolution. In its place was a new resolution, which made no mention of a separation of State and religion or of religious pluralism. As a

Israel today.

On the most superficial level, Labor's flip-flop reflects the tension in any political party between the quest for ideological purity, on the one hand, and the desire to win over uncommitted voters, on the other. The

Labor Party, which ruled the State uninterrupted for its first 29 years and whose supporters view themselves as the ideological heirs of the founders of the mainstream Zionist movement, is becoming increasingly marginal in Israeli politics. A poll in mid-November showed

Labor's flip-flop reflects the tension in any political party between the quest for ideological purity, on the one hand, and the desire to win over uncommitted voters, on the other.

face-saving gesture, so that Labor would not be perceived as having gone "soft" on religion, the new resolution still included a call for the removal of religion from politics and—a thinly veiled attack on the much reviled religious parties. The convention also urged the drafting of yeshiva students, thus reopening the potentially most volatile issue dividing the *chareidi* and secular communities in

it commanding the allegiance of only 22% of Israeli voters. Ironically, the electoral doldrums in which the party currently finds itself has only intensified the push for greater ideological purity. With the party's prospects currently so poor, its members feel freer to follow the path of ideological purity than they otherwise might. At the November convention, for instance, there was for the first time a

large faction in the party ready to accept in principle the creation of an independent Palestinian state and to carry out peace negotiations with that goal in mind.

THE LIFELOOD OF POLITICIANS: POWER

But the lifeblood of politicians is power and it is almost impossible to give up the quest, no matter how quixotic it may appear. That is all the moreso true for such an old war horse as Labor leader

Shimon Peres, who knows that he has, at most, one more turn around the electoral track. Fearing the possible loss of traditional Sephardic voters and an even further reduction of Labor's chances of ever enticing religious parties into a coalition government with itself at the helm, Peres immediately vowed to secure the rescission of the November resolution. He even went so far as to invite representatives of the religious press to meet with him. At that meeting, he spoke proudly of his role in securing the original draft deferment for yeshiva students and government funding for Chinuch Atzmai. He stressed his view that only religious faith could explain the survival of the Jewish people and his belief that a Jewish state without religion is no more imaginable than a body without a soul. Money currently being spent on settlements, he said, should be spent on Jewish education instead.

Secular editorialists had good fun when the religious papers carried the story. One typical editorial was titled: "R'Shimon HaTzaddik," and began: "A hidden *tzaddik* stands at the head of the Labor Party—and we didn't know it. For these past 43 years the love of the religion of Israel has burned within Shimon Peres—and we didn't hear of it...."

The passage and rescission of the Labor resolution in such rapid-fire succession, however, reflects more than a politician's dilemma between securing hard-core supporters and attracting middle-of-the road voters. At the heart of Zionist ideology there has always existed an internal contradiction between antipathy for the Jewish religion and the need to portray the movement as part of the continuity of Jewish history.

THE PAST: CONTINUITY VS. CONTEMPT

There is much in the writings of early Zionist ideologue to support the famous dictum of

Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik, of Brisk: "They do not destroy religion in order to build a state; they build a state in order to destroy religion." Early Zionist writers were obsessed with the degraded state of the Jew in Europe.¹ Writers such as Brenner, Frishman, Berdyczewski characterized their contemporary Jews as "dogs," "spiritual slaves," and "non-men." And this degradation was largely associated in their minds with the ancient religion. With the slogan "Yavneh and Jerusalem are enemies," Berdyczewski expressed the fundamental antagonism between the Jewish religion and the new nationalism. Marcus Ehrenpreis claimed that the

triumph of Zionism lay precisely in the destruction of Judaism:

We have liberated ourselves from the shackles of a sickly, rotten and dying tradition! A tradition that cannot live and does

not want to die; a tradition that manacled our hands, blinded our eyes, and confounded our hearts, that darkened our heavens and banished light and beauty and tenderness and pleasantness from our lives, that turned our youth into old men and our elders into shadows. We have liberated ourselves from the excessive spirituality of the Exile.... We have liberated ourselves from the rabbinic culture, which confined us in a cage of laws and restrictions.

But however hostile to religion Zionist ideologues were, they nevertheless claimed to be leading a movement of Jewish national revival. To do so, they were confronted with a problem: How to reject Judaism and yet at the same time stake a claim to continuity with Jewish national history. Inasmuch as the vast majority of Jews had throughout history de-

¹ The following quotations are from an article entitled: "Trembling with Fear: How Secular Israelis See the Ultra-Orthodox and Why," by Noah J. Efron, in the October issue of *Tikkun*. Prof. Efron argues, *inter alia*, that current portrayals of *chareidi* Jews in Israel's secular press owe much to traditional Zionist stereotypes.

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fined themselves as a nation on the basis of the covenant entered into at Sinai, any absolute break with Jewish religion also entailed a radical break with all of Jewish history and called into question the "Jewish" character of Zionism.

That same tension pervades Israel today. As *chareidi* politicians and religious leaders have learned over the years, the fastest way to stir a tempest in a teapot in Israel today is to challenge the Jewish legitimacy of the State or its underlying Zionist ideology by asking what intrinsically Jewish values inform the lives of the vast majority of Israel's citizenry. Once the original Labor Party resolution was described as urging the severance of religion from the State, it had to be revoked, for its continued existence made it too easy to point out that the emperor has no clothes, that there is nothing particularly Jewish about the Zionist national revival. Most Israelis are still not willing to confront that starkly the implication of the State's ideological underpinnings.

IMPLICATIONS OF PLURALISM

Before consigning the Labor Party resolution to its rightful place in the dustbins of history, one other distressing aspect, which has serious implications for the future, deserves to be noted. The original resolution did not in fact call for severing all traces of Judaism from the State. Rather, by couching the resolution in terms of "tolerance and religious pluralism," its sponsors sought to use the State to make a positive statement about Judaism: that there are no objective standards to determine the content of Judaism, and therefore all "streams"—Reform, Conservative, Orthodox—are equally legitimate. (The resolution's chief sponsor, Avraham Burg, son of long-time National Religious Party minister Dr. Josef Burg, shrewdly noted that had the resolution simply called for a complete separation of State from religion, only the NRP, whose ideology invests the State with religious significance, would have been incensed by the principle of the proposal.)

Americans are raised on an ethos of tolerance which proclaims that ev-

ery issue in life is merely a matter of taste to which everyone is entitled to his own opinion. The Reform and Conservative movements are typically American in proclaiming that *halacha* is merely a set of suggestions from which one may pick and choose at will. Until recently, Israelis have proven generally immune to this view of Judaism as some sort of individual concoction. While the majority of Israelis are not religious, they have understood that if the Torah is the word

of G-d, it must be true and binding in its entirety, not according to one's convenience or taste. The concepts of truth and falsity still exist in Israel; Israelis have traditionally shown little attraction to movements which attempt to finesse the question of truth by recourse to a standard of individual choice. Thus the Labor Party resolution, predicated as it is on the primacy of tolerance, may portend the beginning of a potentially dangerous new trend in Israel. ■

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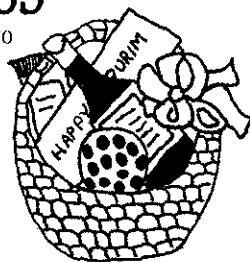
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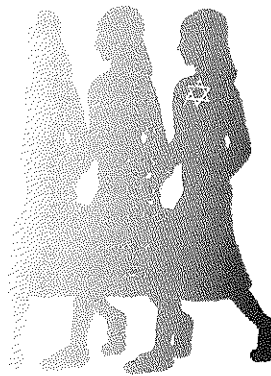
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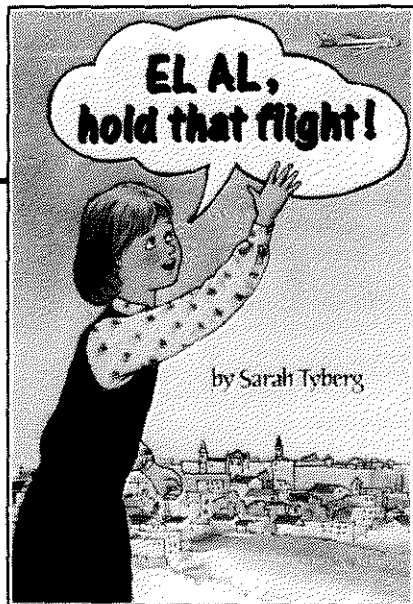
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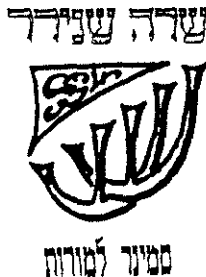
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We go to press grief-stricken with the loss of Horav HaGaon Rabbi Eliezer Levin זצ"ל.

Rabbi Leizer Levin, beloved rabbi, Torah scholar, and leader of Detroit Jewry for more than half a century, passed away on January 19/14 Shevat in Detroit. President of the Vaad HoRabbonim (Council of Orthodox Rabbis) of Greater Detroit and chairman of the Vaad HaChinuch of Yeshiva Beth Yehuda, he was a dean of the Orthodox rabbinate in this country and an early pillar of the Agudath Israel movement in America.

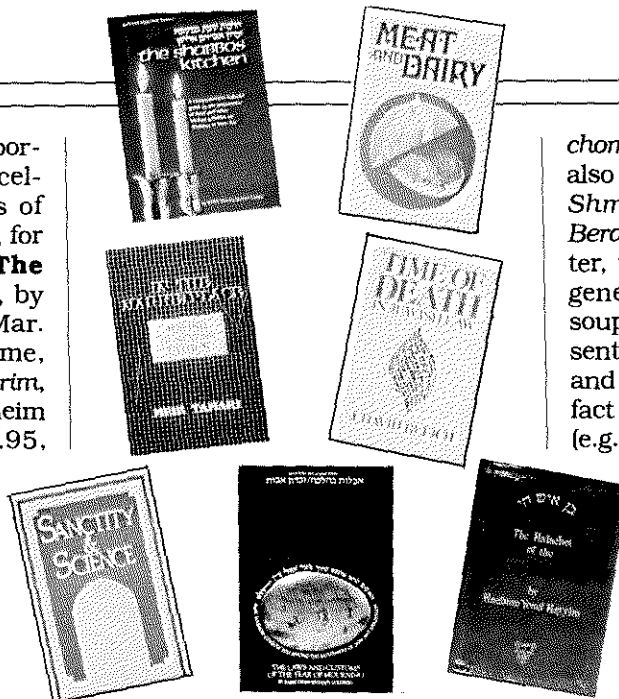
Rabbi Levin was the last known living student of the Chofetz Chaim from the pre-World War I era, subsequently learning at the Yeshiva of Kelm, and later serving as rabbi of Vaiskai, Lithuania.

He came to the United States in 1936, and arrived in Detroit in 1938. A Rabbi who was active in every facet of Jewish community life, he played a leadership role in almost every Orthodox charitable, communal, and educational institution in the city. Besides serving his own congregation, Beth Tefilo Emanuel Tikvah, he was, as president of the Vaad HoRabbonim, consulted on every matter of Jewish practice and policy in the city.

Rabbi Levin was one of the builders of Agudath Israel of America, and participated prominently at its national conventions for many years. He was president of Agudath Israel of the Midwest, and also served on the Vaad HaPoel HaOlami of the World Agudah.

Rabbi Levin served as an inspiring example of the remarkable breadth and depth of knowledge and exceptional *middos* (character development) that was the hallmark of the European *yeshivos* and *rabbonus*. He brought these achievements in scholarship and personality to the American scene, where they had profound impact without suffering loss through compromise or indulgence. While his inspiration lives on, he will be sorely missed. A full-length article on Rabbi Levin זצ"ל will follow. ■

We have had frequent opportunity to welcome excellent English editions of classic halachic works, such as, for example, the first volume of **The Halachot of the Ben Ish Hai**, by Hacham Yosef Hayim, (J.O., Mar. '90), of which the second volume, covering *Va-yikra* through *D'varim*, has now appeared (dist. by Feldheim Publ., Jerusalem, 1991, \$15.95, h.c.); this volume continues the clear and precise presentation of basic *halacha*, according to Sephardic traditions, and contains an index of topics treated in both this volume and the preceding one.



chometz on Pesach. This new edition also deals at length with the laws of *Shmittah*, and with the rules of *Berachos*; in connection with the latter, the author included not only a general list but specific charts for soups and mixed foodstuffs. The presentation is necessarily very concise, and that may be responsible for the fact that a few points are not touched (e.g. microwave ovens and self-cleaning ovens), and that on a few matters, the rules given seem rather stringent (e.g. does one really have to wait six hours for *all* "processed cheese"? However, the author quotes his sources on every point for

New Works on Halacha

Books in Review

At the same time, there is an ever-increasing number of halachic writings specifically composed in English, for our time—usually dealing with one major topic, presenting both the basic *halachos* and their applications under today's conditions, and providing Hebrew or English footnotes that list sources and clarify details and differences of opinion. Rabbi Shimon Eider's series of publications may be considered the pioneer in this field, which has meanwhile grown immensely. We previously reviewed Rabbi Simcha Bunim Cohen's books on the positive commandments concerning the *Shabbos*, and on the use of the services of a non-Jew and of automatic appliances on *Shabbos*. Now an additional volume in this fine series, **The Shabbos Kitchen** (Mesorah Publications, Brooklyn, 1991, \$15.95, h.c., \$12.95, p.b.), presents the *dinim* concerning the preparation of meals, the serving of the food, and the clean-up after the meal; the various topics are presented in systematic sequence, and are each followed by a concise summary. There

are obviously differences of opinion between the *poskim* on many points; the author follows basically the *Mishnah Berurah*, but is careful to deal with divergent opinions in the elaborate scholarly footnotes. A detailed index enables the reader quickly to locate any particular *halacha*.

The Jewish kitchen, in general, is the theme of **The New Practical Guide to Kashruth**, a completely revised and greatly enlarged edition of Rabbi S. Wagschal's earlier guide to Kashruth (Feldheim, Jerusalem-New York, 1991, \$14.95, h.c.). Based on lessons given in the Gateshead Seminary, this volume covers the entire range of Kashruth issues that a housewife must be familiar with; it discusses which products can only be bought if they have a *hechsher*, kashering meat, foods prepared by a non-Jew or left in his care, examination for worms, *toveling* and *kashering*, as well as the manifold issues that arise in the routine preparation of food. Special rules that may apply to children or in case of sickness are discussed, as well as

further reference for the teacher. This is truly an unexcelled text on the subject of Kashruth.

While Rabbi Wagschal set out to cover the entire range of Kashruth laws, **Meat and Dairy**, an illustrated guide for the Kosher Kitchen, by Rabbi Ehud Rosenberg, translated by David Landesman (Mesorah Publ., Brooklyn, 1991, \$15.95, h.c., \$12.95, p.b.), limits itself to the subject of meat and dairy products, the obligation to keep them separate, and the consequences of any contact between them. This is a very difficult subject but it is here presented in all its complexity in a way that can be grasped by anybody: point after point is introduced in a clear manner and is visually presented by diagrams, drawings and charts. At the end of each section is a schematic summary and questions to "test yourself." It is a real pleasure to have such a teaching tool, which is halachically impeccable and pedagogically a masterpiece. The methods used deserve imitation in the teaching of any area of *halacha*.

The Procedure for Setting Aside Trumot and Ma'asrot, edited by Rabbi Shaul Reichenberg, translated by Aharon Angstreich (Feldheim, Jerusalem/New York, 1991, \$2.95, p.b.). This pamphlet, prepared by the Institute for the Study of the Mitzvot Dependent on Eretz Yisroel, is not a simple outline on how to set aside *trumot* and *ma'asrot*, but an exposition in depth of the *mitzvot* involved. A chart is included which shows the differences between what had to be done in Temple times and what is required today. Detailed directions are given on how the "setting aside" is to be done, and the text to be recited is accompanied by illustrated explanations of each phrase. Finally, there is a selection of laws pertaining to *trumot* and *ma'asrot*. This pamphlet will be most useful to anybody encountering produce from Eretz Yisroel; in particular it will serve as a guide to the tourist in how to comply with the *dinim* involved—even if he will shy away from contending with them by himself, he will at least realize the importance of only eating where these laws are strictly observed.

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Mourning in Halachah, (Mesorah Publ., Brooklyn, 1991, \$34.95, h.c., \$29.95, p.b.), presenting the laws and customs of the year of mourning, is an enlarged edition (translated by Rabbi S. Fox-Ashrei and edited by Rabbi M. Zlotowitz) of the monumental work *P'nei Baruch* by Rabbi Chaim Binyamin Goldberger. Its 45 chapters range from "Visiting the Sick" to "Yahrzeit" and "Reinterment" and cover all the relevant laws and customs. The author based his rulings on the practice of Yerushalayim; however, the English version takes into account the customs of the diaspora. In any case, the voluminous footnotes—in English—draw on the entire rabbinic literature, and quote dissenting opinions found in it. The comprehensive index demonstrates that this work really touches on all the common—and some not so common—questions that arise at a time of death and bereavement. An appendix is devoted to the prayers recited on the cemetery. The various versions of the *Kaddish* can usually be found in a *Siddur*; but this volume also includes the *Viduy* and other prayers said by and for a dying person, which are not readily found. Until the time (hopefully soon) that "death will be swallowed up forever," this work will be sure to serve as an indispensable guide and reference work.

Time of Death in Jewish Law (Berman Publ. Co., New York, 1991, \$16.95, h.c.) is a collection of Hebrew and English essays and responsa by Rabbi J. David Bleich on a topic of consuming practical importance. Presented in the chronological order of their original appearance, the articles set out to elucidate the halachic position; the

last of the English essays was written in response to the recent statement of the RCA on the question of brain death—with Rabbi Bleich pointing out, in his introduction, that halachic decision making should not be influenced by polemics, but be determined strictly on the basis of its own sources and dialectic. Approaching the subject in this manner, Rabbi Bleich unequivocally concludes that "brain death" is not halachically acceptable, and the patient in this state must be considered as living and no organs may be removed from him (on the other hand, the author shows persuasively, that this does not militate against the acceptance of a transplant of a heart improperly removed from a patient by doctors). This is indeed the position enunciated by Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rabbi Yosef Sholom Elyashiv in their recent responsa.

Sanctity and Science, Insights into the Practice of Milah and Metzitzah, translated and edited by Rabbi Avrohom Marmorstein from the Hebrew work of Rabbi Yonason Binyomin Goldberger (Feldheim, N.Y. 1991, \$13.95, h.c., \$10.95, p.b.). In writing this work, the author sought to convey the sanctity of the Covenant of Abraham and urge the performance of *milah* in its traditional halachic form—including oral *metzitzah*, despite the fears voiced by some that it could lead to transmission of AIDS.

Rabbi Goldberger movingly describes how Jews through all generations have clung to the faithful performance of this *mitzva*, and shows that oral suction of the blood is an absolutely crucial component of the *mitzva*. However, his attack on the abolition of oral *metzitzah* by reformers, with the use of a sponge in its place, or the use of a glass tube, may well give the reader the impression that the use of a glass tube is as forbidden as the abolition of *metzitzah* or the reliance on a cotton sponge. Yet this is not so. While there was opposition to the tube, too, many great rabbinic authorities considered oral suction via such a glass tube as fulfilling the requirements of oral *metzitzah*. Indeed, the fact, quoted by Rabbi Goldberger, that Rabbi

Yitzchok Elchonon Spektor and Rabbi S.R. Hirsch approved of the use of a tube when the government made difficulties about suction by mouth, indicates that they considered it basically an acceptable way of doing *metzitzah*—though they, of course, preferred to have it done in the way it was always traditionally done, by mouth. If they had not held that way, they would have ruled that the *mohel* should rather not do the *bris* at all.

This is not a theoretical question. *Baruch Hashem*, our Torah society has been protected from the ravages of AIDS, and, with the help of G-d, will continue in this way; but the spread of this plague in secular Jewish society is bound to compel *mohalim* to face the question of whether they can continue to perform their task in all circles. The odds which Rabbi Goldberger quotes against the danger of infection may not remain as favorable, *chas vesholom*, and the use of a glass tube may then be the only way of not excluding innumerable Jewish children from Abraham's Covenant. Thus there is danger in equating use of a tube with suction by sponge or no suction at all.

In the Marketplace, Jewish Business Ethics, by Meir Tamari (Targum/Feldheim, Southfield, Mich., 1991, \$12.95, h.c.) is not strictly a halachic work—it does not present legal rules about how a Jew has to act in the world of business. But it examines many of the salient features of today's economy and shows from Talmudic and later rabbinic sources how the Torah wants us to relate to them. The author analyzes such concepts as property and wealth, fraud and theft, competition and advertising; he shows how modern society treats them, and how *halacha* deals with them—concluding each chapter with a selection of halachic texts that relate to the issues discussed in the chapter. The reader will not derive from this book a knowledge of *Choshen Mishpat*—but he will be sensitized to the problems posed by modern business life from the vantage point of Torah, and he will learn how the Torah views them and what it considers a proper response to them. Living in our world, we are tempted to deal with secular issues according to

secular values, such as the amassing of wealth and the promotion of one's own material interests at the expense of others. In reality, however, the au-

thor reminds us that it is our task to act in the marketplace according to the very specific values and spiritual goals taught to us by the Torah. ■

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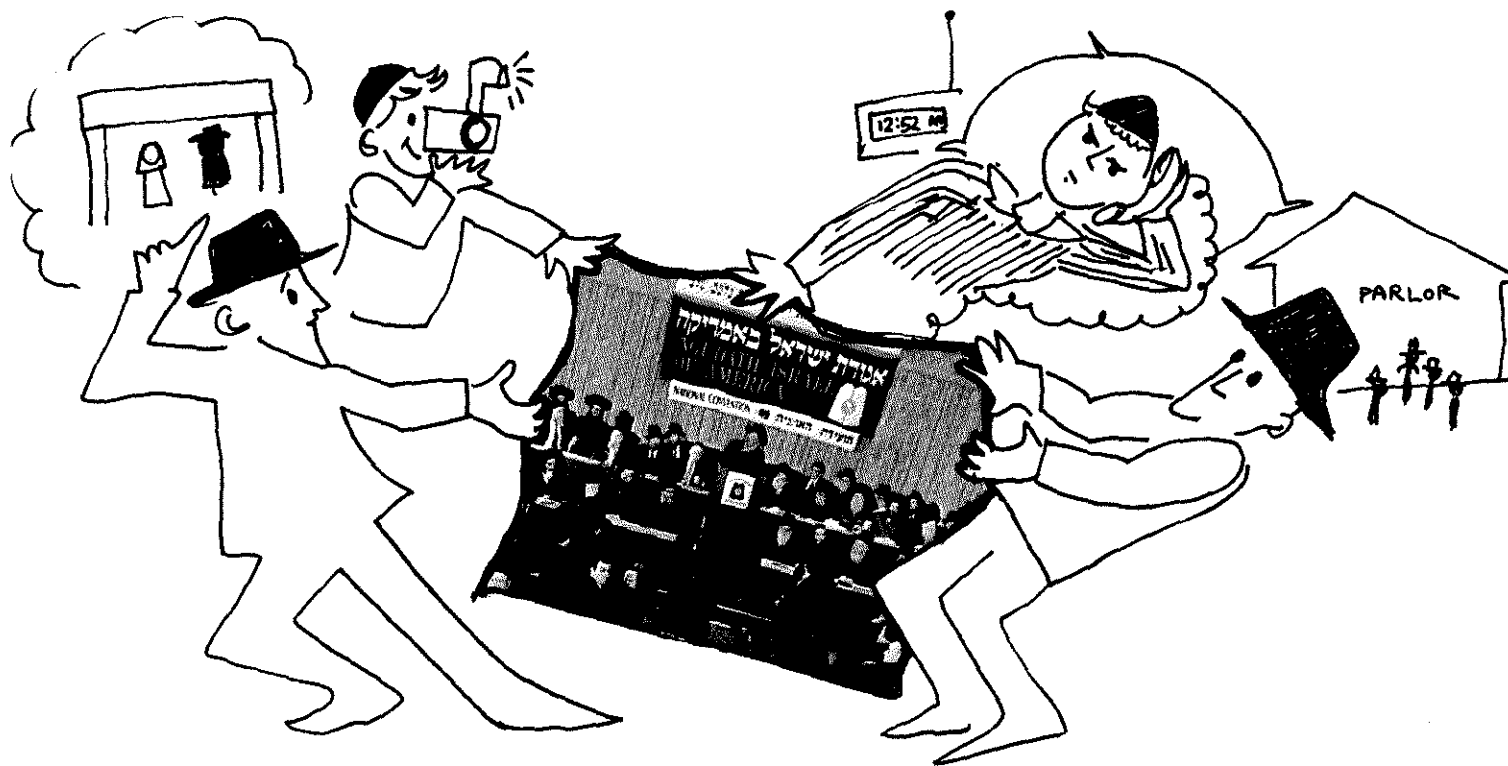
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TORAH LEADERSHIP: A NATIONAL RESOURCE OR PUBLIC PROPERTY?

As I looked up at the dais at the recent Agudath Israel convention, I could not help noticing the tired, haggard faces of the *Roshei Yeshiva* and *Rabbonim* sitting there. And then as I watched how a human tidal wave descended upon them after each session, it struck me that we are doing them an enormous disservice.

Before all else, we must acknowledge that the *Gedolei Torah* are, as a rule, of advancing years (ענין). Despite their age and its accompanying infirmities, they put in a workday—seven days a week—far beyond what most of us regard as reasonable.

Shia Markowitz lives in Monsey, N.Y. This is his first appearance in the JO.

Their physical and intellectual energies are taxed to the limit and beyond by their obvious determination not to disappoint any of their *talmidim* or *baale battim*, wherever and whenever they may feel they need them.

But we do not seem to realize that merely to smile and give a personal *Sholom Aleichem* to each of the thousand-plus people at a convention session, can add up to an enormously tiring experience for an overworked *Rav*. And yet many individuals go even further, insisting on asking *she'eilos*, even in a crowded lobby or hallway, with no consideration for the *Rav's* personal need for a quiet moment or to spend time with members of his family.

At home, the *Roshei Yeshiva* and *Rabbonim* are often given even less consideration. People think nothing of calling a *Rav* late at night with *she'eilos* that are really not that urgent, or that could, in fact, be asked to a local *Rav*.

In many neighborhoods, it seems that one cannot call a parlor meeting for a prominent *tzeddaka* without guaranteeing the presence of a "name-brand" *Rosh Yeshiva* or *Rav* as guest speaker. Despite the fact that we all know in advance how important the cause is, we feel we cannot part with our money without having "star entertainment" as a prerequisite of giving.

Furthermore, it seems today that

a *simcha*—whether a *chasana*, *bris*, *sholom zochor*, or whatever—is not considered complete unless the appropriate *Roshei Yeshiva* are present. Yet, considering the time and physical effort that it takes each *Rosh Yeshiva* to attend the literally hundreds of *simchos* to which he is invited, would it not be a greater service to *Klal Yisroel*, and wouldn't it rather enhance the *simcha*, if we informed the *Rosh Yeshiva* of the event and politely suggested that his presence was not required?

When I asked one prominent *Rebbetzin* why she did not take her obviously exhausted husband away for a few days of peace and quiet, she told me—from experience—that it would be of no use. Once it became known in whatever community they would go to seek asylum that the *Rosh Yeshiva* was there, he would be bombarded with people who just wanted to greet him, to ask him *she'eilos*, or to have him come to their *simcha*.

The *Gedolei Torah* of each generation are a treasure that we must safeguard. Yet in our orphaned generation, the *gedolim* we do have are disproportionately taxed, perhaps even beyond those of previous generations.

We must educate ourselves to call on them when we absolutely need them. We must come to understand that the way to give them *kavod* is by not bothering them, especially when our true motivation might really be only to bolster our own personal *kavod*. We must acknowledge that they need time to learn, to rest and to reflect so as to have the energy to cope with the preeminent issues of life, for which their *eitzos* are truly irreplaceable.

There is nothing new or revolutionary about this idea. *Yisro* perceived the problem—that even one as great as *Moshe Rabbeinu* could not be allowed to handle every individual issue of the community, without eventually burning out.

Let us hope that, by changing our attitudes and by educating our children to learn by our example, the *Roshei Yeshiva* will, *בע"ה*, be granted *archas yomim* to learn and to teach, to guide and to inspire, *b'nachas* and in good health, *ad me'ah v'esrim shanah*. ■

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Letters^{to}the Editor

THE "WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING" OF ESSAY ON ANTI-SEMITISM

To the Editor:

I write in response to Professor Aaron Twerski's cogent essay in the January issue of *The Jewish Observer*. His thoughtful essay on anti-semitism should be required reading for anyone seeking to understand

contemporary American inter-ethnic relations.

In particular, Dr. Twerski's examination of the root causes of the Crown Heights tragedy and his correlation of this event to the "Jeffries affair" draws a number of useful lessons that all of us in public life would do well to consider.

The Agudath Israel has earned a well-deserved reputation for reasoned and reasonable positions on a wide range of social and political issues. Dr. Twerski's article is in this magnificent Torah-imbued tradition of "this is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations."

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN
New York City

The writer is the senior Senator from New York State.

NO "RISK-BENEFIT ASSESSMENT" WHEN DEALING WITH FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

To the Editor:

Dr. Aaron Twerski's recent article on *Golus* and Egalitarianism leaves me surprised and somewhat angered at an Agudah stance that seems confusing and inconsistent. Dr. Twerski throws issues of Jewish assertiveness, assimilation, legislation, and the woes of the black community into one pot to come up with a simple recipe of a passive Jewish response strategy to the threats from without.

At a time when Jews are becoming more vulnerable to virulent anti-semitic attacks from different quarters and all Jewish groups stand to gain by a unified response against a common threat, we are faced with Dr. Twerski's article reminding us that we are still in *Golus*, and that any measured response to an outside attack is warranted only by a "risk-ben-

efit" evaluation beforehand. Although no one can disagree in principle with that caution, Dr. Twerski is quick to conclude on his own that assertive responses to date by Jewish activists have lacked the risk-benefit qualification to justify their usage. He does not, however, provide an objective yardstick for making the risk-benefit evaluation.

Dr. Twerski continues by identifying Jews who demand treatment as first class citizens with those who strive for political and social equality with their non-Jewish neighbors. For this hypothesis, Dr. Twerski alludes to Rabbinical sayings relating to the distinctiveness of *Am Yisroel*. However, these sayings and the issue of Jewish distinctiveness are irrelevant to the questions of assertiveness and the demand for equal rights under the law. Demanding one's rights neither makes one guilty of "combat against adversaries" nor does it demonstrate one's desire for dissolving his Jewish identity.

On the other hand, Dr. Twerski considers Jewish participants in state and federal legislative efforts as "equals" with their non-Jewish counterparts and he promotes the principle of alliances between Jewish and non-Jewish groups for common interests. Why equality in the legislative process in contrast to equality under legislated law in our courts is more beneficial to the Jewish cause is a matter that the author leaves to the reader's conjecture. And why coalitions between Jewish and non-Jewish groups for common interests are preferred to coalitions among Jewish groups themselves for more decisive and unified responses, is a question also left unexplained by Dr. Twerski.

A substantial amount of justification is offered by the writer for the black riots in Crown Heights. Dr. Twerski names black unemployment and Jewish over-reaction to Leonard Jeffries' diatribe against Jews as two important causes for the riots. He suggests that Jews should have toned down their response to Jeffries remarks and instead concentrate their efforts in promoting the welfare of the black community through greater social and legislative efforts.

Aside from the flaws in Dr.

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Twerski's reasoning, I find it difficult to understand why Dr. Twerski would even suggest that Jews, as victims of both incidents, contributed to their own misfortunes. What motivates Dr. Twerski to seek rationalizations for the inexcusable acts committed by the Crown Heights black community against his fellow Jews and at the same time berate Jewish groups for their outcry against such hate and injustice? And why does Dr. Twerski play down the seriousness of Leonard Jeffries' venomous remarks against Jews and play up the reaction to those remarks by concerned Jewish groups?

The fundamental mistake underlying Dr. Twerski's reasoning is his assumption that a Jew must weigh the consequences of his free speech in this democratic society. When it comes to fundamental rights one should not have to make a risk-benefit assessment. On the contrary, voluntarily forfeiting those rights promotes the designs of those who would seek to destroy us. The dangers of silence and acquiescence should have been learned by us from the grim history of our past. We maintain our self-dignity and the respect of others when we exhibit rational responses to situations that affect our welfare and demand what is legally coming to us, never in the obsequious deference we bestow on our wrongdoers. In adhering to such a standard, we compromise, not by one iota, neither our dedication to *Yahadus* nor our distinctiveness as an *Am Kadosh*. Our Torah and our *chachanim* have never advised us to the contrary and neither should Dr. Twerski.

HENRY ADLER
New York City

DR. AARON TWERSKI RESPONDS:

In this issue, *The Jewish Observer* has published two responses to my article on *Golus* and Egalitarianism: one favorable from Senator Patrick Moynihan and the other critical from Henry Adler. Though accolades are sweeter to digest, I am grateful that Mr. Adler has taken pen in hand to write. It provides me yet another opportunity to comment on the issue and clarify my position from serious

misunderstanding.

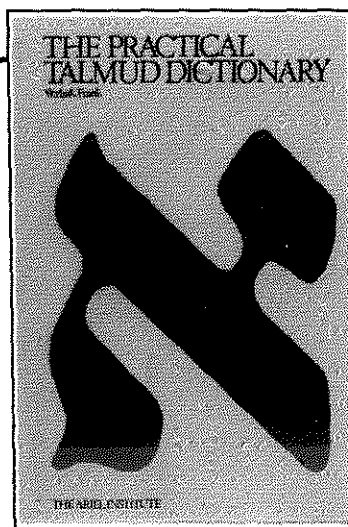
Henry Adler has failed to read my words with care. And where he has not misread my words, his quarrel is not with me but with *Gedolei Yisroel* throughout the ages who flat-out disagree with the position he espouses.

Adler faults my suggestion that all responses to anti-semitism must be subject to careful risk-benefit balancing because I have not provided objective criteria for such weighing. There are two points to be made. First, I offered risk-benefit balancing as an alternative to what I consider to be the dangerously suicidal approach that Professor Alan Dershowitz propounds in *Chutzpah*. We are not free to speak out against anti-semitism with impunity without considering the costs to Jews throughout the world. And we do not begin with a premise that we are "entitled" to all the benefits of first-class citizenship. This means that we do not beat our gums or roll out our drums because it suits our fancy to do so. Risk-ben-

efit weighing is not an all-encompassing answer. As I make abundantly clear in my article, however, it provides a different starting point for analysis. Dershowitz begins at one point on the spectrum and we at a very different point.

As to objective criteria for risk-benefit balancing, I plead guilty as charged. There are no objective criteria. For those familiar with the huge body of literature dealing with risk-benefit balancing in both law and economics, that is hardly a startling admission. But, to devalue a process because there are gray areas is surely untenable. Reasonable persons can differ as to how they evaluate benefits and risks. I believe that anyone who in good faith sought to balance risk and benefit rather than to instinctively react to anti-semitism would not have chosen the Avi Weiss-Dershowitz response to Cardinal Glemp. It made no sense, whatsoever, to antagonize the Catholic Church worldwide for years on end to

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score a debater's point. My discussions with *Godolei Yisroel* confirm that they believe the action to have been irresponsible.

The Black-Jewish Tensions

The Jeffries question is more evenly balanced and I did not suggest otherwise. I did, however, raise the question of whether the high profile vocal response of Jewish organizations to Jeffries took into account the potential high cost of antagonizing blacks. As I made clear in the article, the belief that the Jeffries affair was inextricably linked to the Crown Heights rioting was raised by thoughtful and highly articulate representatives of the Crown Heights Jewish community. They are convinced that the linkage was real and palpable. And what if they were right? On whose back is Mr. Adler prepared to play his free speech theme? Shouldn't the fate of those who are destined to suffer the first strike be taken into account?

At no point did I even hint at forgiveness for or apologies to the black community for outrageous anti-semitism. I made it clear that the is-

sue was not under discussion. Rather I took black anti-semitism in Crown Heights as a given and asked how we should respond to it: Should it be fanned, finessed, or ignored? I am sorry for being the bearer of bad tidings, but unlike in medieval days, I refuse to accept the blame for the bad news I deliver.

At bottom, it is clear that Mr. Adler's quarrel is not with me. My words are an easy target. His truck is with the crystal-clear pronouncements of Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, the *Rebbe* Elimelech of Lizensk, and Reb Elchonon Wasserman. As powerful as their position is in English translation, their words are yet more powerful in the original Hebrew. I challenge Mr. Adler to honestly read the cited passages from their *seforim* and then talk to us about how "free" we are to speak our mind in *Golus*.

Their words are uncompromising. We are not and cannot behave like "first-class citizens" free to respond at whim. We must speak to non-Jews recognizing that they are our "master Eisav" and we are enjoined "*P'nulachem tzefona*"—respond to challenges by evasion. Unpalatable words, I know. But they are not mine.

When Initiatives Are Taken

How then, Mr. Adler asks, do we reconcile the legislative initiatives that Agudath Israel undertakes or the impact litigation which it fosters? I shall let you in on a secret. It is done utilizing the self-same risk-utility balancing that I set forth in the article. We do not make decisions that thrust us into the national limelight without heavy thought and careful weighing. Both the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* and the *Nesius* of Agudath Israel are constantly consulted to determine whether we should undertake a legislative response that raises our profile and can serve as a target for anti-semitism. And they often advise us to stay our hand when the benefits do not warrant exposure to the danger.

At times, the response depends on whether we can join forces with non-Jewish groups. The reasons I set forth in my article are valid. A lower Jewish profile on an issue may make the endeavor less likely to raise unnecessary and unwanted hackles. And parenthetically, we must often sadly eschew cooperation with other Jewish groups when their positions and tactics are inconsistent with Torah *hashkafa*.

Finally, let me be clear. I said in my article (it was set out in bold type in an insert) that in appropriate instances, one may have to fashion a militant response. I have not counseled passivity in all situations. But militancy will be the exception rather than the rule. It will be the product of careful and hard thinking as to whether the situation cannot be dealt with otherwise. The normal presumption favors quiet and reasoned diplomacy. If Mr. Adler had read my article with care, he would have found that I took Jewish leadership to task for not being for more aggressive (and yes, more militant) once rioting broke out in Crown Heights.

I retreat not one iota from the position that my article espouses. Whatever the mode of Jewish speech on the issue of anti-semitism, one thing is certain. Until the coming of the *Goel Tzeddek*, *bimheiro b'yo-meinu*, it will never be "free."

DR. AARON TWERSKI

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MISSING IN JO: THE PRESCRIBED RESPONSE TO "CROWN HEIGHTS"

To the Editor:

Your recently published an article decrying the anti-semitic reaction to the tragedy in Crown Heights (Oct. '91). It is quite unfortunate that you left the issue there. We already have many organizations that have accepted upon themselves the mantle of anti-anti-semitism, the ADL and AJC at the forefront. What is the JO doing for us, if it is only repeating the charges and complaints that are generally put forward by these groups? What perspective should the JO be offering us at such times?

A look at the Rambam in *Hilchos Ta'anis* will call for a different response! The Rambam begins by telling us that it is a *mitzva* to cry out to Hashem whenever there is a *tzora* (crisis) in the community. He explains that this is expected as part of the *mitzva* of *teshuva*, and if there is a proper response on our part, the *tzora* will be removed. If the community does not bother to do *teshuva*, but rather feels that this is just one of those things that happens, it is a cruelty on their part and the problems will only increase. He continues to describe the communal fasts and days of *teffila* which are the appropriate response. He says that the leaders of the community should spend the morning in the *shuls* investigating the community's behavior and correcting any errors that are found. They must warn and investigate those who are not being honest in their business dealings, and properly castigate the haughty, and any similar things that must be done.

At the beginning of the second *Perek*, the Rambam gives us a definition of what is called a *tzora*. The first thing the Rambam mentions is the *tzora* caused by the enemies of the Jews.

This is what I found lacking in your article. What happened to this Torah perspective that we have lived with for 2000 years? I believe in the same issue you quote a prominent *mechaneches* as saying that she doesn't know what *daas Torah* is on

a subject until she reads the JO. If you do wish to carry that mantle, what happened here? Why did *daas Torah* lose out to ADL-type rhetoric?

As a parent and *mechanech*, I see daily how important it is to teach children a sense of responsibility, and to teach them that they can't go through life blaming others for their problems. We must realize that this is true when it comes to anti-semitism as well. We must view it as a message from Hashem and respond to it and deal with it as such. We may not allow our perspective to be clouded and twisted and blinded by the anti-anti-semitism establishment.

CHAYIM LANDO
Los Angeles, California

DEALING WITH TROUBLED ADOLESCENTS: THE BUCK STOPS AT HOME

To the Editor:

The article by Dr. Wikler in your November issue of the JO on troubled adolescents is another important article which yet again opens the doors of family problems in the community which have remained closed for such a long time.

Dr. Wikler in the case of the "Schwartz" family cites a series of disturbing incidents which exacerbated Dovid's condition. It appears that except for the lack of parental harmony in their approach to their son, "Mr. and Mrs. Schwartz" featured little in the causes of Dovid's difficulties. The concept of "*Re'u gidulim she-gidalto*," that the buck stops with the parents, does not come over as clearly as it should. Environmental influence is very powerful, but outside influences are fertile soil only if nourishment from the home is insufficient.

Perhaps one ought to ask a few pertinent questions regarding the parents about whom Dr. Wikler tells us little.

What is the father's profession? Has he ever played spontaneously with Dovid? Is the father constantly at work? Does the mother work? Has she always worked? Was Dovid left for long periods with a baby-sitter? Did the mother feel guilty if she did work? Did the father expect Dovid to

perform well at the Shabbos table? Was the father the "Grand Farherer"? Did the parents criticize teachers in front of Dovid? Do the parents live their *Yiddishkeit* or do they introduce every mundane act as a religious exercise? Does the father lack *kavana*

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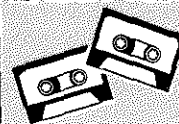
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in the *Amidah* by turning to his son with an angry look for not having *kavana* in the *Amidah*? Are there double standards? Do the parents show affection to each other and to the children? Is the home a relaxed place?

There are many questions to be asked, and the reason why I ask them here is because parents who identify with the problems raised in Dr. Wikler's article need to analyze privately their own home scenario and look as objectively as possible at their own lifestyles to see if something needs rectifying. These are not the only questions to be asked, but from my experience, these are the basic problems to be addressed, and whilst schools can contribute to religious problems in adolescence, the home usually triggers off the pattern which, if not corrected at source, will produce only second-rate solutions.

RABBI M.I. YOUNG

PRINCIPAL: JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
AND MESIVTA DARCHEI NOAM FOR BOYS
Salford, England

MORE TO "TROUBLED ADOLESCENTS" THAN REPORTED

To the Editor:

The author of the article "Parenting a Troubled Adolescent in a Torah Home" brought up some interesting points in dealing with our "troubled" youth. I believe, however, that he did

not touch on several aspects of this problem. After growing up in an environment with a number of troubled adolescents, I can say the following without fear of contradiction:

1. Those schools that put the major emphasis on "knowing the material" and "getting good grades" invariably turn out a higher percentage of troubled adolescents than those that put the main emphasis on *middos* and on following proper Torah *hashkafa*. As the *Messilas Yesarim* says: "Is it possible that our intellect exert itself and work on investigations which we are not obligated in, in fruitless arguments, and *dinim* which do not pertain to us, and that which we are greatly obligated to our Creator we abandon to routine and leave to habit?!... And *middos* likewise need correction and perfection. Who will perfect or correct them, if we don't pay attention to them and subject the matter to careful scrutiny?" (*Hakdama*)

Likewise the Vilna Gaon writes: "Man's main purpose in life is to correct (lit. "break") his *middos*. And if not—what is he living for?" (*Even Sheleima* 1:2)

One need only review the articles "Reaching the Bottom 3/3's of the Class" and "Return of the Drop-outs" in the Nissan, 5742, "Report Card" issue of *The Jewish Observer* to get some idea of what I'm referring to. (The contention that the number of

acting-out adolescents in the Torah community does not exceed that of the larger societies is not a means of justification. Even *Bilam Harasha* could only say "*Hein am levadad yishkon*"—it is not our place to compare ourselves to the larger societies.)

2. The author stated that "By sitting down at the bargaining table and drawing up a behavioral contract, parents stand the greatest chance of reaching a working compromise with their children." True—but careful now. Compromising is only a means to an end. Experience has proven time and again that troubled adolescents are likely to make an eventual comeback mainly in cases where the parents show some resentment *even while negotiating* with their adolescent, rather than acting as if they "condone" a half-way measure. Furthermore, by negotiating with reluctance, parents would likewise discourage other brothers and sisters from *chas veshalom* following suit.

3. "There are times when good judgment dictates that it is preferable to ignore a minor infraction of the rules rather than make a federal case out of it." This statement is worthy of repetition. It can apply not only with regard to adolescents that are outwardly rebellious, but also to those that are inwardly "bothered." One must realize that many "troubled" adolescents have the patience not to "fly off the handle" so easily. Detecting the "early warning signs" may prevent an actual rebellion from taking place at all.

* * *

And now for prevention: "A person must look after his children very carefully to make certain that they go in G-d's ways" (*Even Sheleima* 6:1): There are those adolescents who have had unfortunate experiences in their younger days, when they were punished too harshly for minor infractions, causing them to look for solace with the "wrong" friends. On the other hand, many rebellious teenagers grew up in homes where the parents never disciplined them at all in their younger years.

"One should not strike his child many times at once, only a little at a time as required. Should the parent perceive that he is very angry, he

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should not hit his child until he calms down" (*Even Sheleima* 6:4).

"The wicked man knows that his way is evil and bitter, yet it is difficult for him to part from it. Therefore the prime objective is to train a person in his youth, the green shell of a nut is easy to remove" (*ibid* 6:5).

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST
Jerusalem, Israel

DR. WIKLER RESPONDS:

I appreciate Rabbi Young's frustration with the brevity of the "Dovid Schwartz" case history. It should be noted that many details in the case history were omitted because of space considerations.

The case history as it did appear, however, cited more parental causes for Dovid's difficulties than merely "the lack of parental harmony." I do welcome this opportunity to highlight some of the other contributing factors for which the parents were responsible.

When he was in the third grade, Dovid was tested and some "mild learning deficits" were found. Although "retesting was advised in 2-3 years," no further evaluation was ever conducted. Here the parents were clearly remiss in not following through.

In the fifth grade, "Both his *Rebbe* and English teacher complained that Dovid was not completing his homework." Once again, the parents were at fault for missing this flashing warning sign.

At the beginning of the following year, "Mrs. Schwartz thought Dovid should get counseling, but Mr. Schwartz felt it a waste of money." Besides the obvious parental disharmony this revealed, Mr. Schwartz also demonstrated an attitude shared by many in the *frum* community that counseling, especially for school-aged children, is useless and ineffective. Had Mr. Schwartz allowed Dovid to receive professional help earlier than he finally did, perhaps it could have been more effective than it was.

Finally, "Mr. Schwartz would lose his temper more often than his wife." Undoubtedly, either parent's loss of control fanned the fires of Dovid's alienation and rebellion.

Surely, there was much that Mr. and Mrs. Schwartz needed to rectify. But blaming them totally would not only be unfair, it would also be inaccurate, because outside influences were very powerful in this case.

Again, let us examine the record. Dovid's fourth grade *Rebbe* was so unacceptable that he was not rehired the following year. The first therapist the family was assigned to left the agency before the Schwartzes achieved any results from counseling. The psychiatrist who treated Dovid offered the parents "little guidance." The principal of Dovid's yeshiva gave his parents the impression that if he knew of Dovid's psychiatric treatment, "it would be held against him." In short, Dovid's parents not only contributed to his difficulties, they were also victimized by a complex series of unfortunate circumstances which were well *beyond their control*.

As discussed previously ("The Home and the Yeshiva: Shifted or Shared Responsibility?" J.O., Nov., '79, pp. 17 - 20), both parents and *yeshivos* may find solace in blaming each other for the tragedies of our troubled youth. But real solutions will only be found if parents and *mechanchim* fulfill their respective responsibilities, accept their limitations, avoid mutual recriminations, and recognize that they share the identical goal of producing *bnei* and *bnos Torah*.

Name Withheld has also "brought up some interesting points," only some of which I will address here, due to space limitations.

A distinction was made between "schools that put the major emphasis on knowing the material" and "those that put the main emphasis on *middos*." Of the Torah schools with which I am familiar, none would identify themselves as belonging fully to either category; they aim for a balance between the two. Moreover, the writer gives us no clue as to what criteria he uses to determine which schools belong in the minor-emphasis-on-*middos* group. All of this ambiguity, therefore, casts further doubt on the statistic that the nameless schools in the former category "turn out a higher percentage of troubled adolescents

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that those" in the minor-emphasis-on-knowledge schools.

A final word on *middos*. All would certainly agree that "*middos* need correction and perfection." This applies to adults and children, as well as to adolescents. There is disagreement, however, even amongst *Gedolei Yisroel* (great Torah personalities) regarding what the most productive strategy for achieving perfection of *middos* is.

The fact that the proportion of acting-out adolescents in the Torah community is smaller than that of the larger society was not cited "to justify" anything. It was cited to inform, as was the purpose of the article.

The writer adds, "It is not our place to compare ourselves to the larger societies." That may be so. But it is our place to *contrast* ourselves with society at large. In doing so we emulate our Creator. After all, do His *tefillin* not contain the verse, "*Mi k'amcha Yisroel, goy echad ba'aretz*" ("Who is like Your people, Israel, a singular nation in the world")? *Meseches Berachos* 6a. When we contrast ourselves with the sorry state of the larger society, we highlight our unique privilege, purpose and position in the world.

Finally, I would agree that while some acting out adolescents were "punished too harshly for minor infractions,...many rebellious teenagers grew up in homes where the par-

ents never disciplined them at all." So once again, we see that complex and vexing problems, such as the tragedy of rebellious youth, cannot be distilled to any single causal factor. We must resist the seductive impulse to point the finger of blame in any one direction. In the desperate and, at times, frantic search for a solution, therefore, we must recognize the need to combine varied forces, approaches and resources in order to steer rebellious youth back onto the *derech hayashar* (the right path).

DR. MEIR WIKLER

THE CORROSIVE ATMOSPHERE IN THE WORKPLACE: THE WIDESPREAD VULNERABILITY

To the Editor:

Your article, "In the Wake of the Thomas Hearings" (Nov. '91), showed that we can—and should—find a Torah perspective on world and national events. May I point out several angles I believe you overlooked:

I certainly recall that "a decade ago," Torah leaders began to lament the movement of Bais Yaakov girls from the Seminary to the office. A decade ago my friends and I were those girls, deciding how best to balance a life of Kollel with the need to support a family. While I heard (and often agreed with) the complaints from principals and *Roshei Yeshiva* about

"the spiritually corrosive atmosphere" of the outside business world, I'm afraid that I could not think of many alternatives. *Chinuch*, my own eventual choice, is not a universal one.

While organizations such as Agudath Israel were offering successful business courses in a *frum* atmosphere, these too were often derided as simply another step "out the door." We may cry out for the loss of *tzenius* in our *Bnos Yisroel*, but the inspiration of being part of the Torah world seems to have been encouraging them in that direction for years.

A point, too, about our *Bnei Yisroel*, in regard to those "unwanted discussions" from the men (and growing number of women) who supervise at work. Are our husbands, fathers and sons any less at risk from the camaraderie of the men and women they work with, and the anti-Torah values they express? There are values that, as any wife knows, are brought home too often with the portfolios and attache cases.

The problem will not be solved by pretending it does not exist. It would certainly be helpful if the *yeshivos* would become involved and prepare our young men for a world many of them will face.

MRS. FRANCES BERGSTEIN
Brooklyn, N.Y.

MORE ON "KIDS UP FOR GRABS"

To the Editor:

I want to thank you for publishing my article, "Jewish Kids Up For Grabs," in the December issue of *The Jewish Observer*, describing the work of the Jewish Children's Adoption Network. It is crucial that the Jewish community becomes involved in fighting for the right of Jewish children to be placed in Jewish homes.

Two points needed clarification, as well as an additional point that was omitted:

1. The third paragraph should have read, "It was at that point that the JCAN, which had already been asked to find a Jewish one for Nelli, was informed about her proposed placement." In fact, we were asked to find a home for her on March 1, and had already suggested several, when the non-Jewish couple was intro-

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duced to Nelli. The Jewish home where she now is placed was one of those, and is by all criteria a more appropriate placement for Nelli.

2. The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)'s annual training conference will take place this August in Ottawa. We would love to see many Jewish social workers and adoptive families come and make their presence and opinions known!

3. Anyone seeking information about the NACAC conference, interested in adopting a child, wanting us to help find a Jewish home for a child in need, or interested in helping the Jewish Children's Adoption Network (all donations are tax-deductible) can reach us at (303)573-8113 or at P.O. Box 16544, Denver, CO 80216-0544.

(MRS.) VICKI KRAUSZ
Denver, CO.

HELP FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN IN NEED OF HOME PLACEMENT

To the Editor:

Yasher Koach to Vicki Krausz and *The Jewish Observer* for their help in publicizing the plight of Jewish children not fortunate enough to be able to grow up in a Jewish home. As our community *Baruch Hashem* grows, we must also realize that there are increasing numbers of children who will be born with disabling conditions. When this occurs, many parents are in a state of shock and often, upon the advice of those they know and trust, are encouraged to place their children to assure a more "normal" existence for the rest of the family. The tragedy of this decision is that it is usually made without a complete understanding of the disabling condition, help and treatments available, and, above all, the potential for the family's life to be enriched by the special child's *neshama*. Notwithstanding this, there are many parents who because of their special situations cannot legitimately care for their children and need our help. To these numbers are added those Jewish children who, due to chaotic and disturbed family circumstances, cannot remain at home. Some are even the

victims of child abuse and neglect.

If the parents of these children are concerned that they be placed in a Jewish home, New York law, pursuant to a federal court stipulation, guarantees them the right to request placement with Ohel Children's Home and Family Services—the only agency in the nation specifically designated to serve the needs of those who desire an Orthodox Jewish environment. But if no parent makes this request or if the family is not from New York, no such guarantees are in place and it is a long and hard effort to influence the authorities accordingly. It is even harder to seek to assign a child who has already been placed in a non-Jewish home because we are then infringing on the role of other licensed agencies who have custody. These agencies can easily determine from their perspective that the best interests of the child lie with his remaining in his current placement, especially when a good adjustment has been made.

It is therefore important that all concerned Jews are as helpful and supportive to families in these circumstances as possible and intervene early to encourage them to insist on a Jewish placement. As a licensed agency, Ohel cannot officially act as advocate, but we can and are constant and knowledgeable advisors to those who are.

Of course, once the child is successfully placed with Ohel, we provide total and comprehensive services to the child and the family, including all necessary medical and dental care, social work services and psychological counseling, yeshiva or special education, and recreation, in addition to a warm and caring home to live in.

Because of the ever increasing numbers, more foster and adoptive homes are desperately needed, especially for disabled children. We cannot save a Jewish child unless there is a family ready to step forward and undertake this special *mitzva*. More information about being certified as a foster or adoptive parent and supports available can be obtained by calling Ohel at 718-851-6300.

LESTER R. KAUFMAN, ACSW
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
OHEL CHILDREN'S HOME & FAMILY SERVICES
Brooklyn, N.Y.

FIGHTING INTERMARRIAGE—BY ACTION INSTEAD OF KRECHTZ

To the Editor:

Taking my cue from the stirring remarks of Hagaon Rav Shimon Schwab, at the recent Agudath Israel Convention, I feel that I must comment on your story regarding intermarriage (Second Looks at Intermarriage: "If You Can't Beat Them....," JO, Nov. '91).

Rav Schwab mentioned the very real crisis of *Misyavunim* rabbis doing *Misyavunim* conversions in their *Misyavunim* temples, and the severe erosion of halachic values in the centrist community, but moved on to suggest that perhaps a far better use of the limited time available at the

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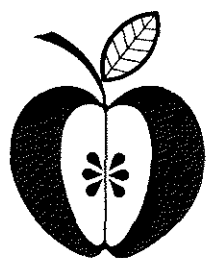


convention would be to deliver some much needed reproof to our own *chareidi* community to fulfill Chazal's admonition of "k'shot atzmecho."

In your well-articulated article, you take the Reform movement to task for



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creating serious breaches in *yichus* in their misguided quest to stem assimilation by validating intermarriages. You are correct in that all they are accomplishing is a mutilation of the 3,500 year old, almost pristine *yichus* environment of the Jewish People.

I would thus expect your fine publication to marshal your readers to do something concrete about the problem. But, of course, the problem's been that there was no way to reach the millions of Jews who are intermarrying at the rate of 53 out of every 100.

I'm sure it will come as news to most of your readers that over the past four years the Aish HaTorah "Discovery Seminar" has demonstrated that we can speak to our Jewish brothers and sisters, unapologetically and intelligently, about the presence of the *Ribbono shel Olam* and the absolute truth of Torah—and they will listen. They listen so well, in fact, that after attending a single one- or three-day seminar, well over 90% (and we're talking about completely unaffiliated Jews here) said that they now understood "Judaism to be most important...in choosing a spouse." Aish HaTorah's Discovery program now attracts 10,000 non-*frum* Jews a year in 85 seminars across the country. In addition, Aish HaTorah sponsors once a week learning programs boasting 4,000 registered participants who are not *frum*.

The point of this is to make an impassioned plea to all observant Jews: refer your non-*frum* friends, neighbors and business associates to Discovery and programs like it, which offer not a promise of a brighter tomorrow, but an immediate *hatzolas nefoshos* of the highest order.

YERACHMIEL MILSTEIN
DIRECTOR, THE NATIONAL DISCOVERY
PROGRAM—AISH HATORAH
New York City

WHAT "ORDINARY JEWS" ARE CAPABLE OF ACCOMPLISHING

To the Editor:

I recently met a couple of ordinary Jews (as opposed to Jews who require an adjective before the word "Jew"). Perhaps your readers would like to meet them, too.

Last month, my aunt, ע"ה, was

niftar in Florida, in a city that is far both physically and spiritually from Miami. There was no one locally that was able to perform the *tahara* according to *halacha*. On Thursday night, at 11:30, Mr. L. of Miami, received a telephone call requesting his assistance in arranging the *tahara*. He worked on the problem for a while and when all other solutions proved impossible, he said, "Give us a few minutes to find a babysitter and I'll drive my wife up to you so she can do the *tahara*." They arrived at 5:00 a.m. Mrs. L. led two local women (who had never participated before in a *tahara*) for an hour and a half through the steps of the *tahara*. When it was complete, they refused to accept any money for the trip, got back into their car and drove the 4½ hours back to Miami. They even followed up with a call right before *Shabbos* to make sure that the funeral had gone okay (and to invite us over for *Shabbos* the next time we were in Miami!).

Ordinary Jews. There was a *mitzva* to be done so they did it. To Mr. and Mrs. L. there was no question of "will we?" or "won't we?". Their only concern was "How will we get this done?"

It is a concern we would all do well to adopt.

MINDY MANDEL
Passaic, N.J.

OF WASTE AND SHEIMOS

To the Editor

The subjects of this letter are *sheimos* (papers containing the Name of *Hashem*, which require burial for proper disposal) and *baal tash'chis* (wasting money).

For several months I have been working for a Jewish funeral parlor (name and address withheld). Frequently, we received boxes of *sheimos* for burial, which we do gratis even though burial plots are expensive and their use for *sheimos* represents a potential financial loss.

Out of curiosity we inspected some boxes and found that the contents could be categorized into three classes of papers: (a) garbage not containing *Hashem's* name; (b) photocopies of *sifrei kodesh* and dilapidated *sifrei kodesh*; (c) usable *seforim*, often in excellent condition, and, in several in-

The Jewish Observer, February 1992

stances, thirty or more copies of one or more *sifrei kodesh*, such as would have been used to supply and entire class at a yeshiva! I diverted these *seforim* to a new yeshiva specializing in Iranians and Russians.

Obviously, it should not be too much to ask for people to dispose of their own garbage. Obviously, *sifrei kodesh*, where otherwise unusable or irreparable, must be buried. The photocopying proliferation is another problem which I will leave to someone else to deal with. It is on the issue of boxes of usable *seforim* that I am writing.

A. I would recommend that communal groups, such as Agudath Israel, start book repositories to which anyone can mail their "excess" *seforim*. The organization can then separate rare publications, and distribute the others to groups in need.

B. The biggest *shanda* (shame) is the *bizayon* (disgrace) to the *seforim* and the *baal tash'chis* represented by the burial of perfectly usable *seforim*. The world is in a "*Schwerre Matsiv*," we Jews especially. Perhaps this punishment comes as a result of the profligate wasting of resources. Even after we give *maaseros* and *tsaddaka*, we still are forbidden to squander resources, as it is written in *Chaggai HaNavi* (2, 8): "For Mine is the silver, Mine is the Gold," saith The L-rd of Hosts."

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

LETTER FROM A MOTHER OF "KIDS ON THE FRINGE"

To The Editor:

Thank you, thank you and *yasher koach* to both *The Jewish Observer* and your anonymous author and educator for having the courage to finally address this most painful but pervasive problem in our community ("Kids on the Fringe," May, '91). I write, unfortunately, from first-hand experience as a single mother and custodial parent of my children (all boys). Needless to say, my teenagers fell prey to exactly the lifestyle you describe, and possibly for many of the same reasons. And the pain of this situation is multiplied many times beyond the pain of the so-called good child rejected on the basis of his scholastic prowess. Here, there is the failed marriage, the children having

to bungle through the separation, the anger at the parents who put them through this, the complication of re-marriage on one or both sides with step-siblings and new grandparents, and possible additions from the new marriage, anger frequently left over from unresolved issues in the old marriage, and the shame of facing friends with this new status of divorced parents.

Picture a boy sometimes having to go to *shul* and sitting alone while his friends sit with their fathers. Then there's the mother trying to "*fere tisch*" until her boys hit Bar Mitzva age and they assume the position their father is supposed to be holding (which he does, on alternate *Shabbosos*). Imagine your children not bringing home *Shabbos* guests for one of two reasons: either he is ashamed, or other parents don't allow it because there is no intact family at the table. Your child, however, is frequently welcome at other tables because he "*nebach*" does not have a home. Message to child? I am different, and that is exacerbated by your intact family at your *Shabbos* table.

Feelings of sadness and anger frequently overwhelm the child, resulting in the acting-out behavior so accurately described by your author. Now the problem becomes more complicated. Acting out child is given feeling that he is tainted and spoiled goods. Even Rabbi Bender, who did the lost children an ultimate *chessed* of bringing problems to the forefront, (JO, May '91) still could not tackle this more pervasive problem beyond "the boy who has even slightly strayed off the well-defined '*derech*,' the boy with the so-called 'bummy appearance'... whom most high schools will not touch."

Imagine being the parent of the boy whom most high schools "won't touch." Think how you want to protect your children from "the wrong element" and then think again what it would be like for your child to be "the wrong element." Do you know what it's like to work a full day (because a single parent, no matter how generous the ex-spouse, can't support a family on "child support" alone), come home to a house full of children, with no one to shoulder any of the burden? Not the housework, not the shopping, doctor

appointments, all aspects of child-rearing, bill-paying; and now complicate this by children acting out. While you yourself are trying to deal with being single. This child cutting school, that son running around with a pack of friends like himself (boys and girls), this principal calling you for another report of what this child's done now, and he's hanging on to his place in this yeshiva by a hair. One false move and it's "*ois yeshiva*." How much good parenting is left in this mother who has to juggle such a load?

And finally, to add insult to injury,

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EMERGENCY

Please help us meet the daily needs of an old European Jew in his 80's who has recently come to this country all alone to be able to live among Jews. A man who has survived the Nazis, remained the only Jew in his town for fifty years and continued putting on Tefillin each day. As he awaits a hearing with the immigration authority, money is needed for rent and basic necessities.

He has been humbled; let us not humble him beyond what is humanely possible.

PLEASE HELP!

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there is the community, which sees your child in these "bummy" clothes, with his "bummy" friends. They notice that maybe you couldn't even get them off to *shul* Friday night because their rebellion extends this far. They have *rachmonus* but somehow sense that you have really failed. Or the ex-spouse has failed. Even the very compassionate author of this article very mildly points a finger at these parents, even while bending over backwards to temper that blame: "...But even when problems appear to derive from human failure, marital or parenting..." So imagine now you are that parent, and you feel, on top of all this, that you have overwhelmingly failed. How many children emerging from this situation feel anything more than "on the fringe"?

Does Klal Have a Role?

The author is most correct in saying that the responsibility should be shared by the *Klal*. Perhaps the first thing a community imbued with *chessed* needs to do is not to treat these children as if they have some contagious disease. The children know full well how they are regarded in the community, and this alienates them further. It's true, all *yeshivos* cannot bear the burden of all children, but in a community where we are taught to do *chessed*, surely we should not throw these souls (*neshamos*) away because we fear for the yeshiva's good name, or our emotionally stable child's good name who by association with the troubled child might *shtet* his/her own *shidduch*. Even public schools have programs for the most difficult of what *goyishe* society must deal with; surely some *yeshivos* can deal with these problems which usually don't even approach the public school type problems! Especially to insure that they don't become such problems. (This summer I learned of two *frum* boys who died of drug overdoses!)

There are wonderful people who have tried to help. I have dealt with many of them personally: Principals and *Rebbeim* who have spent long hours in conference with me on the phone and in person, hanging on to the child who ordinarily would have been thrown out long ago. Another principal, knowing the extent of one

son's "history," accepting the child in his yeshiva anyway and working hard with him to give him that chance. An older *bachur* who has kept a strong *kesher* with the son and his harried mother to try to keep the boy straight. The *Rav* and *Rebbitzin* from my *shul*, who open their hearts and home whenever they can, if accomplishing nothing more than giving the *chizuk* this stressed-out single mother sometimes needs to go on another day.

Finally I'd like to mention people I've met along the way who have opened programs for these "throw-away" children. Rabbi Avi Davidowitz heads Torah Academy of Brooklyn. With minimal space and even less funding he tries hard to accept every boy who has failed in the mainstream. The boys are constantly guests in his home and the homes of his staff. He takes them on trips, he and his *Rebbitzin* have them for *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, he is on the phone with them day and night. He has reached the point where he has to often say no to *Rebbeim* who ask him to shoulder the burden they cannot carry in their *yeshivos*. The *Rebbeim* have been frustrated by the refusals he must sometimes give, and have asked him how he can turn down their souls. Yeshiva RTzahd is another such institution, which accepted a problem child, sight unseen, just by virtue of my phone conversations with the principals.

Yes, there is *chessed* out there but the problem is great. It is time for us to open our eyes to the fact that we don't all live on 613 Torah Avenue, that even if we all follow the same timeworn recipes of all the Dov Dov books, etc., our children will not necessarily be on the proper *derech*, and that if we are truly as *frum* as we say we are, that we should deal *b'chessed* in the same way with our lost souls as we ask *Hashem* to deal with us. If we can't do something personally, perhaps we could delegate our *tzeddaka* dollars to those institutions that are trying their best to pick up the broken pieces. Perhaps we can all have a *zechus* in rescuing a precious soul, and as we all know, "He who saves one soul is as if he has saved the entire world."

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CLARIFICATIONS ON THE ARTICLE ON RABBI DOVID LEIBOWITZ, זצ"ל IN THE DECEMBER, 1991 ISSUE OF THE JEWISH OBSERVER:

Rabbi Moshe Rosen, Chvaidaner *Rav* and author of *Nezer HaKodesh*, was the *Rosh Yeshiva* of the *Beis Midrash* level of Torah Vodaath from September 1926 to June 1928. Upon his departure, the *Beis Midrash talmidim* also left. Rabbi Dovid Leibowitz joined the faculty of Torah Vodaath in June, 1927, and when the *Beis Midrash* was reorganized in 1929, became the *Rosh Yeshiva*.

The source for the Chofetz Chaim's view on the use of mechanical shavers that existed in his day, cited in the article, is found in his *sefer Likutei Halochos*, in a note to *Makkos*, *Perek* 3.

His words:

והנה לפי המאשינקע החדשה שמספרין במ
(היינו מה שקורין אל וכ"ש חצי אל) שמגלחין
כתער ממש ותולש השער לגמרי ולא נשאר
מאומה המספר במ את זקנו לכאורה עובר על
מה שכתוב ופאת זקנם לא יגלחו ושומר נפשו
ירחק מזה מאד.

"... According to this, the new machine that they shave with (called 'ohl, and certainly the half-'ohl) that cuts off the hair exactly as a razor does and cuts the hair entirely with nothing left — a person who shaves his beard with it would seem to be in transgression of the Torah's words, 'and the corner of their beards they shall not raze.' And one who would protect his soul should stay very far from this." ["Ohl" — "zero" — was a measurement used at the time to refer to the degree of closeness of the shave.]

Translations cannot, of course, be entirely exact, and this one should not be taken as authoritative. One must, in any case, study the entire contextual *sugya* carefully to understand the meaning here. A full *halachic* discussion of the subject, including an analysis of the extent and application of the Chofetz Chaim's words, oral traditions from him, and what other *Gedolei Olam* have said on the question of shavers, was outside the scope of my article.

YITZCHOK BRANDRISS

The Jewish Observer, February 1992

Invisible Ledgers

They went shopping for shoes today
Three children and a mother
Riding home in the bus
She observes the day's acquisitions:
Six shiny shoes neatly laced in a row
Three bobbing balloons at the ends of sticks
Definite gains.

Then she pats her depleted wallet, remembering
There are losses, too.
In her mind's eye she sees
The balloons next week
Sagging, airless skins, sticks broken in half
While the children cry for new toys.
The shoes that gleam so bravely today
Will be scuffed later, and frayed
Bursting at the seams, ready for the trash-heap
Demanding further outlays
Of cold, hard cash.

She is tired, so tired
Of adding up
 shaping up
 keeping up.
Riding through the dusk
The years hang heavy on her
And the losses.

She ushers the children home
Still and sad in a twilight hush
Watching them admire the new shoes,
Caper with balloons.
And sitting there, she begins
To notice things.

Her daughter, the older one
Makes a thoughtful remark
She could not have made a month ago

The middle one endures the wait till supper
With a little more patience
Than before

The youngest boy says his bracha
Clear and proud
And does not dispute his mother's "no."

The sighs shrivel and die
Pain turns to wonder
A mother stops counting the minutes.
In an invisible ledger she tallies instead
Each nugget of hard-won wisdom
Each treasured shred of nachas
And her soul, radiant balloon
Gently expands
With her knowledge, her joy:

Thieves may pick her pockets
And the years steal her strength
But they cannot take even the tiniest part
Of what she has
This moment
In this room.
She smiles.
Though her wallet be thin
Her coffers are full.

Libby Lazewnik, a published poet and author of stories for youth, lives in the Har Nof section of Jerusalem. Her poem, "A Private Waterloo," was featured in *The Jewish Observer*, September, '91.

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