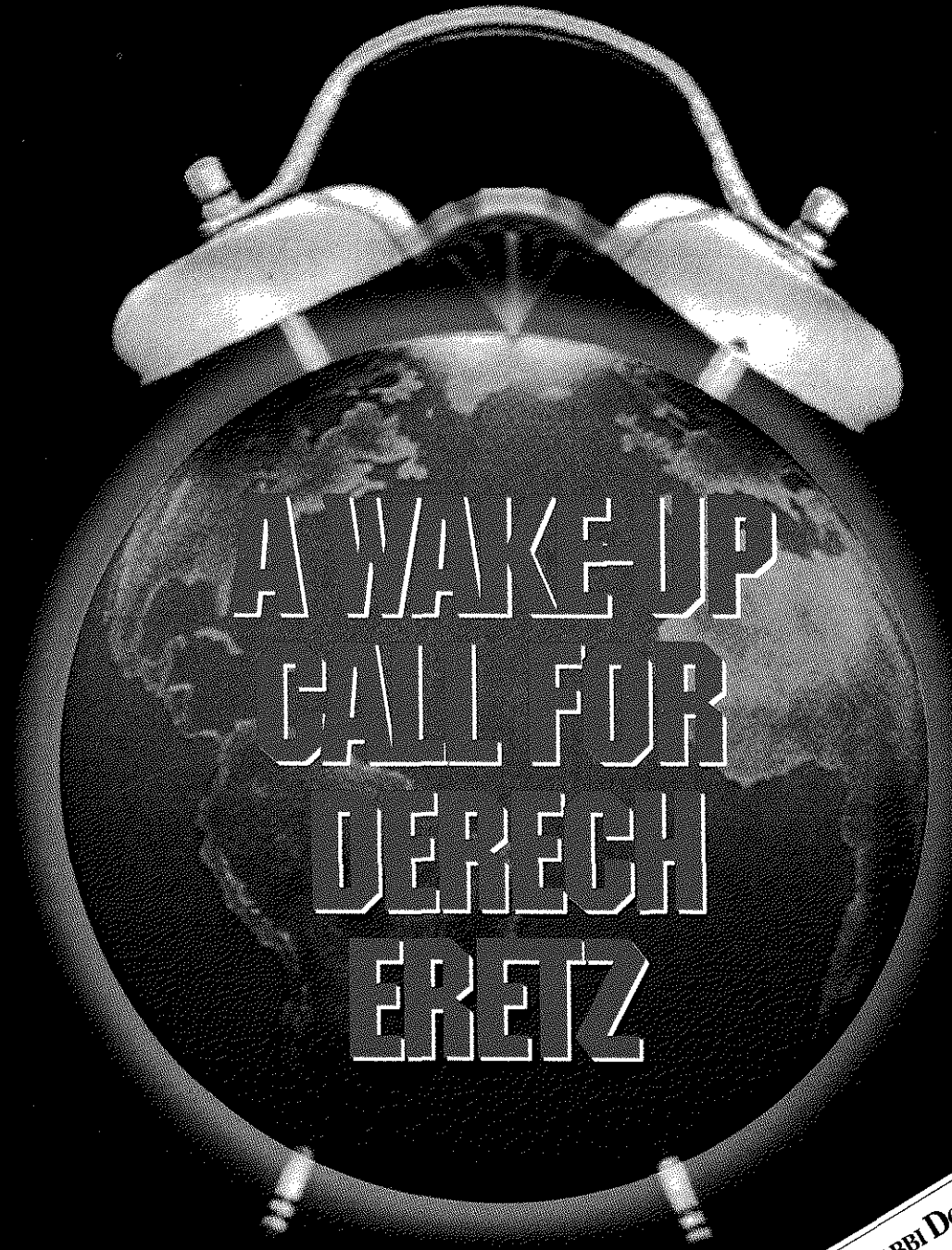


THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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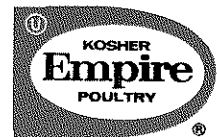
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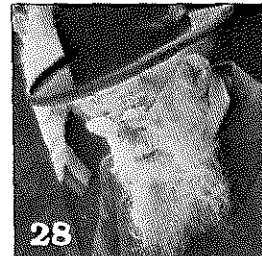
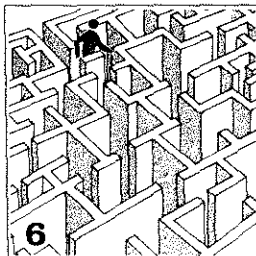
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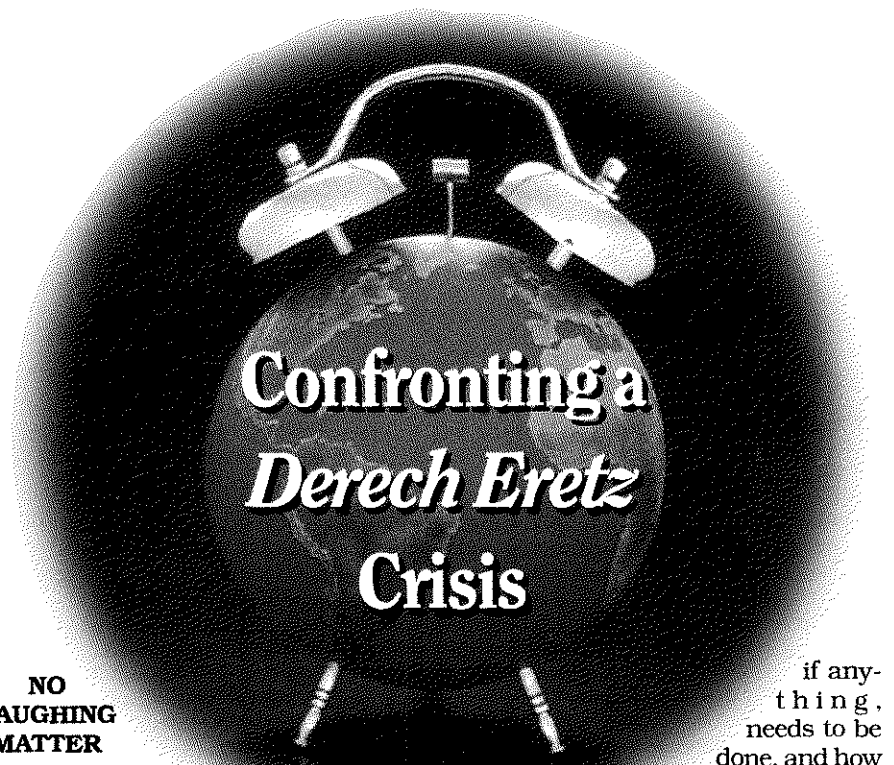
Is DERECH ERETZ IN CRISIS?

Derech eretz seems to be disappearing; at least such is the claim. More than niceties of interpersonal relations, derech eretz is a foundation of Torah life. If there is such a problem, we would do well to examine it and see how to ameliorate the situation.

In the articles that follow, three distinguished writers address this theme. **Dr. Jacob Mermelstein**, a practicing psychologist in the New York area, focuses on the discrepancy between strict fidelity to the letter of halacha and an "unpleasant demeanor" that sometimes reside within the same person, and offers strategies to correct it.

Rabbi Yitzchak Feigenbaum, an outreach professional in Toronto, engages the reader in pursuit of that elusive quality, *yashrus* (uprightness), which crowned the stature of our Patriarchs, and should be prominent among each Jew's goals. He searches for methods of achieving it.

An article based on a lecture by the late **Rabbi Yitzchok Kirzner**, זצ"ל, one of the outstanding teachers of recent times, offers insights in how to instill *middos tovos*—sterling character traits—in our children.



NO LAUGHING MATTER

Men lacht fun dem naar, ober der naar iz meiner—

One pokes fun at the fool, but if I am the fool—or my relative is—then the joke is on me, and the pain is my own. We strive to be *frum*, and the word needs no explanation. Yet we chuckle and nod our heads in a kind of reluctant acknowledgment when one repeats once more the sad joke: "What is the acronym of F-R-U-M? *Feil Rishus Und Meshugaas*. Much evil and insanity."

Yet one of the primary goals of the Torah Jew is to be a *mensch*, an individual free of moral depravity and full of goodness... his life governed by *bitachon*, trust and faith, and devoid of superstitious, unreasonable fears and *meshugaas*¹, those subtle quirks of behavior that are wrong, irrational and simply not Jewish.

So let us define the accusations, inspect them for accuracy, and see what.

Dr. Mermelstein, a psychologist in private practice, is certified in his field by the States of New York and New Jersey, and is a diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology. A *musmach* of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, Dr. Mermelstein leads his local *Daf Yomi shiur* in Agudath Israel of Long Island. Well known as a lecturer and author, several of his articles have been featured in *The Jewish Observer*.

if anything, needs to be done, and how one goes about it. Admittedly,

there are individuals who

study Torah, observe the *mitzvos*, give charity and are honest²; yet their general demeanor is somehow unpleasant. They are impatient, curt with their fellowman, simply "not nice." In addition, there is a kind of "uptightness," a blend of anxiety and depression—not exactly in a clinical, pathological way, yet lacking in calm confidence inherent in *emuana* and *bitachon*—faith and trust. A lack in being a *mensch* and a *Yid*, the Torah way.

¹ "Tomim ti'hiyeh im Hashem Elokecho (Devarim 18,14) Be whole heartedly (trusting) in Hashem." See *Rashi*. Walk with Him with simple faith. Depend on Him. Do not speculate (and overly worry) about the future.

² In spite of recent "exposures"—even by our own well-meaning but, in my opinion, misguided friends, Jews, even Orthodox ones, unfortunately have their share of mental ills and emotional maladjustments. But: Torah Jews who beat their wives are still rare. Those who do drugs or take to drink are still few and far between. The divorce rate is still relatively low, and the same holds true for stealing and cheating. Yes, when such perpetrators are exposed, it unfortunately makes headlines and "good copy," and *Chillul Hashem*. And it should not be. "Figures do not lie, but one can lie with figures." My Torah colleagues and I, who probably see more religious patients in a week than outsiders see in a year, will attest to that.

The focus, then, should be on a certain group of *middos*, inherent traits, that make the man; his deep inner feelings which govern his disposition, and consequently his behavior toward his fellow man. Not high-profile, measurable deeds such as charity or honesty, but the subtleness of being pleasant with others and with oneself: calm, trusting and confident. (Yes, confident—not as an arrogant *ba'al ga'ava*, but with the deserved confidence of a host to a Divine *neshama*, in possession of *tzellem Elokim*.)

The *Mishna* in *Kinyan Torah*³ clearly spells out this inextricable mix of being that nice Torah *mensch*. The matrix unfolds, and here is this ideal man: listening and understanding; possessing reverence, humility, joy, friendship; serving one's master; reflecting purity, patience, goodness of heart, empathy, satisfaction; loving G-d and one's fellow man; loving righteousness and correctness, empathy, learning to learn and learning to do; and much more. All of that through the "acquisition" of Torah knowledge and values: studying, practicing and absorbing... being and becoming a Torah *mensch*. Yet if we see that while Torah is studied and *mitzvos* are observed, these vital traits are stunted or inadequately developed, then there is obviously something wrong.

One need not cite chapter and verse of the abundance of admonitions in both the Written and Oral Laws to behave decently and to have faith, the essential twins that govern an individual's disposition. Thus, if there is only a grain of truth in such accusations, we cannot and must not tolerate them. One might attempt to rationalize such behavior, arguing that it is not necessarily the consequence of evil, but may well be the reflection of inner turmoil. Be that as it may—no matter what the cause, it is still objectionable, and we must find ways to remedy the matter.

FINDING THE REMEDIES

The implications for parents, *Rebbes* and teachers should be awesome. Fortunately, we do have our Torah, to tell us, remind

³ Avos 6:1

us and show us how to reach our children and guide them. The same applies to any concerned adult, and indeed, much of what is being said here is applicable to any endeavor where the goal is to affect people, be it teaching, psychotherapy, or, *lehavdil*, learning to become a Torah Jew. It should also be clear that true Torah learning is, among much else, a process that shapes individuals, creates them, and/or modifies them

One of the primary goals of the Torah Jew is to be a *mensch*, an individual free of moral depravity and full of goodness... his life governed by *bitachon*, trust and faith, and devoid of superstitious, unreasonable fears and *meshugaas*, those subtle quirks of behavior that are wrong, irrational and simply not Jewish.

and brings about such dispositions of which we speak.⁴ And as such, it is (if we may use the term) therapy *par excellence*⁵.

As *Chazal* (our sages) frequently do, they state the problem, and—at the same time—build into the statement of the problem, pointers and

⁴ A *gadol* (whose name escapes me) once said, "If learning Torah fails to produce *Ahavas Yisroel*—love for one's fellow man, it was not Torah that was learned." See also the introduction to *Bereishis* by the *Ha'amek Davar*.

⁵ *Samm Chaim* (Erwin 54a). Torah is a perfect medication. See also Rambam's *Peirush Hamishnayus*, *Peah* 1:1, also *Imrei Shefer* on *Shiluach Hakan-Ki Setze* 22:7. Also, *Malbim* on *Parshas Bereishis* 2, 17.

guidelines toward the solution.

Speaking of our unpleasant and unhappy fellow, *Chazal*⁶ describe him as one for whom there is no hope of forgiveness, neither in genuine repentance, nor in the power of the holy day of Yom Kippur, nor in suffering. They say:

He is one who has "read" (studied the Written Torah) and has "studied" (the *Mishna*) and has served his masters, yet is dishonest in his actions and is unpleasant to his fellow man—what does society say of him? "Woe to him who has studied Torah, woe to his parents and to his master! Behold, how despicable are his ways and how repulsive is his behavior!"

Our Sages thus speak of three items that should have molded a person into a Torah *mensch*, but somehow failed to do so: Delving into the Written law, studying *Mishna*, and *Shimush talmidei chachamim* (serving and interacting with the masters of Torah). We can use the three categories of endeavor—"reading, studying and serving masters"—as a format of sorts to describe how a person can develop a Torah-guided personality, a *Yid* and a *mensch*:

. . . ת ו ר ק ל

TO READ TORAH. We all read, but what do we *really* read?

We all have many experiences, but why do we dream about some and not about others? Obviously some things impress us while others do not. Similarly, some admonitions are readily accepted, while others are glossed over... for many reasons. For example: one sees, hears, and is impressed with something, and is likely to act upon it when it "fits." That is, it is consonant with the way we behave or want to behave. We *do not* notice, or wish to learn, or allow ourselves to be impressed with, items that will evoke feelings of guilt, or make demands of us that we cannot act upon, or do not wish to act upon. The question, then, is: Do we *really* read—are we impressed with and are we ready to act upon Torah demands that call for *feeling, being and becoming*, as we do for demands for *doing*? Are Torah demands such as *Lo sisna es achicha*

⁶ *Yuma* 86a

bilvevecha—not to hate—or *Lo saarotz bifnehem*—do not be afraid [of your enemies]—of any less import, *chas v'sholom*, than saying the *Shema*, or wearing *tefillin*?

Do we excuse ourselves by claiming: "I cannot help it if I *feel* nervous or angry or hateful. But, yes, I can *do* things, and do them well." Then, all too frequently, such action-based *mitzvos* can easily become "compensatory devices" for proper feelings. Yes, I can be "perfect" by spending an inordinate amount of time to get every word of the *Shema* just right, or to have the *tefillin* centered just perfectly. Or, "enlighten" fellow *mispallelim* regarding relatively minor customs. All at the expense of other *mitzvos* of feeling, being, and acting as a Torah *Yid* should.

Certainly we are to *do mitzvos*. And doing, besides being right in-and-of itself, creates proper feelings. When compulsivity sets in, however, and these *mitzvos* fail to create the desired disposition and character, something is wrong. Moreover, when doing develops a flavor of blind perfectionism and becomes *mitzvos anoshim mel'umada*—habitual deeds without feeling or concern regarding the total



Torah *mensch*—something needs to be done.

Not only do the Torah's commands call for specific actions, but they prescribe ways of thinking and feeling.⁷ And if Torah prescribes it, it obviously can be done. The fact that it is more difficult to affect one's inner self and become a Torah *mensch* than to do an action-oriented *mitzva*, obviously does not make the former less important than the latter.

The task then before us—individuals, parents and educators—is to *read all of Torah*, and to have well-defined, clear and explicit goals of what the Torah *mensch* is to be. And then go about striving for it.

⁷ Let us note, for example, that Torah demands of us to be joyous on *Yom Tov*, to be sad on *Tisha B'Av*, to be solemn on *Yom Kippur*. And, more specifically, to *feel* on *Pesach* night *k'etu hu yatza miMitzrayim*, as if each individual himself escaped Egypt. The Torah further expects of us to manipulate our feelings. For example, an individual is, *chas v'sholom*, mourning the loss of a parent. Now it is *Yom Tov* or *Shabbos*, and he must interrupt his mourning and invoke joy to the extent *halacha* prescribes. Or, even while in mourning, he learns of an inheritance and he is required to recite *Shehechiyanu*, a *beracha* requiring an expression of gratitude and happiness.

If the Torah asks for it, obviously it is possible. *Rambam* (*Minyan hamitzvos, lo saaseh*, 58) counts as a command the admonition *V'al Ta'arzu*, not to be afraid (of your enemies). Obviously, it can be done, not by "throwing a switch" or simply deciding to do so. But by working on the inner man through faith, belief and trust in *Hashem*—and in our fellow man.

Do we really read—are we impressed with and are we ready to act upon Torah demands that call for *feeling, being and becoming*, as we do for demands for *doing*?

The Negative Twins

These negative "twins"—the unpleasantness toward others, and the *meshugaasen* within—are not simply coincidental. Both elements are created by the same pathology⁸. In its most rudimentary definition, mental health is the manner in which an individual relates toward himself and toward others. Thus, the satisfied, optimistic *ba'al emuna*-and-*bitachon* smiles with a sense of secure well-being and envelopes others into his happy orbit. He is connected. Doubly so. With the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and with mankind. Conversely, the pathological F-R-U-M fellow holds on to *Yiddishkeit* with *shtick*, not with a Torah grip, and moves away or against people, again, not in a Torah way.

Thus the way man acts toward others is primarily determined by the way he *feels*—toward life, toward himself, and toward the world around him; basically his state of *emuna* and *bitachon*, faith and trust. Fortunately, however, these "twins"—unpleasantness toward others and disturbed inner feelings—have another side, a positive, remedial and therapeutic one. Namely, the way one acts, so does one feel.

You are feeling miserable. What is a good "fix"? One can ingest drugs—street drugs or medically prescribed ones. Or, one can get drunk, or stuff

⁸ The saying in Yiddish is *Er iz nit mit alemen*: He (the disturbed individual) is not [put] together. More literally, he is alone, not with others. Much of psychopathology is a regression, a withdrawal from others. His remedy, conversely, is in good part restoring relationships with others as well as with himself.

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his face with fat or carbohydrates. Or, one can brood and feel sorry for himself... One can drown himself in work. Or, one could take it out on others, abusing a spouse or one's children.

A true Torah *mensch* does otherwise. He reaches out and helps, or at least is pleasant to, his fellow. And, lo and behold, he feels more pleasant within. This maneuver is, of course, more difficult, but, oh, how much better and more permanent! Sadly enough, we find individuals who are forced by their professions or businesses to wear a smile during the day. And they feel pretty O.K. Yet when they come home or go to *shul*, when the professional smile is no longer required, they let it "all hang out." A short-term quick fix, but a long-term loss. Losses in relationships, losses by fostering an inner pathology, losses in failing to become a Jew and a *mensch*, and losses by failing to develop a lifetime psychotherapeutic "fix"—relating and loving.

... ש נ ו ת

TO STUDY MISHNA—TORAH SHE B'AL PEH, THE ORAL LAW. This makes a great many demands of us: how to think, how to feel, and how to behave.

Whatever applies to Torah *Sheb'Ksav* in terms of what to notice and what to be impressed with, obviously applies here as well.

There is more. One important component is the climate for personality development, i.e., incidental learning, within which this learning takes place. It is the climate itself that not only is conducive for the message to be received, but also has a message of its very own. The saying goes, "*Du host gelernt Shas. Vos hot Shas dir gelernt?*" (You learned Talmud. How did the study of Talmud affect you and change you?) This refers, of course, not only to the laws expounded therein, for that is obvious, and is a function of one's diligence and brain power. The saying refers to personality development, the behavioral learnings, the changes of the inner man. Such positive learnings should come about by careful attention to matters relating to the inner man. *Aggada*, that portion of Talmud

that teaches subtly and indirectly, yet powerfully, what the Torah *mensch* is to be, in addition to what he is to do, deserves much more than a simple reading and the offhand remark, "It's only *Aggadata*."

In addition, there can and must be spiritual and human growth simply by one's immersion in the *Yam Hatalmud*, the talmudic ocean, wherein one is totally enveloped in G-d's thoughts, thinking, analyzing, and feeling the majesty of His holy words, conversing with the saints and

Do we excuse ourselves by claiming: "I cannot help it if I *feel* nervous or angry or hateful. But, yes, I can do things, and do them well." Then, all too frequently, such action-based *mitzvos* can easily become "compensatory devices" for proper feelings.

scholars of generations ago⁹, and being occupied not with temporary and mundane matters, but with something enduring, something holy. Exactly how this works may be beyond us, but students of Talmud will confirm that this is so.

Some such learnings are closer to the surface. For example, our sages say that the tractate *Eruvin* teaches us to care for our neighbor. Does not tractate *Berachos* also teach gratitude? Or *Nazir* temperance without austerity? One could go on. Yet, like all else, this needs to be pointed out. Do we say to ourselves and to our students, "Wow, look at this! What does it tell us, teach us? How does it make us better, sweeter, softer?" When studying *Berachos*, contemplate the importance of gratitude and taking nothing for granted: "Thank you, G-d; thank you, fellow man; thank you, spouse or child or parent!" What would assuming such a habit make of us—grumpy complainers and nervous wrecks? More likely, loving, caring, sweet "people's people," endowed

⁹ See Mermelstein, J., "Learning to Love Learning," in *The Mesifla Chronicle*, Mesifla of Long Beach, N.Y., 1988. Also, Mermelstein, J., "To Be A Teacher," *The Jewish Parent*, Publication of Torah Umesorah.

with calm confidence and feelings of security... possessing *bitachon*, trust in the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, and in mankind. Such is the power of Torah *She B'al Peh*.

... ש נ ו ש

SHIMUSH, SERVING AND INTERACTING WITH TORAH SCHOLARS.¹⁰

To begin with, they teach us, emphasize, and point out in Torah and in Talmud precisely such learnings that produce the Torah

mensch. Yet they do much more.

The man walked into my office farbissen, grumpy, uptight and bristling. After dumping all his complaints against his wife, his children and his business partner, he went on: "And what does the Ribbono Shel Olam want of me? More learning, more davening, more tzeddaka, and more mitzvos. What about me?"

I offered him a cup of coffee, and went about developing a relationship with him. At a much later time, I reminded him of his comments and said to him, "My friend, we are tuned into the same Ribbono Shel Olam, Baruch Hashem.

¹⁰ Many titles have been given to our era. It has been called the age of anxiety, the age of "me first," the age of "anything goes," and so on. All of these, at least in part, are true. May I add "the age of the guru." Very briefly, value systems have been lost to such an extent that man no longer knows who he is and what life is all about. So, enters the "guru," who "knows." Obviously, there are destructive gurus who exploit, and there are insane gurus who seduce people to join their insanity. And then there are gurus who may mean well, but who do little else but "make nice." In doing so, our sufferer may feel better temporarily, but nothing really changes.

There are also good "gurus," pardon the term. These are individuals who have the ability to make people feel good by their ability to relate to them, and not sit in judgment. However, there must also be material to be mastered, value systems to be learned, and changes to be expected.

Yet I heard the Ribbono Shel Olam, kaveyachol, very differently. I heard, 'Kind leben, dear child, I am happy with your learning and davening. But when you learn your Daf, the daily Talmud, look into these commentaries, and you will understand better, enjoy it more and become closer with the word of G-d. When you daven, try to infuse your words with more kavana (concentration), and your prayers will have far more meaning to Me and to you.... And here are a number of mitzvos you may have forgotten about. They may be a little difficult a times, and having fun and doing nothing might seem more pleasurable. But think about after. After the deed, after the mitzva or after wasting time, how does it feel? Consider the gain and the loss. So, because I love you¹¹ do it, and you will love the result. As far as your spouse, your children and your partner are concerned, consider the fact that because of them you do not feel alone. You are important to them. Yes, there is a cost to consider their needs and to cater to them. But how about the gain? By being pleasant to them, you will feel pleasant and become a habitually pleasant person!'"

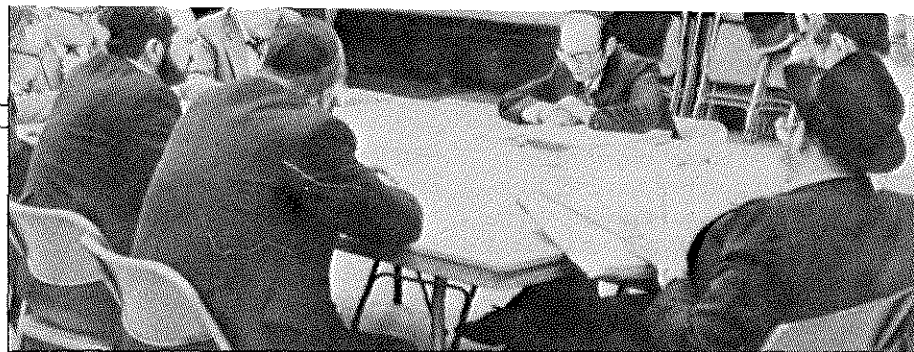
Two people can be learning the identical words of G-d, yet integrate them into their thinking-feeling-doing-system in such two diametrically opposing manners. Clearly it was not the words that differed, it was the delivery system: The kind of person the parent or the *Rebbe* is, the kind of Jew he is, and the kind of *mensch* he is.

Absorbing the Teacher With his Lesson

Our children, and we, are exposed to many beliefs, opinions and attitudes which are dispensed through peers, society and the media. Currently in vogue is "having," enjoying, materialism, "me first," being cool—i.e., not to care and worry, and freedom from responsibility. Ostensibly, all very appealing, but the very sad results are self-evident.

Torah, of course, has a lot to say about that. And Torah too, wants you to have "something in it for me." Yet

¹¹ "Ratza Hakadosh Baruch Hu l'zakos es Yisroel... (Makos, 23b). Torah and mitzvos were given to mankind because of G-d's love for us.



There can and must be spiritual and human growth simply by one's immersion in the *Yam Hatalmud*, the talmudic ocean, wherein one is totally enveloped in G-d's thoughts, thinking, analyzing, and feeling the majesty of His holy words, conversing with the saints and scholars of generations ago, and being occupied not with temporary and mundane matters, but with something enduring, something holy.

how is this taught? How does one behold these fine nuances, the intangibles, the sweetness of Torah and the sweetness of just being sweet? It is of course the *talmid chacham*, the *Rebbe*, and the *shimush talmidei chachamin*—the serving and intimate interacting with these great people—that teach those overtones and undertones of loving and caring for the word of G-d and for His creations, our fellow man.

Exactly how? Firstly, by their very own demeanor, their sweetness, their friendship toward their fellow man and *kaveyachol* toward G-d. Their inner peace, their *emuna* and *bitachon*, belief and trust. Their mannerisms, their goodness and the myriad of subtle nuances that makes one into a person about whom it is said: *Blessed are he, his parents and his teachers*¹². Exposure to such people creates others in their mold. Lectures, admonishments and threats do not perform the task; *experiencing* interaction with good people makes other people good in the same manner.

In addition, such a teacher will teach Torah with a sweetness, exuding the Torah attitude that he has within. He does so even as he gener-

alizes, such as: "*Uvocharto bachayim*¹³. Behold, *tei'ere kinderlach*, here, beloved children, is Torah and the gift of life. Choose, I beg of you, the good life." Furthermore, in teaching and translating the words of the positive protagonists in Torah (such as the *Avos*, our forefathers), the heroes of Torah, this *Rebbe* uses words and nuances that capture the essence of the commandments and convey them—not with harshness nor dictatorship, but with loving and as an offering, a gift. For example, the *Rebbe* does not act out *Avrohom's* directives toward Sara or Yishmael, while entertaining the *malochim*, as an autocratic command: "Go, fetch and do"! Instead, he resonates with the sweetness with which *Avrohom* invited Sara and Yishmael to participate in the *mitzva* of *hachnosas orchim*, hospitality to strangers¹⁴.

It takes man to make man; and the transmitter of Torah—parent,

¹³ *Devarim* 30, 19; see *Rashi*

¹⁴ Psychopathology is frequently the result of hypocrisy and double standards that children see in their parents and teachers. Thus, the parent who acts with warmth to outsiders, such as guests, while turning around with harshness, demanding of his spouse or child to serve them, sends a mixed pathological message with possibly dire consequences.

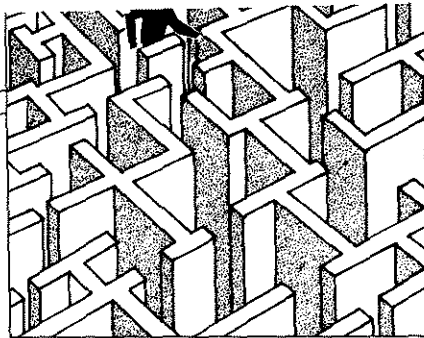
¹² *Yuma* 86a

teacher or *Rebbe*—by his *being* and in his manner of relating with the student/child, teaches far more than by his preaching or even doing¹⁵.

I conclude with a personal note. One is what he is by virtue of what he has been exposed to, what has impressed him and how all this has been integrated. Though man may be a victim of his experiences, he is still responsible for his being and his behavior, because *man has choice*. Even the Nuremberg Trials, after World War II, confirmed this. *Kal v'chomer*, how true this is of the belief system of the Torah Jew. It thus behooves man

¹⁵ With the reader's permission, a homiletic thought: G-d said, "Let us make man" (*Bereishis* 1,26—See *Rashi* and *Ramban*). G-d creates man, his body, his brain, and a certain temperament. Yet the man's personality is shaped to a great extent by his interpersonal life, particularly that of his early childhood. "The child is the father of man," the saying goes. We are what we experience.

Thus, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu, kaveyachol*, asks of every one of us, "*Naaseh Adam*—come help Me make man": Relate to him, help him, teach him to become the kind of man I, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, want him to be, a Torah *mentch*. To serve *Hashem*, to serve mankind and lead a happier and better life himself (see *Mermelstein, J., loc. cit.*).



Though man may be a victim of his experiences, he is still responsible for his being and his behavior, because *man has choice*...how true this is of the belief system of the Torah Jew.

to give credit to others for the good he has learned from them, and to assume responsibility for the bad within him so as to become a better person.

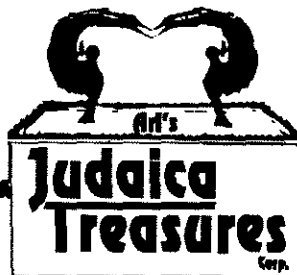
As for everyone else, this holds true for me. I was fortunate to have had some outstanding teachers. My very first one was my mother, *ה"ר*. Among much else, I saw, I experienced, I lived and I heard constantly, "*Vehavei makabel es kol adam beseivar panim yafos*—Receive everyone with a cheerful disposition¹⁶." At times, this may surely be very, very difficult, but if we have the admonition before us, constantly review it, practice it and see the reward, oh, how good it is!¹⁷ ■

¹⁶ *Avos* 1:15. It is not for us to understand our sages, much less, *chas v'shalom*, to judge them. It may seem that *Sharnnai Hazakein* was a stern and demanding individual. If so, that was his *shitta*, his Torah point of view. Yet it was he who also practiced and lived by this dictum: "to receive everyone with a cheerful disposition...."

¹⁷ Vienna, where we lived, was a transit town for emigrants from Poland and Russia. Thus, having *orchim*, guests at the *Shabbos* table, was the norm. When I excused myself for inadequately conversing with these *orchim*, because of my shyness, my mother, *h'i*, said, "Your shyness, your personal difficulty in conversing with strangers, is no excuse for having our guests feel uncomfortable, or, *challita*, unwanted. It is your job to overcome your shyness, and do what you are supposed to do." And of course, doing just that is, or can be, a powerful remedy for shyness or feeling alone.

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A L O S T A R T ?

Common Sense:

MORE CHALLENGE THAN INSPIRATION

Most of us like to read articles that, based on heartwarming stories or touching quotations from *Chazal*, inspire us to reach for higher ideals. But this article is a bit different. This is an attempt to offer some constructive criticism and to focus on some shortcomings in our present Torah community and *chinuch* that cannot be readily blamed on others. Namely, we seem to have the ability to be technically within *halacha*, feeling smug and quite pleased with ourselves, and yet show a lack of *yashrus* (uprightness) and *derech erez* (civility) towards others. At least, that is the perception.

Some even argue that rather than guarantee a heightened air of *derech erez* in a school, an increase in the *frum* or *Chareidi* component in a yeshiva or day school can lead one to expect the opposite.

Now it should not be too difficult to formulate the defense for this alleged lack of *derech erez*: our more *frum*

Rabbi Yitzchak Feigenbaum is the education director of Navon, a Toronto-based outreach foundation. He was represented in these pages by "We Have Mashiach Now," JO, Jan. '93.

We seem to have the ability to be technically within *halacha*, feeling smug and quite pleased with ourselves, and yet show a lack of *yashrus* (uprightness) and *derech erez* (civility) towards others. At least, that is the perception.

communities are generally in or near our urban centers, and the abrasiveness associated with urban life is bound to take its toll on the cherished niceties of daily encounters. Moreover, the Jews in those very same rough-and-tumble environments are responsible for more organized and *ad hoc* chessed activities than any comparable communities the world over.

Yes. But the perception of a lack of concern over *yashrus* and its outward expression, *derech erez*, persists. It cannot all be attributed to hostile press (what may now be called "the Tom Dine Syndrome"). And even

if the Orthodox bashing is all cut out of whole cloth, and we are no worse than anyone else in terms of *yashrus* and *derech erez*, should we not put extra effort into being incontestably free of any such flaws, as accused?

Thus the discussion that follows.

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED YASHRUS?

First we must define "*yashrus*." The *Ha'amek Davar* (*Netziv*), in his introduction to *Chumash Bereishis*, discusses why the *Avos* were called *yesharim* (such that *Chumash Bereishis* is referred to as *Sefer HaYashar*). After his famous description of "*sinas chinam* (baseless hatred) for the sake of Heaven," he says, "And this was the greatness of the *Avos*—that besides being *tzaddikim*, *chassidim*, and *ohavei Hashem* in the greatest way possible, they were also *yesharim*." He then goes on to show how we see from the stories in *Chumash Bereishis* that the *Avos* dealt with even the most "despicable idol worshippers" with *yashrus*.

Let us consider that. If one is a *tzaddik* and a *chassid*, that means that one is already doing all the *mitzvos* and not committing any sins. And

if one is an *ohev Hashem* in the greatest way possible—what else is there? Somehow, being *yashar* is an achievement distinct from those other three traits. If so, just what is *yashrus*, and, more important, how does one develop it?

To understand this trait of being *yashar*, we must refer to *parshas Va'eschanan*¹ where we are told, "Be careful to keep the *mitzvos* of Hashem your G-d, as well as His *eidos* and *chukim* that He commanded you." The Torah then continues, "*V'asisa hayashar v'hatov*—And you should do what is upright and good." Again, "*yashar*" as something distinct from "*mitzvos, eidos* and *chukim*!" The *Ramban* addresses this difficulty with the following explanation: "It was impossible for the Torah to mention all of a person's dealings with his neighbors and friends, all his business activities, and all the rules necessary for conducting a proper society. But after it mentioned some of them... it then made a general principle, to do what is *yashar* and *tov*."

To fully appreciate the *Ramban's* message, we refer to an earlier *Ramban* in *Kedoshim*² where he formulates his famous concept of "*naval birshus haTorah*," i.e., one can be despicable, even while fulfilling all the technicalities of the Torah. The first (and most famous) example of the *Ramban* is in the realm of *bein adam laMakom*; i.e., one could follow all the Divine rules of conduct to the letter, yet be quite distant from *kedusha* (sanctity). To reach *kedusha*, one must go above and beyond the letter of the law; one must have an intuitive sense of where the legislated *mitzvos* are leading, and carry on from there. Less well-known is that the *Ramban* in *Kedoshim* cites the verse of "*yashar v'tov*" as another example of that same principle—regarding *bein adam lechaveiro* (interpersonal dealings), i.e., one could be technically and legally within one's rights, but not be doing what Hashem expects. One could be following the letter of all the laws of business, human relations, and so on, yet not be a *yashar v'tov*. As the *Ramban* says, "It was impos-

sible for the Torah to mention all... rules necessary for proper society"—the Torah could not specifically legislate all situations. It was in reference to this range of conduct that the *Ha'amek Davar* said, "This was the greatness of the *Avos*—that besides being *tzaddikim, chassidim*, and *ohavei Hashem* in the greatest way possible, they were also *yesharim*."

Bringing this discussion home, how many times has your intuitive sense of *yashrus* been assaulted with, "But it says here, and you didn't specify there, besides which there's a *shitta* like this, and a *teshuva* like that, and I won!" Yes, that person "won," but was it *yashar v'tov*? That person may even be a *tzaddik* and *chassid*, but is that sufficient?

APPLYING YASHRUS

We are now faced with a dilemma. If the Torah does not specifically legislate every single scenario that will come up in our lives, but expects us to go beyond the technicalities to be "*yashar*," how are we to know what *yashar* is? I would suggest that the answer lies in a *Sifri*³. Rabbi Akiva commenting on the verse, "*Ve'asisa hayashar ve'hatov*," tells us that the word *tov* refers to "*hatov b'einei Hashem*—what is good in the eyes of G-d"; whereas *yashar* is "*hayashar b'einei adam*—what is upright in the eyes of man." As the *Torah Temima* explains,⁴ only G-d Himself, who can see all future ramifications of any act, can decide what is *tov*—good. We, with our shortsighted vision, cannot determine what is absolutely good. But Man can see what appears to be *yashar*—proper and straight in his eyes. And we are obligated to do not only the objective "*tov*," but also what is "*hayashar b'einei adam*—accepted as proper by Man." How do we emulate the *Avos* who knew how to deal with "despicable idol worshippers"? We must assume an intuitive sense gleaned from all the *halachos* that we do know, and apply that Torah-guided intuition to the situations that are not legislated.

To reach *kedusha*, one must go above and beyond the letter of the law; one must have an intuitive sense of where the legislated *mitzvos* are leading, and carry on from there.

I recall my *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, זצ"ל, driving home this point. Though he offered many examples, the one that sticks in my mind most clearly is *Chazal's* comment on the phrase "*al pi Hashem*"⁵ in reference to Moshe's counting the Tribe of Levi. Hashem had commanded Moshe to count all *Leviim* from the age of one month. *Chazal* tell us that Moshe asked Hashem, "How can I go into their tents to know how many babies are in there?"

"What kind of question was that?" asked Rav Chaim. If Hashem wants to know the population, then go in there and find out—it's a *mitzva*! But Moshe knew that Hashem would never have commanded a *mitzva* that went against common *derech eretz*, and therefore he knew that he had to ask Hashem how to fulfill His command. Common sense—human understanding of how people feel and think—should tell a person what makes other people feel uncomfortable.

ANALYZING THE PROBLEM

If it is true, as the *Ramban* said, that conduct in some situations is not legislated, and that we must use our own "*yashar b'einei adam*"—common sense to decide what to do, then we are faced with a serious problem. Seemingly, *frum* Jews do not believe in common sense! At least we do not run our lives by what the world deems common sense. *Hilchos ribbis*

¹ Devarim 6,17

² Vayikra 19,2

³ Sifri on Devarim 12,28

⁴ Devarim 12,28, note 113

⁵ Bamidbar 3,16, see Rashi

(laws against usury) do not conform to "common sense." Our understanding of *tzernius* does not reflect what the world calls "common sense," and—the root of it all—saying *na'aseh* before *nishma*—"we will do" before "we will listen" at Sinai—was not common sense!

Years ago, when I was working in Yeshivas Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem, a student asked me why one wasn't allowed to use napkins on Shabbos. When I asked him why he thought it was prohibited, he told me that he had been in Yeshiva for three Shabbosos and there had never been any napkins!

I protested, "Does it make any sense that napkins should be prohibited on Shabbos?"

I remember his answer to this day: "Rabbi, there are a lot of things around here that don't make any sense!"

True. Much of what we do does not "make sense." Our children want to go places or buy things that makes perfect sense to them and their peers, and we explain to them that we do what Hashem tells us is right, not what the world tells us is right. We impress upon our children not to assume that they know what the

Seemingly, *frum* Jews do not believe in common sense! At least we do not run our lives by what the world deems common sense. The root of it all—saying *na'aseh* before *nishma*—"we will do" before "we will listen" at Sinai—surely was not common sense!

halacha is, but to ask a *she'eila*. We train ourselves to be wary of making our own judgments as to whether something is permissible or not; we must ask. The better and stronger the *chivuch*, the more ingrained does it become that we cannot rely on our own limited judgment or "common sense," but rather we must consult *daas Torah*—and that is absolutely correct! That is what has kept us going through all these years of *golus*.

We can readily see today the tragic results of Jewish education that did not make "asking the authorities" a value. The problem is that by stressing that value, we risk losing our human sensitivity to just plain *yashrus*. We may lose the ability and the initiative to see if something simply makes any sense. As the *ba'alei Mussar* have always told us,⁶ when you put a strong emphasis on one *midda*, per-

⁶ See *Michtav M'Eliyahu*, Vol 3, page 294, regarding *chumros* and *kulos*, in which he says, "The concept of being very meticulous and strict in laws is certainly a great principle, but there is a great need to be careful lest one come to some harm. There is a rule regarding *kochos hanefesh*: when one exaggerates the value of one principle, it is almost certain that through that, the value of another principle will become smaller in his eyes. And there is a great danger in this to one's *nuchnius*, for the *yeitzer hora* just might use this trick to satiate and satisfy a person with *dikdukim* of one *mitzva* in order to make him stumble, *chas v'shalom*, in many *aveiros*."

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force you lose sight of another. The stronger the emphasis on *kavod* for the *poskim*, the greater the reliance on *daas Torah*, and the deeper one's appreciation of how little of Torah we really do know, the greater the possibility of losing respect for one's own sense of common sense-*yashrus!* The previous generation had a problem with the former, but seemed to have had a strong sense of simple *yashrus* and *kavod habrios*—showing dignity to all of G-d's creations. *Yeshivos* and Seminaries today, *Baruch Hashem*, have to a great extent corrected the problem of over-reliance on one's own thinking, and have ingrained a strong reliance on *daas Torah*. But by doing so, have we come up short on the other end?

To offer an example, bringing it down to the here and now: We tell our child to take his feet off the couch. When we come back in the room, his feet are on the wall. "But you just said to take them off the couch, you didn't say not to put them on the wall!" And we do the same. The *Shulchan Aruch* does not discuss it, your *Rav* never specifically mentioned it, so, *ergo*, it is fine to do! But is it *yashar*? Does it fit the "rules necessary for proper society" that the *Ramban* speaks of? We are trained to research and ask *she'eilos* to determine what is in the realm of "*birshus HaTorah*," but have we sensitized and trained our children and ourselves to also be *yesharim*, like the *Avos*?

ONE MORE PROBLEM

There may be one more reason why the contemporary setting may not promote the desired degree of *derech erez* and *yashrus*. Perhaps this can become clear by referring to a story from Israel. At one time, a study was carried out to determine why Israeli youth exhibit more *chutzpa* than their European counterparts. One opinion offered was that since all Israeli youth serve in the army, and Israel is always in a state of war, the youth feel that the older generation owes them something, rather than vice versa. This attitude is reinforced by members of the older generation, who feel dependent upon the youth for their protection,

thus inspiring within the youth a sense of superiority to their elders.

In a certain sense, the present generation of *bnei Torah* suffer from the same syndrome. In many cases they learn more, are more knowledgeable and more precise in their observation, than their parents. Intensive Torah *chinuch* across North America is relatively new. The parents of many budding *talmidei chachamim* and *bnei Torah* did not have the opportunity for long-term learning enjoyed by this generation. Day schools, *yeshivos*, and Bais Yaakov schools impress on their students to learn more and to strive to be greater than

their parents' generation. In many cases, their fathers had to work right after high school or marriage, while they have the opportunity to sit and learn. Never mind the *mesirus nefesh* of simply keeping *Shabbos* years ago. Today, *lomdus* and *frumkeit* reign supreme, and one can feel a certain superiority. That can lead to a sense of over-confidence, and a sense of *bittul* towards the inborn and intuitive sensitivity to *yashrus* that were developed through *mesirus nefesh*, unsophisticated *emuna peshuta*, and a lot of real life experience.

This is a situation for which there are no simple fix-it solutions. At

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least recognizing the question, however, is surely a start towards reaching an answer.


SO WHAT DO WE DO?

An upbeat ending is essential. I will try to offer one with some approach toward a solution.

Rabbi Dessler says⁷, "The root of the obligation for *derech erez* is in our obligation to a person *because he is a person*" (emphasis mine). You can teach children to pop out of their

⁷ *Michtav M'Eliyahu*, Vol 4., pg. 246.

You can teach children to pop out of their seats when the *Rebbe* or *Morah* walks in; you can train them to mouth the proper platitudes; you can educate them to be *tzaddikim*, *chassidim*, and *ohavei Hashem*; but to achieve *derech erez*, one needs a human understanding of what another human being is, how another feels and thinks, and some common sense as to what proper societal conduct demands.



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seats when the *Rebbe* or *Morah* walks in; you can train them to mouth the proper platitudes; you can educate them to be *tzaddikim*, *chassidim*, and *ohavei Hashem*; but to achieve *derech erez*, one needs a human understanding of what another human being is, how another feels and thinks, and some common sense as to what proper societal conduct demands. One must become sensitive to others, and to learn how to see things from another person's vantage point. We have to train ourselves and our children to not only say the right things, but to know how those words are being heard. The school can (and must) make it clear that *yashar b'einei adam*—common sense—is a clear Torah imperative, and that human sensitivities are to be admired along with all other *middos* and halachic strictures. (How that is done without undermining a sense of authority is a complex issue, which centers on the human qualities and self-confidence needed to be an effective *mechanech*.) But it also demands that parents share the responsibility for educating their children, rather than abdicating completely to the school.

As a parent, I know that at times I feel too busy "saving *Klal Yisroel*" to really raise my own children. Besides, isn't that what I pay all that tuition for? But as a *mechanech*, I know that I can teach, explain, demonstrate and inspire students until I'm blue in the face, but a child's sensitivities to other humans, a child's perception of society, of basic instincts, of caring for "a person because he is a person"—all that will be determined by what he or

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Instilling Middos Tovos in Our Children



THE DIVINE FACTOR IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Shadchanim praise it. Teachers stress it. *Roshei Yeshiva* emphasize it. *Gedolim* personify it. Most of all, it is the crowning glory of parents—a child with *middos tovos*, admirable character traits. The rare nobility of *middos tovos* and all that they encompass calls for an analysis of the subject.

We tend to think of *middos tovos* as they relate to two distinct categories: *bein adam lechaveiro*—interpersonal affairs—and *bein adam laMakom*—between man and G-d. Yet, they are not separate entities, but integral parts of one another, with a tightly woven interplay between the two.

Pirkei Avos, the primary source of *middos* development in the Oral Law, is introduced with the statement, "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai...." *Chazal* point out that only in *Pirkei Avos*, where character traits are discussed, is the element of *mesora*—transmission of Torah—



stressed, to underscore that *middos tovos* emanated from *Hashem*, together with His Torah.

We might wonder why this is so. After all, a saintly human being could conceivably be capable of authoring a reasonable text on social ethics!

Another puzzling aspect of the opening verse is that there is no mention of *Hashem's* Name; the emphasis seems to rest on the word "Sinai"—an omission that certainly needs explanation.

These difficulties can best be resolved in the context of *Chazal's* explanation that our ultimate goal in the world is to plant, nurture and develop within ourselves an ever-deepening relationship with *Hashem*. We develop our connection to *Hashem* through seeing His all-encompassing presence in the midst of our mundane activi-

ties—in moments of grief, in times of tension, in spurts of joy—and, ultimately, perceiving the Hand of G-d in all that occurs in our lives, feeling gratification and even joy for our awareness of His constant presence.

For this reason, *Shmuel Hanavti* is aghast when *Klal Yisroel* approaches him in request for a King. He appeals to *Hashem* in pain, and *Hashem* replies, telling him that in actuality, they had not rebuffed him, they had rebuffed G-d. They were solely interested in a king for their social and political well-being.

As far as the *shefa Elokai*—the enhanced spirituality that the *Navi* and the *Sarhedrin* nurtured in *Klal Yisroel*—that was of lesser concern to them!

Similarly, when we strive to instill *middos tovos* in our children, it should be with a clear focus: Do we simply want a "well-mannered," socially acceptable person who graces the scene with proper etiquette? Or do we want a child whose *middos tovos* are a springboard for ultimate growth to a close relationship with G-d? Since *Hashem* authored the criteria for good *middos*, there must be an element of G-dliness inherent in them.

That Divine element manifests itself in a person, who by virtue of his *middos*, is inviting *Hashem's* presence into his life. And *Hashem*, so to speak, looks at the person with posi-

The late **Rabbi Yitzchok Kirzner** served as Director of the Citywide Outreach Educational Program of the Jewish Renaissance Center, in New York, and authored the book, *The Art of Jewish Prayer*. "The Barriers of Golus," based on a lecture by Rabbi Kirzner, was featured in JO, June, '93.

Mrs. Lev, a resident of Brooklyn, NY, has been represented by several articles in JO, including "An FFB's Return—A Tribute to Rabbi Kirzner" (Nov. '92).

tive *middos*, and is thoroughly pleased. The person becomes a delightful place for Him to dwell.

Thus, the passage stresses Sinai, the lowliest of mountains, as a symbol of humility, to emphasize this vital prerequisite for absorbing Hashem's Torah in its fullest sense, that the receiver of Torah and *middos* would better absorb and accept these teachings "from Sinai"—from a place of humility, a place where ego does not create a barrier between the person's will and G-d's will. Only then can he be connected to Hashem, the Giver of Torah at Sinai.

THE DEGREE OF INTERRELATIONS

Reb Tzaddok Hakohein, the famed 19th Century Chasidic thinker, elaborates on how the spheres of *bein adam lechaveiro* and *bein adam laMakom* are actually a single, unified field. He begins by addressing the mystery of what precisely causes an "impurity" of the body, as, for example, *tzora'as* (Biblical leprosy). We commonly believe that when a person is overcome with a negative trait such as jealousy, he succumbs to *lashon hora* (slander), and as punishment is stricken with *tzora'as*. Not so, points out Reb Tzaddok. The body, as long as it is nurtured in harmonious union with the *neshama*, remains pure and healthy. But when the body adopts negative *middos*, it tears itself away from the *neshama*. Once it is depleted of its source of pure spiritual nourishment, the body becomes vulnerable to impurity, which is then physically manifest in the form of *tzora'as*.

Ultimately the two ailments are very much linked to one another. For, to the degree that a person is ravaged with character flaws in an interpersonal area, to that degree is he tearing his body and *neshama* apart, effecting a most certain personal alienation from his *neshama*, and ultimately Hashem.

Instilling *middos tovos* in our children, then, is *not* simply a matter of training a "well-mannered" child. Rather, it is part of the intense desire that, with healthy *middos*, the child should be connected with the ethereal

Instilling *middos tovos* in our children is *not* simply a matter of training a "well-mannered" child. Rather, it is part of the intense desire that, with healthy *middos*, the child should be connected with the ethereal *neshama* with which he was blessed.

real *neshama* with which he was blessed.

THE STEPS TO TAKE IN ADVANCE

Are there any meaningful steps that we can take, so as to equip our children with *middos tovos*, so that they blossom into spiri-

tually healthy people who will embrace Hashem, who will include Him in their lives, under all circumstances? The following is but a partial list—certainly not all-inclusive—of suggestions that could help us begin working at this formidable task.

Pure motivation in raising children

The *Chovos Halevovos* in *Sha'ar Habitachon* discusses the delicate balance between *hishtadlus*—the efforts a person expends towards a goal—and *bitachon*—his ability to refrain from further effort, and to stand back and rely on Hashem. In regard to raising children, the *Chovos Halevovos* addresses the dilemma of determining the limits of *bitachon*: How do we know that we've already done our utmost in raising our children, at which point we can then plead for Hashem's compassionate intervention?

A parent (the *Chovos Halevovos* states) is nothing more and nothing less than a responsible *shaliach*, an emissary of Hashem, designated for the lofty purpose of raising his child to grow into an *eved Hashem*, a person whose essence embodies one overriding desire: a yearning to grow close to his Creator by understand-



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ing, knowing, and doing Hashem's will. In keeping with the ruling that a *shaliach* in a sense embodies the powers of his designator, parents as true emissaries of Hashem become infused with strength from the One who has entrusted them with His mission.

That deceptively simple statement of the *Chovos Halevovos* alludes to a myriad of possible ulterior motives that might interfere with a parent acting as the ideal emissary in raising children. Parents, though instinctively loving their children, might unwittingly push their child to succeed in areas where they themselves had failed. Or, a parent who, having suffered from a domineering parent in his home, is no longer the hapless victim, and is now delighted to have his chance in the powerful role of despot. Or, parents might nurture their chil-

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dren as insurance for caring for them in their old age.

All these motives, says the *Chovos*

Halevovos, and many, many more, are all different facets of the same element: that of ego. A parent, in communicating honestly with a child, need not fear "bad chemistry" between them if the parent's rebukes to the child are not laced with ego. In expressing concern to the child about negative behavior, the child will not respond favorably if the parent is acting in a self-serving manner, i.e., a good part of what the parent is concerned about is, "what shame this child is causing for me!" Leaving the "me" out in raising children indicates clearly that our children's negative behavior upsets us only because it will create obstacles in their ultimate quest for Hashem.

If letting go of our ego is our primary concern in raising children in general, how much moreso does this apply in regard to instilling *middos tovos* in our children. If we react to children out of self-gratification—the child's inappropriate behavior will embarrass "me," what's it going to look like for "me," what's in store for "me," how well will their accomplishments reflect on "me," how will people look at "me," what will my friends and relatives think of "me"—then what is the subtext of the message we are transmitting to the child? One resounding word: "ME." The child has to be concerned with "ME"!

Besides picking up messages of ego through parent-child interaction, children also sense ego involvement when watching parents communicating with each other. Do they witness their parents struggling with choices, basing their decisions solely on saving face? Or are the parents negotiating with a sense of humility, bending towards what is essentially right and true? Ego, in this context as well, can speak volumes to our children.

Either way, a child absorbing "me" messages will grow up with an unhealthy sense of ego—a sense of the world at large being at his beck and call. What will happen to this child if later in life he is faced with inexplicable circumstances? Circumstances where, in order for his *emuna* to survive, he must yield and bow to Hashem's will even though he may be resisting it with every fiber of his being? Who can say whether he will



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overcome these enormous *nisyonos* (tests) in *emuna*? *Middos tovos*, or lack of them, actually equip, or handicap, the child in eventually handling all the emotional highs and lows intrinsic to a healthy relationship with G-d.

pearances can be very deceiving. There are, for example, mothers who seem selflessly dedicated to their families. That devotion—as an exclusive obsession—is simply not enough. Since family members are, in a sense, an extension of oneself, a

motives, such as honor, monetary benefit, etc.), are constantly learning a crucial lesson in *chiruch*: that of selflessness.

At a slightly different angle, the issue of selfishness must also be considered when we pamper our children. We often times do a great disservice to our children when we indulge in them—be it in the form of money always jingling in their pockets, constant sugary snacks, or the like. Over-indulgence is likely to develop one overriding trait: that of self-centeredness. A parent must be clever in exercising discretion in setting boundaries in this area, charting the middle course—a very fine line, indeed. Otherwise, an egotistical child will harbor only one constant thought: “What’s in it for me?” Everyone, at all times, will have to yield to his wishes, his needs, his opinions.

On a deeper level, this “me” attitude will spill over into how a child will relate to Torah and *mitzvos*. An egotistical child, for example, may also perform *mitzvos*, but with a marked difference. The root of his actions will not be to serve G-d first and

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Functioning through selflessness or selfishness?

Another factor in inculcating good *middos* in our children is a matter of how we relate to *ourselves*. The revered *Mashgiach* of pre-War Mir, Reb Yerucham Levovitz, זצ”ל, would decry selfishness as being the root of every *awetra*. Inevitably, when parents convey selfishness, they are creating an almost insurmountable spiritual handicap to the child.

In communicating selfishness, ap-

child might interpret family dedication as another form of self-service. Additionally, the child assumes that “Mommy thinks I’m the center of the universe, so it must be so!” People involved in *Klal* work, selflessly and purely giving to others, are commonly confronted by the query: “Doesn’t your family suffer from all your time away from home?” The answer is rather straightforward. Children who see their parents selflessly devoted to the benefit of others (devoid of ulterior

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foremost, thus forging a bond between him and his Creator, but rather, unfortunately, to serve himself in the forms of monetary gain, honor, esteem, approval, or some other variety of self-service.

While two people may seem, superficially, to be doing the same *mitzva*, their motivating roots bear drastically different results. To be sure, both will gain a certain level of reward for the performance of the *mitzva*, but the person whose motives are "Hashem-oriented" will grow immeasurably in his spirituality, deepening his understanding of Hashem as his nurturer. By contrast, the person performing the *mitzva* out of self-service will undermine the very purpose of a *mitzva*. Instead of drawing closer to Hashem, he will draw closer to himself.

The Slonimer Rebbe portrays this concept most vividly. He describes *middos tovos* as *kanfei ha'avoda*—the wings of serving Hashem. Everyone performs *mitzvos*, everyone acts in serving Hashem, but the determining question remains: how much will the *mitzva* elevate the person? How high will he soar? What permanent change will the *mitzva* indelibly imprint on the person? All these depend upon the roots, the motivations that lurk beneath the surface of the simple performance of the *mitzva*.

☞ The intellect directing the emotions

We commonly perceive mankind as consisting of two basic components—intellectual and emotional. We sum up the intellect as being our potential for processing information intelligently, while we see our emotional aspect as a naturally flowing function, beyond our control.

All our *seforim*, from *Sefer Bereishis* through *Sifrei Mussar* and *Sifrei Chassidus*, teach the co-existence between intellect and emotion. Hashem created within the human personality the potential to use his *seichel*, his intellect, to influence and cultivate wholesome, productive emotions. We can appreciate this concept through the following tale:

It was Simchas Torah, a time of sheer joy in celebrating with our most precious gift: the Torah. In the Rebbe's court, all eyes were riveted on two

A child's mind is not a void; its supply lines need constant replenishment. The more that parents provide it with positive, healthy *hashkafos*, the healthier the child's *middos* will be.

Chassidim fervently dancing, clutching the Torah close to their hearts. Their dancing increased in tempo, seemingly ad infinitum. People began speculating as to who would tire first. Curious, they turned to their Rebbe, wondering about his thoughts as to the ultimate winner in the dance-a-thon. The Rebbe indicated his choice, offering no explanation as to his decision. Eventually, one of the dancing men began showing signs of fatigue as his steps slackened, until he finally stopped... as the Rebbe had predicted.

Intrigued, the Chassidim sought an explanation from their Rebbe for his intuition. "When both of these people were dancing, thoughts fueled their emotions, their drive to dance. One person was joyously celebrating the Torah that he had already learned while the other was exhilarated for the Torah that he would still absorb. After all is said and done, Torah that has already been learned is *fintie*. Torah yet to be mastered is unlimited. I therefore knew that the person dancing with an unlimited vision in his mind would outlast the one with limited motivation."

Another aspect of using the mind to channel the emotions is taught by the Alter of Novaradok, Rabbi Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, זצ"ל. The Alter advises that the only method by which a person can permanently cultivate healthy *middos* is by focusing one's mind on the unadulterated truth in every instance. To seek not a personal truth, but an objective truth as expressed in the Torah. Inevitably, good *middos* will flow from such thought-out Torah perspectives.

For the mind to steer the emotions, however, calls for time. We live in a fast-paced world where slow-moving reactions are derided and delayed re-

sponses are deemed inferior. But if a person's good *middos* are to take root and develop, a person must be patient with himself. A person needs to allow himself the time to *think* before reacting to any situation. One needs time to assess what has occurred, and what the Torah response should be.

Consequently, crucial in implanting *middos tovus* in our children is for parents to exemplify this lesson: *Think with a Torah perspective before reacting*: Would Hashem be pleased with my reaction? Does the Torah sanction my response? Children, by osmosis, absorb their parents' attitudes. Teaching them this basic concept of "thought before action" can determine the entire spectrum of their *middos tovus*... or lack thereof.

Supply the mind with wholesome nourishment

Another means of instilling good *middos* in children is to fill their minds with nourishing, wholesome ideas. A child's mind is not a void; its supply lines need constant replenishment. The more that parents provide it with positive, healthy *hashkafos*, the healthier the child's *middos* will be.

Each child should be addressed at his or her own capacity and age level. Sermonizing is usually counterproductive. Telling inspiring stories, and sharing incidents and observations are much more effective.

Character traits, *Chazal* teach us, are directly related to the level of one's thinking. A person aspiring to superficial, petty things in life will lose his temper over minor annoyances. The higher one's aspirations, the less likely will his temper be triggered by petty things. And yes, children too can aspire to big things, to lofty ideals. One just has to tune them in to a higher frequency.

Tzenius in the home: A blessing for having children with inherently good middos

In *Shir HaShirim*, *Shlomo Hamelech* says, "As chaste as a garden locked is my sister, my bride; a spring locked up, a garden sealed" (4, 12). This verse depicts the beauty and sanctity of *tzenius* in the Jewish home. Personal modesty reigns between parents; and in the home, in general, modesty in behavior, in thought, in speech and in dress ex-

press the quality of the person's inner being—in contrast to flashy externals. The element of *tzenius*, reserving one's beauty for the one that it was intended, will result in fulfillment of the promises of the verse that follows: "Your least gifted ones are a pomegranate orchard with luscious fruit" (*ibid*, 13).

Inevitably, where *tzenius* is honored—where parents do not relate to glitzy externals, but identify with the purity of the *neshama* within—the natural outgrowth will be children who reflect that very concept of the privacy of inner beauty over emphasis on externals, children with *middos tovus*... our ultimate wish. ■

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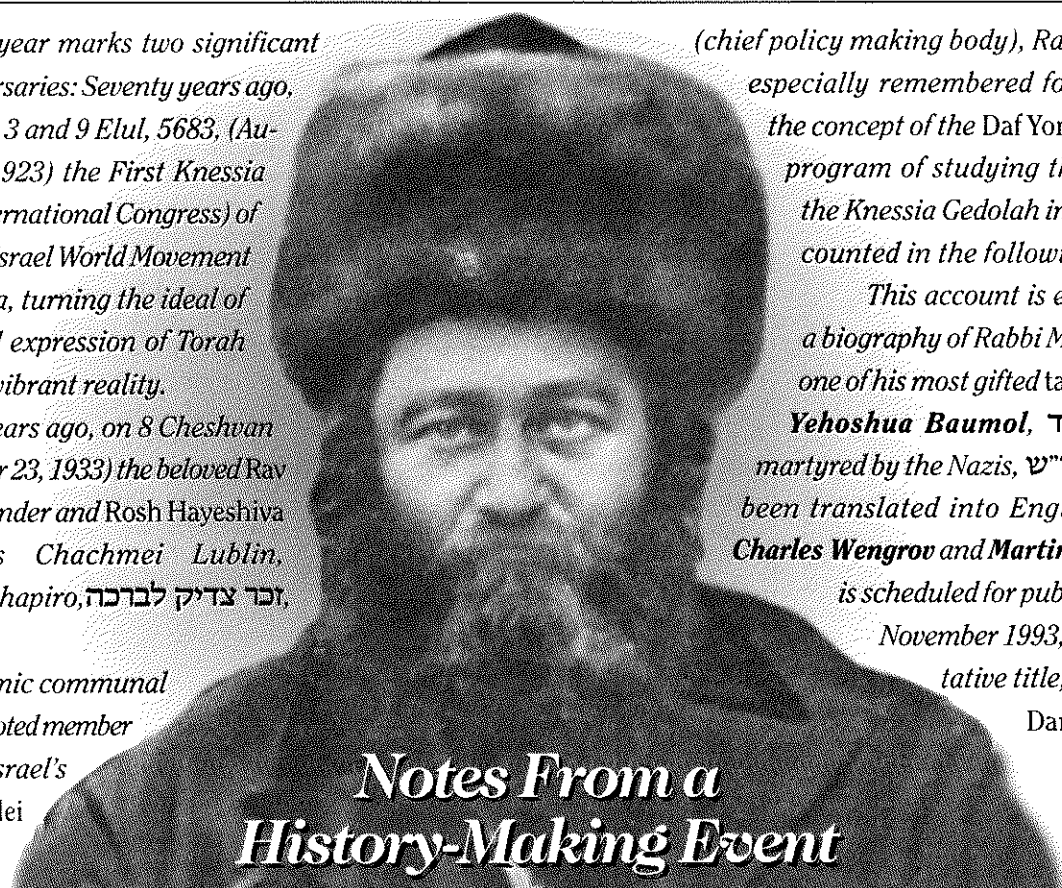
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This year marks two significant anniversaries: Seventy years ago, between 3 and 9 Elul, 5683, (August 15-21, 1923) the First Knessia Gedolah (International Congress) of the Agudath Israel World Movement met in Vienna, turning the ideal of an organized expression of Torah Jewry into a vibrant reality.

Sixty years ago, on 8 Cheshvan 5694, (October 23, 1933) the beloved Rav of Lublin, founder and Rosh Hayeshiva of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, Rabbi Meir Shapiro, זכר צדיק לברכה, passed away.

A dynamic communal leader and devoted member of Agudath Israel's Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah



Notes From a History-Making Event

(chief policy making body), Rabbi Shapiro is especially remembered for introducing the concept of the Daf Yomi (folio-a-day program of studying the Talmud) at the Knessia Gedolah in 1923, as is recounted in the following pages.

This account is excerpted from a biography of Rabbi Meir Shapiro by one of his most gifted talmidim, **Rabbi Yehoshua Baumol**, ד"ר י"ח, who was martyred by the Nazis, ש"י. The book has been translated into English by **Rabbi Charles Wengrov** and **Martin H. Stern** and is scheduled for publication in late

November 1993, under the tentative title, *A Blaze in the Darkening Room: The Life and Legacy of Rav Meir Shapiro.*

Introducing Daf Hayomi to Klal Yisroel

On the third of Elul, 5683 (August 15, 1923), while the normal [night] life... went on in Austria's capital city of Vienna, the first Knessia Gedolah ("Great Assembly") of Agudas Yisroel opened at the glittering, elegant Royal Theater building, with some six hundred delegates in attendance. It was to last for seven days, with such luminaries in attendance as the venerable (octogenarian) Chofetz Chayim, the *Rebbe* of Tchortkov, and the *Rebbe* of Ger.

Quite certainly, the greatest Torah authorities were there—the most re-

Rabbi Charles Wengrov, who lives in Jerusalem, is responsible for rendering into English such books as *Sefer Hachinuch*, *The Chofetz Chaim on the Siddur* and *A Tzaddik in Our Time*. He has been called "the dean of the translators." **Mr. Martin H. Stern** lives in London. The original Yiddish manuscript on which this book is based was never published.

nowned Torah scholars and the revered masters of Chassidic learning and piety—to thrash through the various grave and weighty problems which faced... Torah Jewry in the European diaspora.

...Among them was the effervescent Rav Meir Shapiro, still looking, irrepressibly, for ways to promote and launch his *daf hayomi* program. Then the Knessia Gedolah... did it for him: It put him on the program, to present the idea at one of the formal, plenary sessions. And he spoke:

If the entire observant community everywhere, in every single location where our observant Jews exist on this earth, will study the same *daf* of Talmud on the same day, could we have any better, more palpable expression of the sublime eternal unity between the Holy One, His Torah, and His people?

How splendid this could be! A man goes sailing across the sea, and he carries a volume of *Meseches* (tractate) *Berachos*. He is traveling from the Holy Land to America—and every day, with the setting of the sun, he opens the volume and studies the *daf*. Arrived in New York, he enters a *beis midrash*, and to his amazement, he finds a group at work on the very page of Talmud that he has reached in his own private learning program. Delighted, he sits down and joins them. He gets into Talmudic debate with them, and is answered back. The net result is that the Glory of Heaven has become greater, mightier, more holy.

Suppose someone migrates from North America to Brazil, or to far-off Japan. Having arrived and settled, he will head for the *beis midrash* and find there, what? A group [occupied] with the very part of the Talmud that he has been studying. Could we have a better way of bringing Jewish hearts

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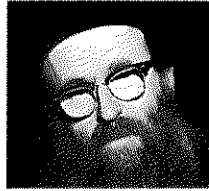
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Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Levin



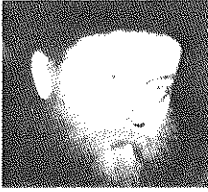
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Rabbi Moshe Sherer



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Rabbi Yissocher Frand



Prof. Aaron Twerski



Rabbi Nosson Scherman



Rabbi Avrohom Yosef Leizerson



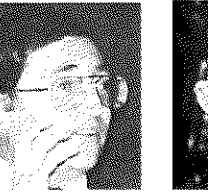
Rabbi Yitzchok Ishee



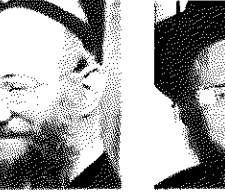
Rabbi Yisroel Reisman



Rabbi Peretz Steinberg



Rabbi Paysach Krohn



Rabbi Ben Tzion Kotlas



Rabbi Zev Le

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 25, 2:00 P.M.

CONCURRENT SYMPOSIA

I. SHMITTAH FOR THE AMERICAN JEW:

THE IMPLICATIONS ARE MORE RELEVANT THAN YOU THINK

Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer, Rav, Kehillas Bais Avrohom (Monsey)

Rabbi Shmuel Fuerst, Dayan, Agudath Israel of Illinois

Rabbi Moshe Heinemann, Rav, Agudath Israel of Baltimore

Chairman: **Dr. Yitzchok Perle** (Boston)

II. TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN THE SERVICE OF TORAH:

COMING ATTRACTIONS, HASHKAFKA REACTIONS

Speaker: **Rabbi Dovid Cohen**, Rav, Congregation Gvul Yaabetz

Panelists: **Harold (Heshy) Gans**, Senior Mathematician, U.S. Dept. of Defense

Rabbi David L. Greenfield, Founder, Vaad Mishmeres Stam International

Dr. Avrom Pollak, President, Star-K Kosher Certification (Baltimore)

Dr. Chaim Ziegler, Professor, Computer & Information Science, Brooklyn College

Chairman: **Eliezer Bruckstein**

III. ORTHODOXY'S PUBLIC IMAGE:

WHY ARE THEY SAYING THOSE THINGS ABOUT US?

Overview: **Rabbi Nosson Scherman**, General Editor, Mesorah Publications

Speakers: **Rabbi Yitzchok Ishee**, Rav, Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin/Avenue L

Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, Rav, Agudath Israel of Madison

Chairman: **Mordechai Mandelbaum** (Toronto)

IV. "BAYIS NE'EMAN B'YISROEL":

PREPARING OUR CHILDREN FOR MARRIAGE

Rabbi Paysach Krohn, Noted author and lecturer

Rabbi Peretz Steinberg, Yoshev Rosh, Vaad Halachah,

Council of Young Israel Rabbis

Rabbi Ezzriel Tauber, Founder and Director, Shalheves

Chairman: **Yosef Davis** (Chicago)

THURSDAY EVENING, 7:30 P.M.

Opening Address:

Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky

Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva of Philadelphia

Symposium:

THE CLASH BETWEEN MODERNITY AND ETERNITY:

STANDING UP FOR TORAH PRINCIPLES

Speaker: **Rabbi Yaakov Perlow**

Novominsker Rebbe

Discussants: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Ner Israel

Professor Aaron Twerski

Professor of Law, Brooklyn Law School

Chairman, Commission on Legislation

and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America

Chairman: **Rabbi Moshe A. Faskowitz**

Rav, Young Israel of Redwood



Rivie Schwebel
Convention Chairman



David I. Benin (Denver)
Convention Co-Chairman

SHABBOS ADDRESSES

Listed in order of appearance:

Rabbi Avrohom Pam

Rosh HaYeshiva, Mesivta Torah Vodaath

Rabbi Elya Fisher

Rosh Kollel Ger

Rabbi Yosef Harari- Rafal

Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Ateret Torah

Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Levin

Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Telshe-Chicago

Rabbi Aryeh Malkiel Kotler

Rosh HaYeshiva,

Beth Medrash Govoha (Lakewood)

Rabbi Esriel Erlanger

Mashgiach Ruchni, Mirer Yeshiva

Rabbi Simcha Bunim Ehrenfeld

Mattesdorfer Rav

Rabbi Zelig Epstein

Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Shaar HaTorah, Queens

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Rabbi Avrohom Pam



Rabbi Zelig Epstein



Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg



Rabbi Shmuel Kamnietzky



Rabbi Reuven Feinstein



Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller

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MOTZOEI SHABBOS, NOVEMBER 27, 8:00 P.M. KEYNOTE SESSION

Rabbi Elya Svei
Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva of Philadelphia
Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller
Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Telshe- Chicago
Rabbi Moshe Sherer
President, Agudath Israel of America
Special Guest from Azerbaijan

Audio- Visual Presentation:
"A LESSON OF FAITH AND COURAGE"

Greetings: **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Mendelson**, Rav, Komernius, Chairman, Keren HaShviis
Chairman: **Rabbi Dovid Olewski**, Rosh Yeshiva B'Gerer Mesivta Bais Yisroel

SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 28

TORAH CHINUCH IN ERETZ YISROEL: A Report
Rabbi Avrohom Yosef Leizeron, Associate Director, Chinuch Atzmai

Symposium:
VISIONS OF ZION REVISITED:
SECULAR ZIONISM/ RELIGIOUS ZIONISM/ LOVE OF ZION

Overview:
Rabbi Nachman Bulman, Mashgiach Ruchni, Yeshiva Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

Panelists:
Rabbi Ben Tzion Kokis, Yeshiva Ohr Somayach of Monsey
Rabbi Yonason Rosenblum, Noted author and lecturer (Jerusalem)
Rabbi Zev Leff, Rav, Moshav Mattityahu

Chairman:
Rabbi Chaskel Besser, Presidium-member, Agudath Israel of America

SHABBOS SYMPOSIA

EMUNAH AND BITACHON IN THESE TURBULENT TIMES (IN YIDDISH)

Rabbi Reuven Feinstein, Rosh HaYeshiva, Mesivta of Staten Island
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Mendelson, Rav, Komernius, Israel, Chairman, Keren HaShviis
Rabbi Eliezer Ginsburg, Rav, Agudath Israel Zichron Shmuel/Flatbush South

REACHING ACROSS THE "FRUMKEIT" DIVIDE: THE LAYMAN'S ROLE IN KIRUV RECHOKIM (IN ENGLISH)

Overview:
Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Ner Israel (Baltimore)
Speakers:
Rabbi Yaakov Salomon, CSW, Psychotherapist/Lecturer, Aish HaTorah-Discovery
Rabbi Yehudah Silver, Principal, Jewish Secondary Schools Movement
Educational Director, Project SEED, United Kingdom

SHABBOS CHAIRMEN:

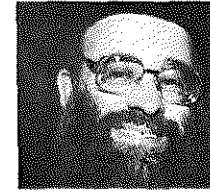
Rabbi Shaul Chill, President, Council of Young Israel Rabbis
Reb Yosef Friedenson, Editor, Dos Yiddische Vort
Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Lowy, Rav, Agudath Israel of Toronto

SHIURIM

Rabbi Shaya Cohen
Executive Vice President, Priority One
Rabbi Shaul Kagan
Rosh Hakollel, Kollel of Pittsburgh
Rabbi Yehudah Pames
Rosh Yeshiva,
Yeshivas Rabbenu Yitzchok Elchonon
Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss
Rav, Agudath Israel of Staten Island

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WEEKDAY SESSIONS



Rabbi Feivel Cohen



Rabbi Yosef Harari Rafal



Rabbi Nachman Bulman



Rabbi Esiel Erlanger



Rabbi David Cohen



Rabbi Moshe Heinemann



Rabbi Yonason Rosenblum



Rabbi Yaakov Salomon



Rabbi Yehudah Silver



Rabbi Eliezer Ginsburg



Rabbi Avroham Chaim Feuer



Rabbi Shmuel Fuerst

1. TAKING SHADLONUS TO THE NEXT LEVEL:
CULTIVATING THE POLITICAL GRASS ROOTS

Chairman: **Jacob Z. Schuster** (Monsey)
Panelists: **Michael Landau**
Dr. Irving Lebovics (Los Angeles)
Simcha G. Lyons (St. Louis)
Coordinator: **Chaim David Zwiebel**, General Counsel, Agudath Israel of America
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Shmuel Blech**, Rav, Cong. Anshe Sfard (Lakewood)

2. A MATTER OF BREAD AND BUTTER:
FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR ALL AS A COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

Chairman: **Yosef Feldman**, Chairman, Agudath Israel Prof. & Mgmt. Employment Services
Panelists: **Rabbi Chaim Meyer Ehrman, PhD**, Prof of Marketing, Loyola University (Chicago)
Rabbi Shmuel Lefkowitz, VP for Community Services, Agudath Israel of America
Rabbi Avraham Simon, M.A., N.C.C., Director of Career Development, Agudath Israel Professional and Management Employment Services
Gedaliah Weinberger, President, American Healthcare Systems, Inc.
Coordinator: **Rabbi Zvi Boruch Hollander**, Director, Agudath Israel of California
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Feivel Cohen**, Rav, Khal Tomchei Torah

3. BEYOND CROWN HEIGHTS:
THE REALITY OF URBAN ANTI-SEMITISM

Chairman: **Shlomo Werdiger**
Panelists: **Chaim S. Kaminetzky**, National President, National Council of Young Israel
Menachem Lubinsky, President, Metropolitan Coordinating Council on Jewish Poverty
Charles A. Posner, Deputy District Attorney, Kings County, NY
Coordinator: **Mordechai Avigdor**, Associate General Counsel, Agudath Israel of America
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Hillel David**, Rav, Congregation Yeshiva Shaarei Torah

4. AGUDATH ISRAEL AS A NATIONAL MOVEMENT:
LIVING UP TO THE CHALLENGE

Chairman: **Henry Lowenthal**, President, Agudath Israel of Cleveland
Panelists: **Benish Kaplan**, Presidium-member, Agudath Israel of California
Shmuel Markovitz, President, Agudath Israel of Baltimore
Fred Pfeiffer, Presidium-member, Agudath Israel of Montreal
Coordinators: **Rabbi Shmuel Bloom**, Executive Vice President, Agudath Israel of America
Rabbi Labish Becker, Director of Torah Projects, Agudath Israel of America
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Levin**, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Telshe- Chicago

5. DAF YOMI AND BEYOND:
FINDING NEW WAYS TO GROW IN TORAH

Chairman: **David E. Retter, Esq.**, Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, Cong. Heichel Moshe
Panelists: **Nosson Motechin**
Shmuel Rieder, Member, Boker V'Erev Kollel
Dr. Elliot Samet (Detroit)
Coordinator: **Rabbi Nosson Gugenheim**, Director, Agudath Israel of Montreal
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Meyer Scheinberg**, Rav, Agudath Israel of Flatbush

6. HOLOCAUST MUSEUMS AND MEMORIALS:
ARE THEY SENDING THE RIGHT MESSAGE?

Chairman: **Aaron Bleeman** (Toronto)
Panelists: **Dr. Joseph Geliebter**, Director, Rabbi Leib Geliebter Memorial Foundation
Mordechai Friedman
Yosef Rapaport
Coordinator: **Reb Yosef Friedenson**, Editor, Dos Yiddishe Vort
Rabbinic Rabbinc Advisor: **Rabbi Shlomo Rotenberg**, Rav, Agudath Israel of Williamsburgh

7. SURVIVAL STRATEGIES FOR SMALLER TORAH COMMUNITIES:
GROWTH FROM WITHIN? HELP FROM WITHOUT?

Chairman: **Yussie Ostreicher**
Panelists: **Shimon Nafel** (San Jose)
Rabbi Yonason Rosenberg, Rav, Congregation Ahavas Sholom (Columbus)
David Silverberg (Minneapolis)
Rabbi Yaakov Wasser, Rav, Young Israel of East Brunswick (NJ)
Coordinator: **Rabbi Mendy Dombroff** (Elizabeth)
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Menachem Greenblatt**, Rav, Agudath Israel of St. Louis

8. "TALKERS ANONYMOUS":
RESTORING KEDUSHAS BAIS HAKNESSES

Chairman: **Nochum Stein**
Panelists: **Shia Bernath** (Monsey)
Jacob I. Friedman, Esq.
A. Joseph Stern (Edison)
Coordinator: **Rabbi Nissim Wolpin**, Editor, The Jewish Observer
Rabbinic Advisor: **Rabbi Aaron Zuckerman**, Rav, Agudath Israel of Midwood

9. OUR CHILDREN:
ARE THEY LISTENING TO US? ARE WE LISTENING TO THEM?
(FOR WOMEN ONLY)

Chairman: **Mrs. Bella Weinreb**, Director, Camp Chayl Miriam
Panelists: **Mrs. Suri Becher**, Recording Secretary, Agudah Women of America
Mrs. Matti Berkowitz, Vice President, Agudah Women of America
Mrs. Slova Wolff, President, Yeshiva Darchei Torah Women's League
Coordinator: **Mrs. Rochel Miller**
Consultants: **Mrs. Hannah Parnes, MSW**
Mrs. Esther Reisman, Member of Faculty, Bais Yaakov Academy

10. MAZAL TOV!
THE JOY AND STRESS OF MAKING A SIMCHA
(FOR WOMEN ONLY)

Chairman: **Mrs. Ruchie Levitin**, Monsey
Panelists: **Mrs. Rochel Gutman**
Mrs. Miriam Krohn
Coordinator: **Mrs. Chanie Friedman**
Consultants: **Rebbetzin Yehudis Perlow**
Rebbetzin Shoshana Perr, CSW, BCD

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 6. HOLOCAUST MUSEUMS
 7. SMALL COMMUNITIES
 8. "TALKERS ANONYMOUS"
 9. OUR CHILDREN
 10. MAZAL TOV

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Check type of accommodations requested. (Give first and second choice.) If accommodation requested is not available, the next category will be assigned.

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The Knessia Gedolah in Vienna, 1923

into one great, harmonious union?

Nor is this all. Until now, thanks to the traditions of the yeshiva world, where every young learner is initiated into the Talmud, only certain *mesechtos* are studied, while others are left to a select few learners and scholars to take pity on them and open their pages. The *daf hayomi* program will put all that right!

One further point: Our youth, the future of the Jewish people—it is they above all who must begin this great *mitzva* of “wholesale study”!

...Amid thundering applause, the whole assembly of some 600 delegates rose and stood to attention; and with a fiery holy fervor, with emotions that rose to fever pitch... [they] accepted the obligation to participate in the program, that was now scheduled to begin with the new Jewish year: on Rosh Hashana, 5684 (Sep-

tember 11, 1923).

At the same time, the convention called on Jewish communities everywhere to adopt the program and proclaim it throughout the world. And thus it was born into the world “in a fortunate hour,” to be welcomed and absorbed as an unforgettable and unrepealable part of religious Jewry’s way in the world: a global daily study portion.

After Rosh Hashana he received a letter from his only sister, who lived in a far-off village in the region of Bukovina, in northern Rumania, and knew nothing whatever of his activities: “On the night of Rosh Hashana,” she wrote, “I had a dream: I saw you in Heaven, dear brother, surrounded by a great mass of angels with striking figures, all radiant as the light of the firmament; and you, my brother, were standing in their midst, your face alight like the sun in its full strength; and they

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were all smiling to you, as they thanked you and rejoiced with you very, very greatly.... Please, dearest brother: let me know what the dream means...."

The reactions to the program, as the Jewish people learned of it far and wide, made the meaning of the dream quite clear to him. Echoes and reverberations of response came, clearly and unmistakably, from all over the world. There was no doubt that the idea took hold, and in scores of far-flung locations... people were taking to studying the Talmud almost in unison—the same leaf, the same two pages, in the same tractate.... And quite certainly the numbers of participants kept growing as the new Jewish year progressed....

When he saw how well the idea had been received, how vigorously the novel learning program was thriving, Rav Meir once gave a most interesting reason for it, in his own characteristic way:

We read in the Talmud that when man (Adam) was created, his body came from Babylonia, his head from the Land of Israel, and his limbs from other lands (*Sanhedrin* 38a-b). This indicates that if there is a wish that an important creation should exist as a permanent, stable entity and be able to spread through the world, everywhere—then the component parts that comprise the material for it should be varied, from a variety of places. Then it will belong everywhere; it will find its place everywhere.

Now let us have a look at a page in the Talmud: the *Mishna*, the earlier part, was given its redacted form by Rabbi Yehuda haNassi in the Land of Israel; so we have a parallel to Adam, the first, created man: the head derived from the Land of Israel. Now, the *Gemora*, the later, major part of the Talmud, was put together by the Babylonian Sage, Rav Ashi; again we have a parallel: Adam's body came from Babylonia.

Now further: the commentaries of *Rashi* and *Tosefos*, printed with the text, derive from France. [In the back of]... a printed tractate in a volume of Talmud, we have more commentaries: *Rabbeinu Asher*, from Germany; *Rambam on the Mishna*, from Egypt; and then the last ones: *Maharshal*, *Maharsha*, *Maharam*, and so forth—all produced in Poland. Thus the analogy continues: Adam's limbs came from other lands.

The man who yearned and dreamed of achieving major goals in Torah education for his people found himself the founding father and the inspiration for a sound new system of continual daily study by old and young, amid the Jewish people worldwide.

Hence, (said Rav Meir,) when we read in... *Bereishis*, "This is the book of the developments of man....," we can apply the words to the Book of the Talmud: it was composed and formed in the same way as Adam. And that is the reason why the *daf hayomi* program has found such a warm reception everywhere among our devout people of the Torah: because there is such a close parallel between a page of Talmud and the human being that the Almighty created.

The success of the idea brought a series of other learning programs in its wake, either for people who would find two pages of Talmud a day too taxing or too time-consuming, or for those who wanted supplementary programs for daily learning. Soon enough, printed schedules appeared for *Mishna yomis*, ongoing sections or paragraphs of the *Mishna* for study day by day; *Nach yomi*, a daily study portion in the *Neviim* (Prophets) and *Kesuvim* (Writings); *mussar yomi*, a daily portion for study in the sacred literature of ethics and morality; and so on.

So the man who yearned and dreamed of achieving major goals in Torah education for his people found himself the founding father and the inspiration for a sound new system of continual daily study by old and young, amid the Jewish people worldwide. ■

The Mirror

*The sefer leans
heavily against the shtender
serious, thirsty
beckoning me to commence.*

*And i
drift through the dusty window;
i fly
out and high
across tree-spotted valleys and silver-
windowed cityscapes.*

*I contemplate;
such a gift is this world
one could
lose himself in its roaring possibilities.*

*Or consider rather
the Giving
And the Giver
reading His card before tearing the box.*

*And looking straight ahead
I find myself,
in the middle posuk
of the middle perek
and breathing
deeply.*

Mr. Kashkin, of Monsey, N.Y., was represented by his poem, "For Rabbi Kirzner," in JO, Nov. '92.

For the interest of our readers who are able to read Yiddish, a 120-page special commemorative issue of *Dos Yiddishe Vort*, including ten articles relating to the life of Rabbi Meir Shapiro, *The Lubliner Rav*, was published in honor of the Ninth Siyum HaShas of the *Daf Yomi*. This photo-filled edition, an historical collector's item, is available through *Dos Yiddishe Vort*, 84 William Street, NYC 10038, for \$6 postage-paid.

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Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz, זצ"ל

An Appreciation

The passing of Rav Dovid Lifshitz, זצ"ל, a beloved and re-markably unique figure in the Torah community, on 9 Tamuz (June 30) this past summer, left us bereaved and poorer for his absence.

Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz was born in the year 5666/1906, in Minsk. His father, Rabbi Yaakov Aryeh Lifshitz, was the son of the *Gaon* Rabbi Shlomo Zalman, author of the well-known *sefer, Olas Shelomo*, on *Kadoshim*. As a result of the turmoil of World War I, the young Dovid was forced to flee Minsk with his parents, to join his grandfather in the city of Grodna. It was there that Reb Dovid met the towering figure of the yeshiva world, Rabbi Shimon Shkop, זצ"ל, under whom he had the privilege to learn for a period of time. Reb Shimon encouraged him to continue his studies in the Yeshiva of Mir, where Reb Dovid became the close *talmid* of the *Gaonim*, Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda Finkel, זצ"ל, and the *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, זצ"ל. His seven years in Mir were distinguished by his

great *hasmada* (diligence) and his keen *lomdus* (analytic mind).

Reb Dovid married the daughter of Rabbi Yosef Yoselovitch, Suvalker Rav. His father-in-law passed away shortly after their wedding, and Reb Dovid was invited to succeed him. Reb Dovid was not yet thirty years old at this time, and many viewed his ascension to the position of *Rav* of Suvalk—a community with some 27 *batei midrashim*—with more than a little skepticism. Before long, however, the leaders of the *Kehilla* became aware that Reb Dovid was a man of exemplary Torah knowledge and exceptional *middos* (character), and most worthy of his position. Word of his stature spread, and Reb Dovid was soon a familiar figure at rabbinical conferences.

Typical of Reb Dovid's leadership in Suvalk was an incident regarding the local *Mikva*, which was in need of repair. Reb Dovid called a meeting of

the community leaders and they assured him that the matter would be handled. They were, however, less than ex-

peditious in taking action. The Rav purchased bags of cement, filled buckets with water, and was about to take the matter into his own hands, when the community leaders, much embarrassed by their footdragging, repaired it on their own.

When the Second World War broke out, Suvalk was turned over to the Communists, who did not look too kindly upon an activist Rav. That left Rabbi Lifshitz no choice but to flee to Lithuania with his family. A year later, in 1941, Reb Dovid joined a group that fled Lithuania to Japan, from where they embarked to America. He arrived in San Francisco on *Erev Shavuot* of that year, on the same ship as the Lomzer Rav, Rabbi Moshe Shatzkes, the Novaradoker *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Avrohom Yafen, זכרונם לברכה, and יבדל לחיים, Rabbi Michel Feinstein, שליט"א.

Upon his arrival in America, Reb Dovid assumed a rabbinical position in Chicago, where he also served as *Rosh Hayeshiva* in Beis Medrash L'Torah. He was extremely active in strengthening Jewish observance in the community at large, and is credited with having influenced more than a hundred merchants to close their businesses on *Shabbos*. Shortly afterwards, he came to New York where he was invited to join the *Yeshivas Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan* as a *Rosh Hayeshiva*. In the years since then—close to half a century—thousands of *talmidim* studied under Reb Dovid, including a number who have emerged as outstanding *talmidei chachamim* and disseminators of Torah. Indeed, amongst the thousands of mourners who attended the funeral in Manhattan and Jerusalem were a number of prominent rabbinical figures who took pride in having been his *talmidim*.

In addition to his *Harbotzas HaTorah*, Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz, from the moment of his arrival in New York City, was deeply involved in many aspects of community activity. He was drafted immediately to the front line of the rescue efforts of the *Vaad Hatzolah*, along with other *Roshei Hayeshiva*, including Rabbi Aaron Kotler, Rabbi Avrohom Kalmanowitz, and Rabbi Reuvain Grozovsky, זצ"ל. He was also an active member of the *Agudas Horabbonim*, along with Rabbi Eliezer Silver, and Rabbi Yisroel Rosenberg, זצ"ל. After the passing of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, זצ"ל, he assumed a leading role in that organization.

Rabbi Lifshitz was always concerned over *Eretz Yisroel* and the welfare of the Jews there. Along with leading *Roshei Yeshiva*, such as Rabbi Aaron Kotler and Rabbi Reuvain Grozovsky, he was a prominent presence at gatherings that protested the spiritual deprivation of *olim* from Yemen and various Sephardic lands. He was amongst the founders of *Chinuch Atzmai/Torah Schools* for Israel, and regularly graced the dais at their annual dinners. In addition, Rabbi Lifshitz was one of the eleven *Roshei Hayeshiva* and *Rabbonim* that issued a *psak* thirty-five years ago,

For close to half a century, thousands of *talmidim* studied under Reb Dovid, including a number who have emerged as outstanding *talmidei chachamim* and disseminators of Torah.

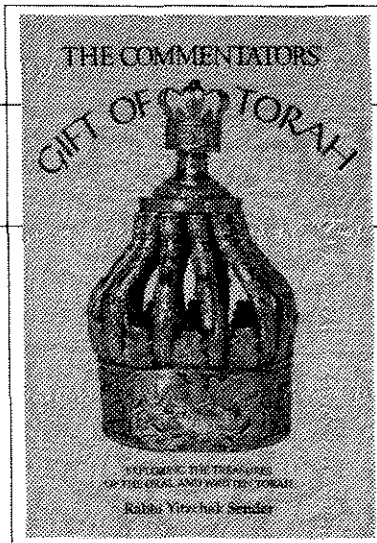
prohibiting participation in religious association with Conservative and Reform congregational and rabbinical groups.

Rabbi Lifshitz was admired for his warm *Ahavas Yisroel* and his open friendship with every Jew, which were expressed in an active pursuit of *chesed*. It is therefore not surprising

that he was associated with *Ezras Torah*, the fund well-known for support of *talmidei chachamim* and *b'nei Torah* the world over, especially in *Eretz Yisroel*. Thus, with the passing of Rabbi Naftoli Riff, זצ"ל (who led *Ezras Torah* after the *petira* of the *Gaon*, Rabbi Eliyahu Henkin, זצ"ל), Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz became president of the organization. In addition to his own fruitful efforts on behalf of *Ezras Torah*, Rabbi Lifshitz succeeded in attracting a number of young, energetic forces to the organization.

Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz was always known by the title "Suvalker Rav," even though he spent most of his years on these shores as a *Rosh Yeshiva*, who had a profound impact on his *talmidim*. Perhaps, in his way, he epitomized the classic European *Rav*—*talmid chacham*, *poseik*, teacher to the young men of his community, guide to his people, doing his utmost to meet their myriad needs—both spiritual and material. ■

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A Talmid Recalls His Rebbe

¶
*An Adaptation of a Hespel
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Rabbi Lifshitz at the recent Sigum Hashas celebration in Madison Square Garden.

THE VAST GULF OF SEPARATION

I feel totally inadequate to define or adequately describe the greatness of *Mori VeRabbi Hagaon Reb Dovid Lifshitz, שליט"א*. I can only give some impressions of a *talmid* and relate some personal experiences.

I learned in his *shiur* for one year, yet I gained from him a *derech* (approach) in learning for my whole life, and I remained, as did many, a *talmid* my entire life.

One very strong feeling I have with the *Rebbe's* passing is the quite palpable manifestation of *קידת הדורות*—"the descent of the generations"—as each successive generation falls short of the Torah greatness of the previous generation.

The *Chachamim* tell us: "If the previous generations were angels, then we are men. If the previous generations were men, then we are like donkeys, and not like the donkey of Reb Chanina ben Dosa or Reb Pinchos ben Yair, but like ordinary donkeys" (*Shabbos* 112b).

The *Chachamim* were referring to the generations immediately preceding them. They felt that the gulf in the breadth and depth of the grasp of To-

rah between the generations was like the one that separates angels and men, or men and donkeys. This is not just a quantum leap, but the difference between two worlds, inhabitants of one unable to understand the other. A man cannot understand a *malach*; a donkey cannot understand a man. They are in different worlds. It is as if a tiny ant comes into contact with a man. He thinks to himself in his ant mind, "What a great creature is this I have come upon!" He's looking at what to him seems to be a huge black object—the man's shoe. He knows nothing of the foot, which fits into the shoe, nothing of the man's knee, and surely nothing of what goes on within his heart or his brain. For the ant, the shoe is the man.

This is as much as we comprehend of the Torah greatness of the previous generations. They lived in different worlds, even though we may have co-existed with them in this world.

The *Rebbe's* command of Torah was really beyond the comprehension of his *talmidim*. No matter where in *Shas* one spoke to him, he could discuss the *sugya* in depth, directly quoting the language of the *Gemora*, and with full command of the *shütos* of the *Rishonim* and *Gedolei Acharonim* (views of the earlier and later commentaries). And he himself was aware of the gulf between himself and his *Rabbei'im*, and spoke of it to his *talmidim*.

The *Chachamim* felt that the gulf in the breadth and depth of the grasp of Torah between the generations was like the one that separates angels and men, or men and donkeys. This is not just a quantum leap, but the difference between two worlds

As long as he lived, his *Rebbe*, Reb Shimon Shkop, lived. He always referred to him as "*Mori VeRabbi, Reb Shimon*." I remember once asking him to explain a *s'vora* (reasoning) of Reb Shimon in a difficult *sugya* in *Nedorim*. (He was not learning *Nedorim* at the time.) He said, "This is what *Mori VeRabbi Reb Shimon* said," and then proceeded to repeat in Yiddish the words he had heard from Reb Shimon several decades before. When I continued to probe, he repeated the exact same words.

Rabbi Keller. *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Telshe-Chicago, is a frequent contributor to *The Jewish Observer*, most recently with "Family Values: A Torah Perspective," May '93. The *hespel* (eulogy) on which this tribute is based was delivered at Rabbi Lifshitz's funeral at Yeshivas Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan, where Rabbi Keller was his *talmid*.

HIS APPROACH TO THE TALMUD

His *derech* in learning was to infer the precise meaning of the *Rishonim's* intent from their words, specifically pointing out differences in *halacha* between various *Rishonim* which could be understood from seemingly slight differences in nuance in their words.

At times he would build an entire *shiur* on a *diyuk* (inference) in the language of a *Rashba* or a *Ritva*. It was not his way to approach a *sugya* with a *s'vora* that pleased him and then try to demonstrate how this or that *Rishon* held the *s'vora*. He began with the goal of understanding what the *Rishonim* said.

His *hasmoda* (diligence) and "*tigen in lerner*" (total immersion in his studies) as a *bachur* in Grodna and in Mir were legendary. Even in his later years, he would never lie down during the day. Once when he was sick and was forced to rest, he told the *Rebbetzin* not to say that he was in bed... "*Es iz a bizayon*. It's something to be ashamed of."

He would tell us of winter Friday nights in Mir, when it would get dark very early. After davening, the *bachurim* would eat a quick *seuda* and then return to the *beis midrash* to remain studying until the early hours of the morning. In the middle of the night, they would take a break to eat *kugel*. His purpose in telling us this was to give us the flavor of the European *yeshivos* and an idea of how *bachurim* developed into the *Gedolei Torah* that those *yeshivos* produced.

His world was the world of *ד אמות של הליכה*—"the four cubits of *halacha*." His mind was always engrossed in Torah. Yet that did not isolate him from the world. His love for Torah did not conflict with his love and concern for *Klal Yisroel*, and for each individual Jew. His manifold *chessed* and *Klal* activities never took him out of the *daled amos* of *halacha*. He took the *daled amos* of *halacha* with him wherever he went. And he tried to influence his *talmidim* to do the same.

In a *shmuess* he said once at the end of a year, he spoke of those four *amos* and in a characteristic insight, bridging the worlds of *halacha* and *aggada*, applied to them the *halacha*:

that a person acquires as his possession that which is within his four *amos*. He told his *talmidim*, "A *ben Torah* never leaves the *yeshiva*. If he does, it is a sign that he never was in the *yeshiva*. For wherever he goes, his four *amos* should take possession—should be *medakesh* (sanctify)—that which surrounds him, and transform it into a *yeshiva*."

HIS GREAT LOVE FOR HIS TALMIDIM

He had a great love and affection for his *talmidim*. I'll never forget the day I went to take leave of the *Rebbe*, before I left New York to go to Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland. We were standing in the *beis midrash*. He took me by the arm and drew me out into the hall. I didn't understand at the moment why he was taking me out of the *beis midrash*. But then he gave me a kiss on the cheek (one is not permitted to kiss one's child in the *beis midrash**) and

*See R'MA, ORACH CHAIM 98:1

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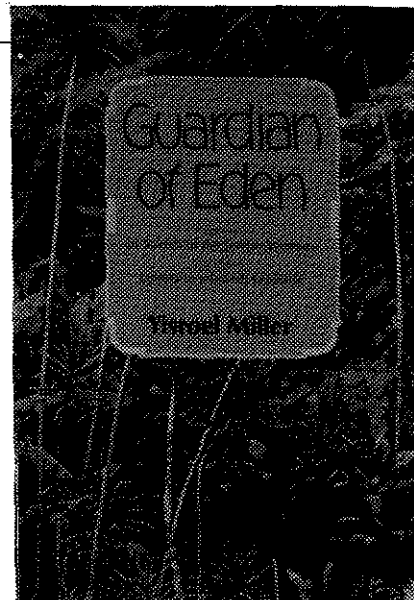
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told me to make sure that I write down any *chiddushim* in Torah that I might come up with in the course of my learning. Unfortunately, I cannot say that I followed the Rebbe's admonition, but I can still feel that kiss on my cheek.

Once, when he was in Chicago on a mission, he came to my home for a visit, unannounced. We were in the midst of preparations for a daughter's wedding, and invitations were all over the dining room table. He went to the table and took one, saying, "I now have my invitation. You don't have to send me one." Then he really caught me off guard: "I'm on my

way to New York. Maybe I can take a package for you?"

I was taken aback and protested that I would never think of bothering the Rebbe. But he insisted, and if I remember correctly, ended up taking a package to New York!

Just as he would share in his *talmidim's simchas* as if they were his own, he would share in their grief and misfortune. He would shed tears. And he would shed real tears, if he heard that a *talmid* had not acted as he should have. He would try to be *melamed zechus* (find some justification) for the person.

Yet he was far from naive. His great love for Torah and his love for his *talmidim* did not blind him to the dangers and temptations of the society in which he and they lived. He spoke out continuously against those dangers and temptations, and against the falsification of Torah by movements far removed from the *daled amos* of *halacha*, and philosophies purporting to be part of the *daled amos* of *halacha*.

HIS PASSING

He passed away the week of *Parshas Chukas*. That *Parsha* (*Bamidbar* 21:17,18) tells us of the *שירת הבורא*—the song that the people of Israel sang over the miraculous source of water, which had originally come to them in the *zechus* of Miriam. The *Ohr HaChayim* explains that this song was actually the song of Torah, which is also referred to as "a well of water."

באר חפרוה שרים כרוה נדיבי העם במחוקק במשענתם — "This is the well that was dug by the princes, The nobles of our people hollowed it out, Carved out with their staffs."

"This is the well that was dug by the princes"—these were the *Avos*, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, who prepared this heavenly source of water, the Torah, to be given to *Yisroel*. However, the well was not yet ready to be drunk from until *כרוה נדיבי העם*, "The nobles of our people hollowed it out." This refers to Moshe, who brought the Torah down into this world, those who received it from him, the *Zekainim* and *Neviim* (elders and prophets), and the *Anshei Knesses Hagedola* who explained it and revealed its hidden parts, for *Torah Sheb'Ksav*—the Written Torah—cannot be imbibed without *Torah Sheb'al Peh*.

Says the *Ohr Hachayim*, this refers to that which the sages of later generations would be *mechadeish* (reveal new meanings in Torah).

ואין זה אלא כחוקק בה חקיקה ואינה כמדה הראשונים שחפרו וכרו וגם זה אינו אלא במשענותם של ראשונים שכל דקדוק ודקדוק שידקדק בתורה צריך לפרשו ע"פ דבריהם וכל דבר שלא היה מיוסד ע"פ דברי הקדמונים אין לסמוך עליו

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His love for Torah did not conflict with his love and concern for *Klal Yisroel* as a whole, and for each individual Jew. His manifold *chessed* and *Klal* activities never took him out of the *daled amos* of *halacha*. He took the *daled amos* of *halacha* with him wherever he went. And he tried to influence his *talmidim* to do the same.

this well of Torah, can only be undertaken with the staffs of the *Rishonim*—the earlier sages.

"For each inference exacted from Torah must be explained according to their (the earlier sages') words, and anything not founded on the words of the *Kadmonim* (earlier authorities) cannot be relied upon."

I believe that the words of the *Ohr HaChayim* perfectly characterize the *Rebbe's* approach to Torah. He did not seek to create a new *mesora*—a new "Tradition." All of his learning and his *shiurim* reflected an awesome respect for the words of the *Rishonim*, and this is what he tried to imbue in his *talmidim*.

This is what he taught us. He did not approach the *Rashba* with a *chiddush* of his own—a preconceived notion of what he wanted the *Rashba* to say. He wanted to

know: What does the *Rashba* say?

HIS FLIGHT TO FREEDOM

Although this is not a biography, I feel that I must include a story that he personally related to me in great detail—the story of his flight from Sувалк.

After the German occupation forces entered Sувалк, he remained behind because he felt that as Rav he should stay until the very end to guide his Kehilla. But word reached him that the Germans were about to arrest him, and he should leave immediately. He, the Rebbetzin and other family members took a wagon at night to flee for the border. In the middle of the night, they reached a crossroad, not knowing which way to turn. A Polish peasant came by and called out, "Sувалкер Rav! Don't go that way! Go the other way!" They followed these direc-

tions and escaped to safety. They later found out that had they gone the other way, they would have fallen right into the hands of the waiting Germans.

In relating this incident, he stressed the total improbability of a Polish peasant riding down a country road in the middle of the night during wartime. Then, lowering his eyes, he said, "*Ich shem zich tzu zogen, az dos iz geven Eliyahu HaNavi—I'm ashamed to say that I believe that it was Eliyahu HaNavi.*"

TAKING LEAVE, FROM WITHIN THE DALED AMOS.

Whenver one visited him, the talk was always in Torah—not in a superficial manner, but in depth. Even in his last months, when his sickness precluded his "talking in learning," he would speak words of *beracha* and *chizuk* in learning.

The last time I visited him, he was very weak. He spoke to me as if I were still one of the young *talmidim* learning in his *shiur*. "*Ir zolt zeh'n tzu ligen in lernen un shteigen in lernen un veren a gadol baTorah.*"

This was his life and this was his legacy: Be immersed in learning, grow in learning, become *Gedolei Torah*.

When all else of the world was out of his sight, even when his prodigious memory had failed him, he never left the *daled amos shel halacha*.

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It is Succos in Jerusalem and it is almost time for the *Simchas Beis HaSho'eiva*. I check my watch and find that I have little time left, so I bound down the 142 steps that separate me from the Wall Plaza, and with a joy like no other joy I had ever known, I daven *Maariv*.

A rhythm throbs in my head, and finds expression in my swaying as I daven. I cannot trace its source until I reach the words in the *Shmoneh Esrei*: "U'vnei *Osah*—and rebuild that city, restore the throne of David," quickly, swiftly, soon, in our days.. now! Instead of sobs of yearning, I feel sobs of joy: Now!

I leave the Wall after *Maariv*, and dig my hands into my jacket pockets, fingering lint, searching for chips. And now, in *gola*, I want those chips of that joyful, hopeful, redeeming Wall. Now!

Saturday Night, the tourists find other haunts, and leave the Wall bathed in the memories of the departed Sabbath. There, the timeless, otherworldly *kedusha* of *Shabbos* lingers on.

The *dayan* of Geulah, Reb Noach comes, waiting for his faithful ten to gather two hours after sundown. This time I'm one of them. I plant myself a meter distant from the Wall. But I feel as though I'm gripping it. "V'hu *rachum*—and He is merciful..." I need His mercy to carry me on through the rest of the week, so I "grab on to His Wall," and—through the *Shema* and *Amida*, it doesn't let me go.... Second "Boruchu," "Aleinu," and the *dayan* summons his cohorts to join him in a "Kappitel *Tillim*," and then intones a *Mi Shebeirach* for a startlingly long list of sick people. Each of the participants seems to know another ailing person in need of a *refu'ah*, and whispers the name to Reb Noach. And, eyes clenched, Reb Noach responds: "Sarah bas Leah." "Sarah bas Leah..." "Yisroel ben Tzipporah." "Yisroel ben Tzipporah..." "Nissan ben Chaya Dina." "Nissan ben Chaya Dina..." The *chassid* in *Shtreimel*... the brick-red bearded Amerikaner and his little boy with brick-red *payos* curling down his cheeks... the olive-skinned Sephardi in colorfully crocheted *kippa*... the deep-

Wall Chips by Shepsi Sabadena (Reprinted in abridged form from *The Jewish Observer*, Nov., '84)

voiced yeshiva fellow ...and Reb Noach, booming *Yehei Sh'mei Rabba*. Each one was there, and will be there again next week. And I am here, oceans and continents away.

Give me chips of *Motzoei Shabbos* at the Wall. Without it, how can I face weekday?



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On Monday, *Chol Hamoed*, is the special *Birkas Kohanim*. The area before the Wall overflows with the festive crowd—up the steps beyond the plaza. The *Chazan* intones the *Chazoras Hashatz*, and a rustle of *tallis*-bedecked men dominate the space immediately by the Wall.

"*Kohanim!*" You can hear the shush becoming a hush. A stray voice, an embarrassed giggle, and then silence. The Source of all blessings chants through the white breakers of bobbing *talleisim*: "*Yevorechecha*." And the hearts respond: Bless me! Bless me Father!... "*Veyishmerecha*—and watch over me." Protect my blessings, and protect me from my blessings, which come from You! "*Shalom*—establish peace for you": Grant me and my fellows that inner peace that permits us to live in peace with one another.

Could I please have that chip of time, of blessed time, with me to help me receive the *Kohein's* blessings whenever, wherever they ascend the *bima*?

On Hoshana Rabba, we drive through the dark streets of Me'ah She'arim, through the Jaffa Gate and into a massive traffic jam. We leave the car in the Rova Yehudim parking area, race down the steep Rechov Batei Machse and find a number of *minyanim* taking shape in the amorphous darkness of the Kosel Plaza. For some reason the floodlights are not on.

I wrap myself in my *tallis*, and begin *Shacharis* in the waning darkness of pre-dawn Jerusalem. "Is the Eastern sky lit up yet?" Yes. With an unexpected bolt of lightning. *Barkai!* Thunder rolls in the heavens, and appropriate blessings for natural phenomena rumble on that spot of earth so close to the heavens.

Berachos... the *Akeida*: Abraham's willingness to offer his son, his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice on an altar just a few meters beyond that Wall, and here we are, feeling a splatter of rain on my forehead. The *minyan* I chose progresses, and so do I through the Verses of Song—and a few more drops—large, Jerusalem raindrops invade my space... One *minyan* after another edges, lurches, toward the sheltered "cave," further north along the Wall, but they have been preceded by others. There is no room.

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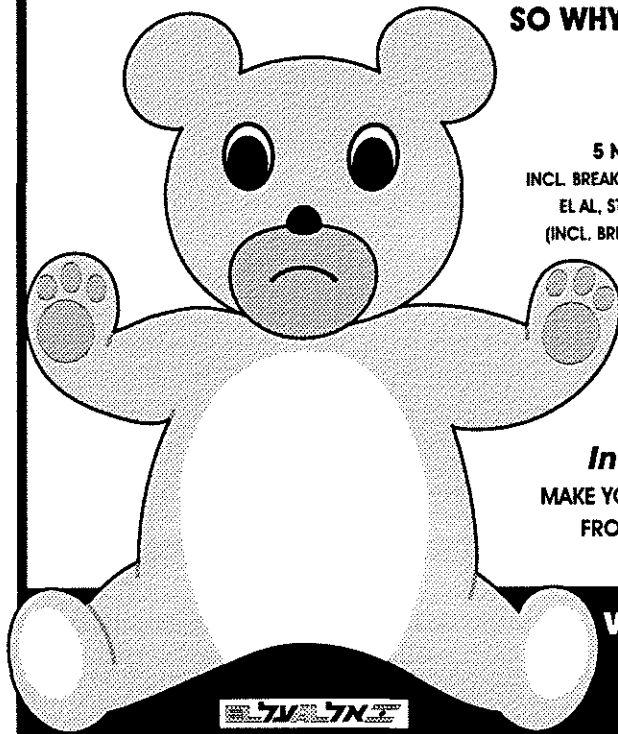
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"Borchu..." I bow toward the Wall in response to the Chazan's call, and the drops increase in their tempo. I eye my companion, and raise an eyebrow: Nu? He replies with his shoulder: How can we leave in the middle of davening?

The drops become a sheet, and the sheet becomes buckets. Flashes of lightning help me approach the words of the Shema. I tug on my tallis to protect my head and my hand becomes soaked on contact.

What to do? Daven on. You couldn't possibly become wetter, an inner voice says, so you may as well pretend you're in the sunshine. A glance at my watch tells me that we're a minute away from sunrise, and the drenched (I assume)

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Chazan proclaims "Ezras"—a minute away from *Shmoneh Esrei*.

The rain-filtered light illuminates the words on my *Siddur*, and the words curl on the puckered paper and ask me: Did you ever soak my pages with tears? Your grandfather used to. Why must I be wet with rain water? Why not with the purer salt of your tears?

Me? I never cry in my *Siddur*. It's not me. It's phony. And my heart will be busy with pride for my intensity of devotion. Not me.

I bend over to shelter the *Siddur* from the cloud's clean tears, and concentrate on the words: "Grant us wisdom... Return to us... Forgive... Heal us our rifts... Cure us our ailments..." and the *Siddur* continues to dampen. The words blur—or is it my eyes? I do want those words to continue to prompt my heart, to coax my lips to speak to that Ear that appends the Wall... I try to clear my eyes, but my hand is too wet, my sleeve saturated. "Return us our judges... Rebuild the City... Restore the Throne....!"

My shoes squish as I retreat three steps from my soaking encounter. That rain-soaked Wall, that tear-soaked *Siddur*. That chip of time. Will I ever find it again?

The Wall stands silent, carved by time, chipped by exposure to the elements. Could my heart also yield to my exposure to the elements? Granite, yes. But let it give way. And then, when I *daven* in the *shtiebel* around the corner in Brooklyn, I'll let my experience of a *Succos* in Jerusalem carve a chip—a Wall chip—in my heart....



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In the merit of this great mitzvah of pidyon shvuyim, may all who participate be blessed with every benefit by the One who frees the imprisoned.

אל כל אחינו בני ישראל די בכל אתר ואתר, ידוע ומפורסם המצב הקשה של יונתן פלדר, איש שומר מצוות, שסובל עונשים ויסורים יוצאים מן הכלל. ומצוה על כל אחד ואחד להשתדל להוציא אותו ממאסרו, מי שיכול על ידי שליחת מכתבים להממשלה ובכלל להמליץ עבורו. ובזכות המצוה הגדולה של פדיון שבויים יתברכו כל העוסקים בכל מילי דמיטב מהמתיר אסורים.

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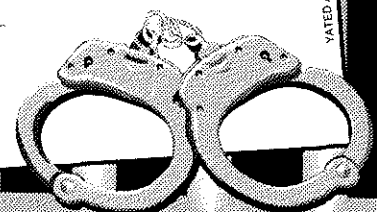
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SECOND LOOKS

Of Slogans And Substance

The Zionist Movement has had extraordinary success in using powerful mottos and slogans for projecting its goals and the thrust of its activities to the broad Jewish public. Beyond doubt, its history-making achievements drew heavily from deep-seated, millennia-old attachments to Zion, where "our eyes yearn to see Your return." Flip through the pages of vintage copies of secular Jewish magazines, and take note of how admiring rhetoric about heroic efforts to "drain swamps and convert them to fertile farmlands," and the ever-stirring calls for *Achdus*

(such as the "We are One!" slogan) have, each in its time, evoked loyalty and inspired generous giving.

Some more key words: "The Jewish Problem," and "Normalcy." The goal of the secular Zionist dream has always been to restore the Jewish people to "normalcy"—that is, to a status where it is in possession of a land, culture, and language of its own, like all other nations—thus bringing to an end the two-millennia-old "Jewish Problem." (This is not the time or place for another lecture on "the true nature of the Jewish Problem." But anyone who recites *Krias Shema* twice a day is familiar with the concept of *Golus* and the "Jewish Problem" as a result of spiritual failings.)

For all their emotional wallop, slogans do not always stand up under close analysis. This calls for a keen eye or ear; sometimes, however, a truism or platitude can strike even the uninformed reader or listener as hollow. For example, last month, when Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres addressed various American Jewish groups, he was reported to have appealed to them to make "a concerted effort to keep their children Jewish." (JTA, Oct 4) The report went on:

Asking American Jews to preserve their Jewish identity and to teach their children Jewish history and the Hebrew language, Peres indicated that they are not the only ones faced with preserving their Jewishness in the face of a broader culture.

"I am more afraid of cable television (which has recently begun broadcasting in Israel) than I am of Arab armies," the foreign minister said,

"because I know how to stop invading armies. I don't know how to protect against cable television."

...[In another speech, to] the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Peres explained that cable television "...brings in a lot of nonsense, and I wouldn't want to replace the series of the stories of the Bible with the series of the happenings in Dallas," referring to the popular soap opera.

"Today I'm worried about our smallness, not for military reasons, but for cultural reasons."

This appeal for return to Jewish values—as sensible and urgent as it is—seemed rather pathetic, if not ludicrous, juxtaposed as it was on the JTA Daily News Bulletin with an item about the kind of normalcy Peres's ruling party is presiding over. It dealt with a notorious "far-from-puritancal" female pop singer...

[who] is the latest of a string of highly popular, and often controversial, stars to have visited Israel this year and performed at Tel Aviv's Hayarkon Park.

Recent performers—who played to hundreds of thousands of fans willing to pay \$50 and more for tickets—have included Elton John, Guns 'N' Roses and Michael Jackson.

As for Michael Jackson's visit to Israel during Rosh Hashana week, it was headlined by JTA as a "...Taste Of Normalcy For [Israeli] Teens." We quote further:

If there is one thing Israeli youths have longed for, it is normalcy.... And while Michael Jackson may not be anyone's definition of normalcy, his local concerts certainly were.... Jackson was mobbed by enthusiastic Israeli fans from the moment he arrived here.... Jackson devotees greeted the singer wherever he went with awe and admiration... during his Israeli tour, which included a trip to Masada and a shopping spree in the Dizengoff Shopping Center here [on Rosh Hashana!].

...According to ticket sales and police estimates, attendance at Tuesday night's concert in Tel Aviv's Hayarkon Park—estimated at 100,000—was even bigger than that at his first appearance Sunday, when some 70,000 fans turned out.

That's almost equal to the number who showed up at the demonstrations for and against the Palestinian autonomy plan. And while those demonstrations were free, concertgoers paid a whopping \$35 and up for the privilege of seeing Jackson live.

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It would certainly be refreshing to hear an Israeli Labor Party leader lay claim to Torah. But the *Mesora* finds no home in the habits, dietary practices, and *Shabbos* desecration of the Labor Party that Peres represents. Nor does its wisdom resonate in the convoluted arguments he cited for Jews to live under Arab control in Gaza and parts of the West Bank.

During Jackson's two appearances, the fans screamed and wailed, pushed and shoved to get a peek at their idol. They smoked pot and hashish. They even drank down cans of Jackson's sponsor, Pepsi—the very same Pepsi that for so many years adhered to the Arab boycott against Israel. All of a sudden, Israelis, too, were the voice of a new generation.

Now, time-honored Normalcy for the Jewish People should reflect Rav Saadya Gaon's classic characterization: "Our people are a nation only by virtue of Torah." If Torah is central to the values and function of *Am Yisroel*, then all is well—or normal, if you will. Once this key component is removed, however, what is left of Jewry—or "Israel"? Sadly, without a Torah compass for guidance, every fad and fancy that plagues the surrounding world will invade this remnant of Jewry. Call it "normalcy," if you must.

But if the Jewish Problem is going to be solved by this brand of Normalcy, how do we solve Normalcy?

Of Heritage and Heresies

In his address to the Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations referred to earlier, Peres fended off anticipated criticisms by some Orthodox rabbis present, who he expected would reject his proposed trade-off of "land for peace" in negotiations with the PLO. Rabbi do tend to quote Torah sources. So, in preemptive response, Peres rejected their alleged "mandate from G-d":

"We won't give... up the Torah [to them]. They think that we don't know

it. May I tell you, we are born in the same land of learning... And we remember."

A very stirring rallying cry indeed. It would certainly be refreshing to hear an Israeli Labor Party leader lay claim to Torah. But should one think that his protest was a matter of choosing the interpretation of the *Malbin* over that of *Sforno*, or some other selection within the range of the *Mesora*, one would be very disappointed. The *Mesora* finds no home in the habits, dietary practices, and *Shabbos* desecration of the Labor Party that Peres represents. Nor does its wisdom resonate in the convoluted arguments he cited for Jews to live under Arab control in Gaza and parts of the West Bank: "Abraham as a settler was living for 25 years in *Eretz P'lishitim*, in a foreign land. And the other 25 years he used to live in Chevron, under a non-Jewish group." Had he dealt with the tensions of *pikuach nefesh* versus *kedushas haAretz*—the halachic issues of the sanctity of life and military security in balance with the sanctity of the land and diplomatic pressures—instead of irrelevant "historical precedents," that would have been another matter.

Moreover, Torah as the Labor Party's prized possession seems to be in odd company, considering the constant flow of ridicule of religion and distortion of Biblical characters that the leaders of Labor's coalition partner, the Meretz Party, seem to spout as a matter of course. (See "Quotations from Minister Aloni"—JO, Sept. 92.)

If Minister Peres wants to claim his

right to Torah, we'll be happy to share it with him. But Torah must be recognized as the source book of Divine directives and values by which a Jew—and a Jewish State—must guide itself. If Peres treasures Torah as a national repository of usable quotations and stirring slogans, and no more, then unfortunately, he is missing the mark. ■



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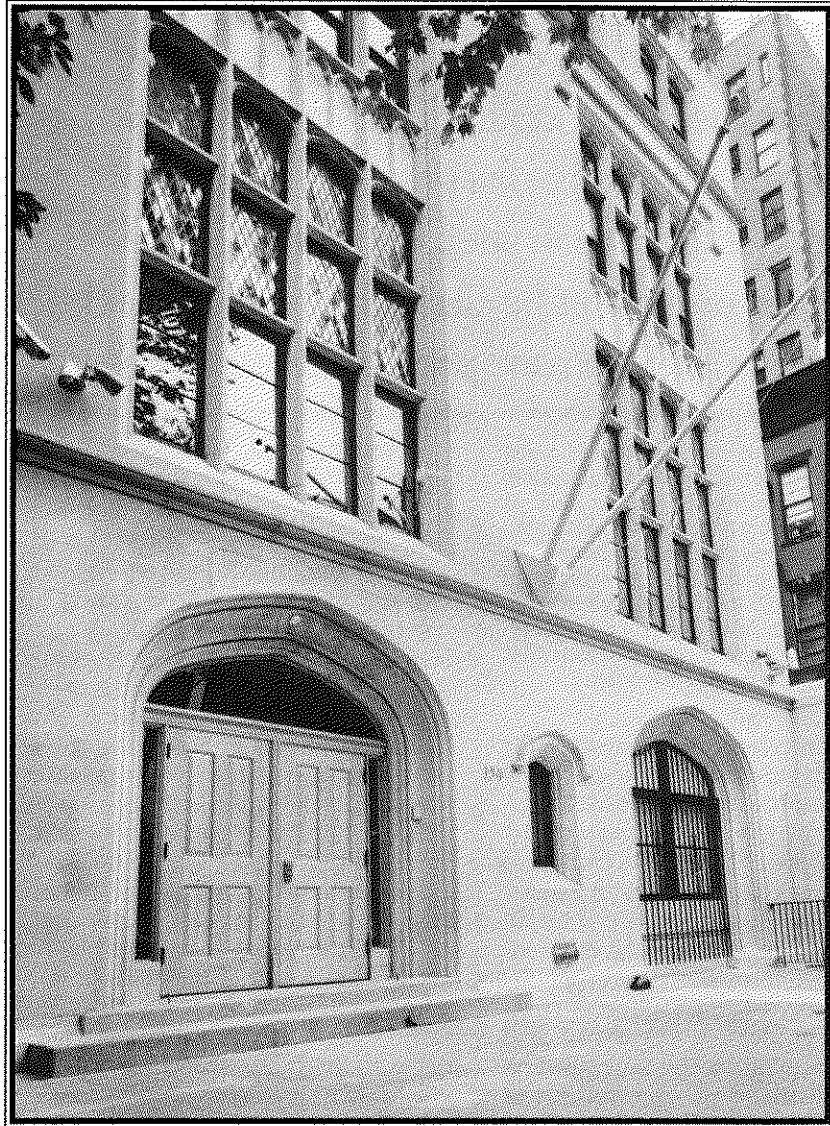
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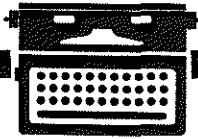
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Letters to the Editor

LAVISH EXPECTATIONS ... AND HOMEWORK

To the Editor:

The article, "Whose Homework Is It Anyway?" (JO Apr. '93), raised some issues that have begged to be addressed for a long time in Yeshiva schools. I have children in both high school and elementary schools, and have found that many teachers (and principals) expect the parents to assist their children with projects and assignments.

When my daughter was young, I met with the principal of her school to voice my concerns regarding the great number of projects being assigned. (As soon as one was handed in, the next one was given.) The problem was threefold: First, the projects were too difficult for the children to do independently. Eliyahu Mayer in "Whose Homework Is It Anyway?" states that when he went to school, he was the one who ultimately had to do the homework. Yes! That is how it should be, if only the teachers would assign projects that correspond to the level and ability of the children so that they are able to do them themselves! After ascertaining that the assignment level is appropriate, the teacher must make sure that the students will be able to obtain reference and research materials on their level instead of those that are on such sophisticated levels that the parents must "translate" them for the child to comprehend. If a project is necessary, the teacher should guide the students and the project should be an extension of classroom teaching. The project should not consist of a new topic that must be self-taught.

Second, why is it that a drawing

done alone by the student to illustrate information learned is not "creative" enough but should rather be done on wood, a cake baked in a special shape, or executed in some other exotic way? Why must a science project be done on a grand scale that requires the involvement of the parents, if it is to be as "imaginative" as the assignment dictates? And why are the teachers and principals not as satisfied—rather, should they not be more satisfied and proud of our youngsters—if their drawing, done "only" on oaktag with markers, reflects what they have learned and was accomplished and executed independently? Is their purpose really to reinforce knowledge and educate the children, or is it to display to the parents who come to school on the day of the exhibit so that they can "oooh and aaah" over their labors and the creativity of the other parents?

It is time to return to the basics! Just as materialism has reached a "knows no bounds" in today's world, so it seems to have carried over to the lavish expectations regarding projects and assignments, both in type of presentation and in number. Sometimes, this does not originate only from the teacher, but is actually authorized and required of them by school policy. Parents need to speak out as a group so that the principals will realize that this is not a "problem" of the individual.

Third, the number of projects is exorbitant. It is unreasonable to expect our children to attend school for long

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hours, do large quantities of nightly homework and study for almost daily exams until late at night, and squeeze in reports and projects in their "spare time" (let alone help at home as responsible family members).

What message are we transmitting to our children when we overburden them with so much work that they cannot afford the leisure to take the time to enjoy their lessons and really learn from their homework? Sometimes, overload can be overkill, and less can accomplish more.

Homework is for the *children*, to be given to them on a level *compatible with their abilities* so that they may have the satisfaction of completing their work on their own. *Their* accomplishments will encourage them to be happy with themselves throughout their lives and not feel that they must try to do things on a broader scale, especially if they are not able to. This will give them the confidence, self-es-

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teem, and satisfaction that comes with completing a job properly on their own. We want to give our children tools to ably cope with life instead of giving them the feeling that they cannot live up to their mentors' expectations without outside assistance or unusual grand-scale ideas and schemes.

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MORE ON THE "MASTER DAF" TAPES

To the Editor:

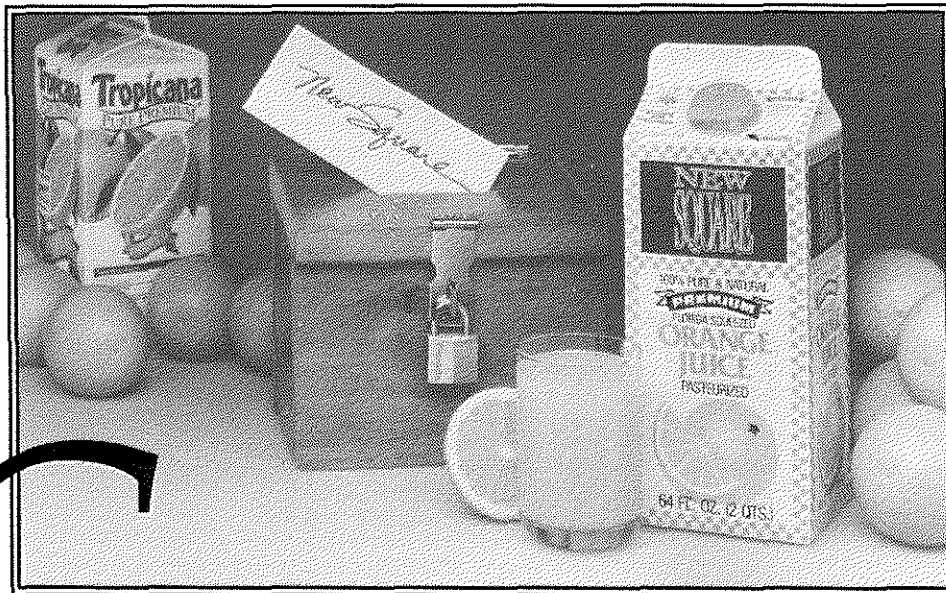
I would like to thank you for printing my letter concerning the Daf Review Tapes. However, since that letter was written, the source for these tapes has changed. The tapes are now called "Master Daf" and are available by calling 1-800-213-6626. Sources for local distribution centers, especially in New York, are being explored currently. The initial response to the Master Daf has been quite impressive. They are primarily being used for *chazara* during the daily commute to and from work, which so many of us must endure. By optimizing these time slots with *chazara* of the *daf*, the impact of our daily *shiurim* is magnified.

DR. JEFFREY GROSS
Cleveland, Ohio

An Author's Statement:

I have been told that a line regarding the influence of Lubavitch, in my review article of David Landau's book, *Piety and Power* (JO, Oct. '93), may have unfortunately lent itself to misinterpretation. I did not mean to say that the Lubavitch community, with its thousands of adherents, is not itself part of the *Chareidi* world. Nor did I mean to make short shrift of the numerous *ba'alei teshuva* who have entered observant Jewry through Lubavitch's efforts, or of its pioneering role in bringing Day School education to various communities.

Any such regrettable misreading of
my words was certainly not intended.
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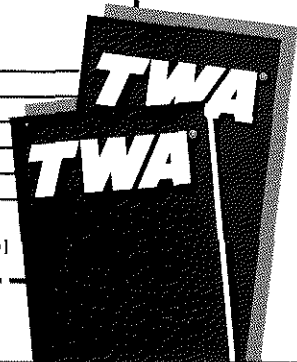
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