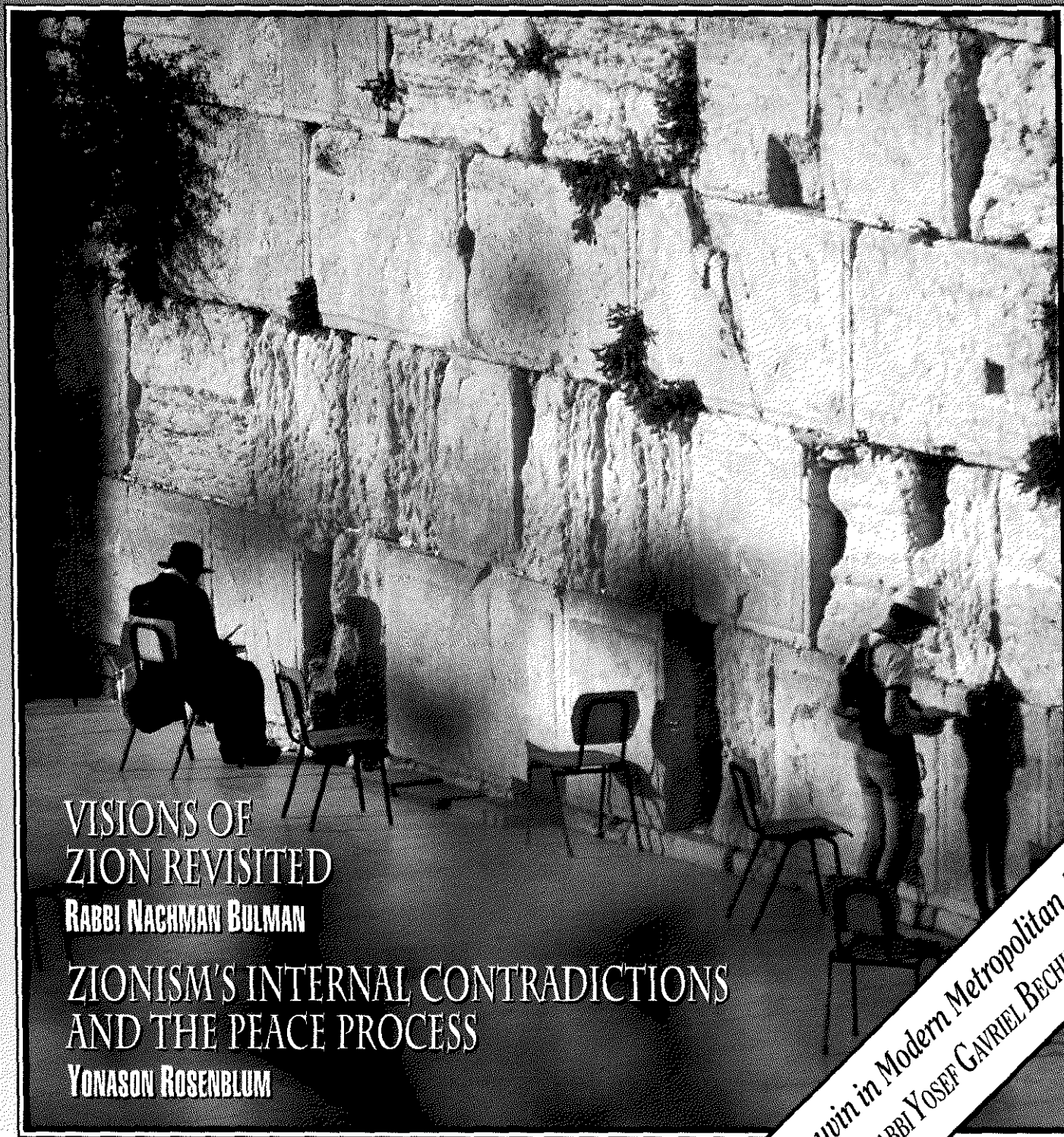


# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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VOLUME XXVII / NUMBER 5



VISIONS OF  
ZION REVISITED

**RABBI NACHMAN BULMAN**

ZIONISM'S INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS  
AND THE PEACE PROCESS

**YONASON ROSENBLUM**

*Eiruv in Modern Metropolitan Areas*  
**RABBI YOSEF GAVRIEL BECHHOFFER**

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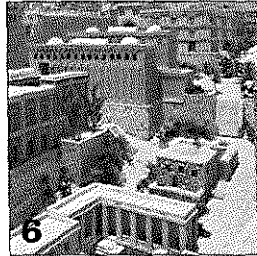
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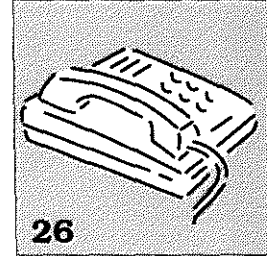
JUNE 1994  
 VOLUME XXVII / NO. 5



**6**  
**Visions of Zion Revisited**  
*Rabbi Nachman Bulman*



**14**  
**The Chickens Come Home To Roost:**  
**ZIONISM'S INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS AND THE PEACE PROCESS**  
*Yonason Rosenblum*



**26**  
**What Do You Say To That?**  
**—PERMISSIBLE AND FORBIDDEN SPEECH**  
*Rabbi Dovid Weinberger*

**30**  
**Eiruv in Modern Metropolitan Areas**  
*Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer*

**37 SECOND LOOKS ON THE JEWISH SCENE**  
**A Bridge Across Chasms of Divisiveness**

**38 BOOK REVIEWS**  
*Avi Shulman*

**40 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

As we go to press, we record with sorrow the *petira* (passing) of the Klausenberger Rebbe, Rabbi Yekusiel Yehuda Halberstam, זכר צדיק לברכה.

A biographical appreciation of the Rebbe is planned for a future issue.

תוצב"ה

# Visions of Zion

## Revisited

### I. ENGAGING THE DIVINE SPARK

In his classic *Sefer, HaKuzari* (*Ma'amar* 2,8), Rabbi Yehuda Halevi has the *Chaver*, a man distinguished in the wisdom of the Jews, say:

"The *Nitzutz Ohr Eloki*—the spark of that Divine Light (of which he had been speaking earlier)—creates in *Am Yisroel* a predisposition to *nevu'a*—prophecy. That spark of the Divine Light is effective in elevating His people, in His Land."

Earlier, the *Chaver* had explained that "His people"—*Knesses Yisroel*—are the heart, the treasure and the end purpose of all existence, and that *Nitzutz Ohr Eloki* affects His People in His Land in a singular manner. True, all the other lands are also full of *Hashem's* Glory, but the spirituality of *Eretz Yisroel* is still unique. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* did not entrust this Land to any intermediaries—not to any *kesuyim*, any veils, any *malochim*, any *Sar* or *Sarim*. All the other lands, in that sense (*kivayachal*), cannot be described as His Land. No other nation is called His nation, even though He is the Master of the world.

#### Whereupon the King of the Kuzrim

Rabbi Bulman, noted thinker, author and lecturer, serves as *Menahel Ruchani* in *Yeshiva Ohr Somayach*, Jerusalem. This article is based on a presentation at the recent National Convention of *Agudath Israel* of America.

said: "That the Divine Spark is found with His People has already been explained to me. But what is unique about His Land?"

The *Chaver* then said, "You are surely aware that each land produces specific types of vegetation and supports different types of animal life. So too do different locales foster different national, cultural, and social characteristics amongst its populace. Each produces a different kind of human being. Should it be so difficult for you to understand that if *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* chose this land for this people, that it has a *segula meyuchedes* for the *Am Segula*—that it harbors special treasures for His Treasured Nation?"

To this the *Melech HaKuzrim* responded, "I haven't heard that the inhabitants of *Eretz Yisroel* are better people necessarily than people who live elsewhere."

The *Chaver* replied, "Even the best of vineyards requires tending. The Jewish people, in effect, are the heart of the world. And this land, *Eretz Yisroel*, is uniquely reserved for them, providing a special support system for them. Just as a whole array of activities is necessary for tending a vineyard, and if one fails to perform them, then the best of lands, most suitable for growing vines, is going to remain fallow, so too do specially designed *ma'asim* (actions) and *Toros* (according to some *Chachmei Yisroel*, "*Toros*" refers to basic concepts in *emuna* and *hashkafa*) nurture

*Eretz Yisroel*. Moreover, the *Toros* are dependent on that Land. It is not possible for this special, unique people to respond to the Divine without regard for the factor of place. This place—the best vineyard land—will grow nothing without tending. And if you are going to tend the vines of *Am Yisroel* elsewhere, it is impossible for them to grow."

These are astounding words. Does Torah not flourish elsewhere in the world? Isn't it a given that "Ever since the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, G-d has no place in His world other than the four cubits of *halacha*" (*Berachos* 7b), regardless of geographic location?

What, then, did Rabbi Yehuda Halevi have in mind? As Rav Saadya Gaon said, "Israel is a nation only through its *Toros*," and this includes *Torah Shel Ba'al Peh*, which was transmitted through all the millennia of our existence. How could the Torah and the *Am haTorah* flourish in settings removed from *Eretz Yisroel*, far from the spiritual soil from which it is meant to draw strength?

Based on the writings of the *Ramban*, the *Michtav MeEliyahu* (Vol. III) makes it clear that the relationship of the Jewish People to *Eretz Yisroel* while in exile is far different from that of the Seven Nations that once

inhabited the Land and then were expelled. Those other nations were so depraved in their conduct that the Land could no longer tolerate them; moreover, there were no longer righteous individuals to protect the land's inhabitants from Divine wrath; as a result the Land expelled them, decisively and with finality—just as a person with a sensitive stomach will reject tainted food, never to partake of it again.

By contrast, we Jews were never totally rejected from the Land. Yes, we suffered exile twice: Once for a relatively brief seventy years, and then for close to two thousand bitter years of *Golus Edom*. But even as we wallow in alien environments, our attachment to the sacred precincts of *Eretz Yisroel* still holds fast. *Klal Yisroel* is unlike those others, which have never been welcome to *Eretz Yisroel* since their expulsion. For even if they ever did chance to return, its landscape remained as harsh and desolate for them as when it was totally abandoned. But when Jews come back to *Eretz Yisroel*, the response of the Land to their return is an incontrovertible sign that they were never totally rejected.

The proof: When we Jews return to *Eretz Yisroel*, the mother country opens up her arms in warm embrace. All of a sudden, mountains and valleys open up with song, trees start to blossom, and the fields begin to yield their produce. Such is the Land's relationship with us.

Our dependency on the Land is the other side of the coin, as Rabbi Yehuda Halevi and the *Ramban* say. Great heights in Torah can be realized in *chutz la'aretz*, but one level of attainment forever evades us—that of *ruach hakodesh b'Yisroel*, which is the final rung on the ladder of spiritual ascent of Rav Pinchas ben Yair, the ladder on which Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto based the *Mesillas Yeshorim*. It was in quest of that lofty goal, in attempt to bring this potential to reach the topmost rung to full realization, that some three hundred *talmidim* of the *Ga'on* of Vilna and some three hundred followers of the *Ba'al Shem Tov* came to *Eretz Yisroel* and rekindled the life of the new *Yishuv*, each group in its own way.

**E**ven if other nations ever did chance to return to *Eretz Yisroel*, its landscape remained as harsh and desolate for them as when it was totally abandoned. But when Jews come back to *Eretz Yisroel*, the response of the Land to their return is an incontrovertible sign that they were never totally rejected.

The result, indisputably, was the development of generations of *Ovdei Hashem* that populated the four key cities of the Land—Yerushalayim, Chevron, Tsefas, and Tveria. For the most part, they were not involved in tending vines or planting fields, only with attempting to fulfill their Divine strivings. They established an operative *chinuch* system that produced *talmidei chachamim*, *ga'onim* and *tzaddikim*, *unearthing the sparks of Divine Light that had been hidden from sight for so many centuries.*

## II. SHIFTING EXPRESSIONS OF CHIBAS HAARETZ

**S**ome 140 years ago, the Chibas Tzion Movement began to take shape with the goal of physically rebuilding and sowing the Land—at first in keeping with the dictates of the Torah. For decades, this movement had the support of many *Gedolim* of the time, including the *Netziv*, Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Spektor, Rabbi Yehoshua Kutner, the *Avnei Nezer*, זכרון לבריכה, among others. Over the years, divergent forces fractured the unity of the Chovevei



Tzion until eventually *Maskilim* wrested control of the movement from the hands of the Torah leadership. At that point, the same devotion to the sanctity of the Land that had led them to associate with the Chibas Tzion Movement forced them to withdraw from it.

The political Zionist movement then emerged, at first concentrating on the settlement and building of a secular *Eretz Yisroel*, ostensibly with a neutral attitude as to the cultural character of the hoped-for "new" *Eretz Yisroel*, until Achad Ha'am and his kindred spirits entered the scene at one of the early Zionist Congresses. Their vision of a newly-fashioned secular Jewish People "recreating" a new soul for *Am Yisroel* became the goal of the Zionist Movement. *Kibush hakehillos* (conquest of the communities) became a clearly defined agenda for its educational system, one bent on bringing up a generation with a new Jewish identity void of Torah. At this point, most *Gedolei Yisroel* distanced themselves even further from the Chibas Tzion movement. Their responsibility for the perpetuation of *Knesses Yisroel* in its pristine form, demanded such a stance.

In a matter of a few years, World War I broke out, destroying the *kehillos*—the communal structure that had preserved Jewish communities over the centuries, in Eastern and Central Europe. After the conclusion of the War, Palestine was assigned by League of Nations' mandate to Great Britain, which entrusted the fate of the *Yishuv* to the Jewish Agency, then under the leadership of Chaim Weitzman. For the twenty years until the outbreak of World War II, the *Yishuv* was under the control of the Zionist establishment, with financial, cultural, and educational re-

sources mainly in their hands. With World War II came the total destruction of the Torah civilization of Europe, of a thousand years standing.

At this point we must register our strongest protest against the historical distortion, that all the *ga'onim* and *tzaddikim* of the time did not want their followers to settle in *Eretz Yisroel*. True, they refused to join the Jewish Agency. They said, "We cannot hand over the keys of representation and legitimacy to a body and to a movement dedicated to transforming the total *neshama* of *Klal Yisroel*." But never did they surrender their *chibas Eretz Yisroel*. If there had been no Gerrer Rebbe, no *Imrei Emes* yearning for the Land, would there be that mighty army of Gerrer *Chassidim* in *Eretz Yisroel* today? If there had been no *L'vush Mordechai* of Slobodka-Chevron, and others like him who settled in the Land in the 20s, would there be a Slobodka, or Chevron *Yeshiva*, and their many offshoots in *Eretz Yisroel* today? There was a tremendous upsurge of desire to come

to the Land during those twenty years between the wars. "Your people get six percent of entry certificates," the Agency told the leadership of *Agudath Israel*, with the disdain with which one tosses a bone to a dog. And they would make sure that whatever the

broke out. But if not for the uncompromising stance of the Torah leaders of the 20s, the 30s and the 40s, and if not for their fierce love of the Land, the Torah community would not be flourishing in *Eretz Yisroel* as it is today.

**The *ga'onim* and *tzaddikim* of the time refused to join the Jewish Agency. They said, "We cannot hand over the keys of representation and legitimacy to a body and to a movement dedicated to transforming the total *neshama* of *Klal Yisroel*."**

constituency of the recipients of the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate, namely, the leaders of the Jewish Agency, would control the formation of the new organism of the "Nation that Dwells in Zion...." Twenty years passed under their dominion, and the Second World War

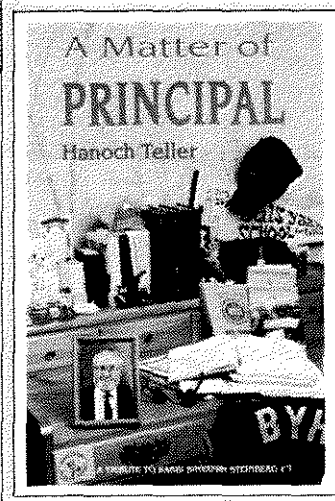
### III. THE QUESTIONS THAT WE NOW FACE

The brief historical survey recounted above is meant to serve as the backdrop for a few questions. A single incident can perhaps convey the substance of these questions:

The late *Ponovezher Rav*, *Rabbi Yoseif Kahaneman*, זצ"ל, was called upon to speak at a protest meeting in *Petach Tikva* in 1944. A scandalous occurrence had taken place in *Ein Charod*, a *kibbutz* that was the symbol of anti-Torah sentiment in the *Yishuv*. The *Va'ad* (governing council) of said *kibbutz*, made up of dyed-in-the-wool neo-Stalinists, discovered that a group of retirees—fathers and *zaydes* of the *kibbutz* *znikim*—were planning to organize a *minyán* in *Ein Charod*, and they had brought a *Sefer Torah* to their secret sanctuary. The *Va'ad* of the *kibbutz* deliberated the matter and decided that *Ein Charod* could never grant hospitality to a *Sefer Torah*, not even for one single night. So they deposited the *Sefer Torah* in a wagon—to transport the *Sefer Torah* safely outside the *kibbutz* boundaries.

The *Ponovezher Rav* was then regarded as the tribune of his people. He was an eloquent spokesman, who could powerfully articulate the deepest sentiments of the Torah community. So all eagerly awaited his response: "Morai v'Rabbosai! An impossibly terrible thing has happened in *Ein Charod*. We must take immediate action!" Everyone was certain that he was going to call for a

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hafgana—a protest demonstration. Instead, he called for “mobilizing an army of sofrim (scribes) to write Sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos for the people of Ein Charod!”

The audience was certain that the Rav had tragically lost his senses, because of the loss of his loved ones, his kehilla and yeshiva, in the war.

Let us skip thirty, forty years from that incident. In Ein Charod today, changes are taking place. Some weeks ago, in Yeshivas Ohr Somayach, a seventy-year-old kibbutznik stood near me at Shacharis, davening with great fervor. Afterwards, he asked me, “You’ve heard of Ein Charod? I’ve lived there for 24 years, ever since I made *aliya* from England. My two sons and I recently became *ba’alei teshuva*. My sons are now learning in ‘Torah Ve’Emuna’ in Yerushalayim. I need a yeshiva for myself.”

(We did place him in a yeshiva that could serve his needs.) He related that his wife agreed that he deserves a sabbatical after those 24 years, so he will be learning in Yerushalayim for the year. After that, he’ll have reached retirement age and will be able to leave the kibbutz.

What triggered this personal revolution? “Several years ago Rav Shach held a *drasha*,” he said. (I recalled how the *Rosh Yeshiva* had expressed himself in a manner that we American Jews find difficult to fathom.) “Rav Shach said very simple, direct words, but his message went through me like an arrow, right here,” he said, pointing to his heart. “He said to us kibbutzniks, ‘What does your *Yiddishkeit* consist of? *Davar acher* (pork), and raising rabbits?’” (Many of us may recall that the anger with which the *Rosh Yeshiva* was greeted was awesome. It seemed as if the whole country foamed at the mouth with fury. But unbeknown to the media, something else also ensued.)

My visitor continued: “Here and there kibbutz members, myself among them, decided to visit Rav Shach. We found a nice *alter zayde* who gave each of us loving hospitality and a warm welcome.”

“*Rebbe*,” he added, “we came out of that encounter as different people. At first we were persecuted for our convictions in Ein Charod, but there

### Report From Yagur A Mezuzah on the Dining Room Door

Since Yagur’s founding as a Labor Kibbutz 72 years ago, the doorway to its communal dining hall has been without a mezuzah. That is, until several weeks ago. It was then that several kibbutzniks approached Yonatan Galayin, the director of the dining hall, and asked for permission to post a mezuzah there. With little hesitation, Yonatan approved the idea, and dispatched a committee to the city to choose the “best” (i.e., most mehudar) mezuzah available.

After it was mounted, there was little comment until a column, signed by “a little bird,” appeared in the Kibbutz Bulletin, saying that “if any individuals wish to decorate their homes with one, that’s their privilege, but to put a mezuzah on the communal dining hall is unwarranted religious coercion.”

A response, from Yoram Gal, was quick to come: “How magnanimous of ‘little bird’ to permit us a mezuzah on our private homes! ... But on the dining room entrance—never! I would say that whoever forbids a mezuzah on the dining room entrance is guilty of religious coercion.”

“The time has come to make it clear that whereas Yagur may not be a religious kibbutz, we are not anti-religious.”

\* \* \*

From personal interviews with some of the Yaguris, it would seem that gradual changes have entered into the kibbutzniks’ mindset. Founded by European Jews who had rebelled against the religion of their youth in their ardent embrace of Socialism, they passed on their anti-dati fervor to their children. Today we are dealing with a third generation— young folks who experienced neither the way of life of the shtetl of old nor the fierce rejection of it that their parents absorbed from the founders. Today’s citizen of Yagur—some 1400 souls, all told—are open to any and all spiritual stirrings. As a result, candle-lighting on the Sabbath eve is performed by almost all, as a matter of course, these past few years. And the number of those keeping the Yom Kippur Fast has grown from 50 in 1973 to 300 this past year.

Who faces greater challenges—the Chareidi Jew who struggles to keep his set times for Torah study in spite of distractions, and attempts to preserve a degree of purity, notwithstanding the current street scene—or Yonatan Kibbutznik, who bravely nails a mezuzah onto the communal dining room doorpost?

YITZCHAK MATISYAHU TENENBAUM,  
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were others like us. Now we have a *minyán*. And there are a lot of Jews who fast on Yom Kippur."

How does a thing like this happen? *Kedushas Eretz Yisroel* did it. Not compromise, nor sophisticated rationalism. Simply the response of the Jewish *neshama* to the persistent *kedusha* of the Land.

### The Changes Taking Place

Because of the dangers to our principles of faith, which were posed by those who deviated from Torah, we have at times deemphasized sacred components of our tradition. (Study of *Tanach* is but one notable example.) Once secular-oriented Jews embraced the aspiration of Return to Zion, religious Jews necessarily began disassociating themselves from espousal of that eternal Jewish hope. In the interim, there have been heated debates as to whether living in *Eretz Yisroel* is *per se* an automatic stimulus towards a Torah life, or whether *Eretz Yisroel*

depends on *zechus* (merit) and *chov* (liability)—i.e., if we have *zechusim*, then *Eretz Yisroel* can give us a full measure of spiritual bounty; but if, *chas v'shalom*, we lack the *zechusim*, *geography per se* cannot transform *vacuous people into loftier beings*. We subscribe to the latter approach. Yes, the Land possesses that *Nitzutz Ohr Eloki*—the spark of Divine Light. But only people and their supporting actions can make the Land into a positive, potent spiritual force.

At this critical juncture in history, we can take stock of the battle for the soul of the Land, and come to the conclusion that we are winning, one step at a time. We are winning tens of thousands of children, we are taking over "their" institutions, we are populating "their" cities—which is perhaps why our "secularized" brothers are so angry. This is not solely a matter of the growing strength of the Torah community. We are also witness to the failure of the Zionist dream\*—es-

\*At the same time, some Leftists have become more radical in their views; see next article.

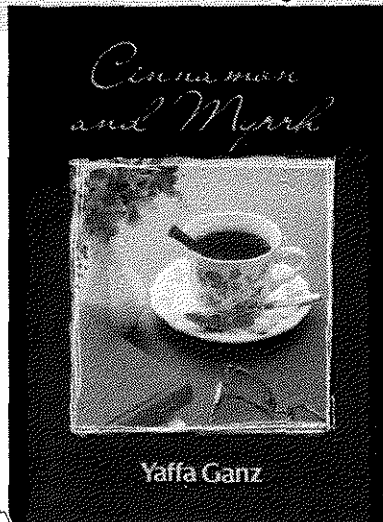
**How does a thing like this happen? *Kedushas Eretz Yisroel* did it. Not compromise, nor sophisticated rationalism. Simply the response of the Jewish *neshama* to the persistent *kedusha* of the Land.**

pecially in terms of its two major ideological underpinnings:

First, the concept of "I am in control of my own destiny," which implies that we are capable of ushering in a redemptive state through human efforts rather than through Divine providence, has failed. The current unraveling of Israel's control of large portions of *Eretz Yisroel*, certainly puts this view to rest. The other is the belief that we are now in the era of *As'chalta d'Ge'ula*—the first stages of redemption, *endowing the State with religious, messianic significance*—this, too, is fading from favor, for the same reasons. The broad masses as well as political and intellectual leaders are coming to recognize that control of Israel, the land and the state, is not firmly in their hands. Many concessions lie ahead for them to maintain even partial control over both.

As a result, many religious Zionists, among them even those affiliated with Merkaz HaRav and the Yeshivos Hesder, with whom we have had strong differences in the past, *have stopped saying the tefilla for the Medina*. What a change this represents, what a crisis in the mindset of many who had staked their lives on the conviction that the *Medina* has transcendental metaphysical significance. Now they are beginning to say, "We see that the *chilonim* are not at all faithful to *Eretz Yisroel*. They seem ready 'to give it all away.' So perhaps again we need to come close to our *Chareidi* brothers. We need to connect with 'your' *yeshivos*."

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Perhaps we should undertake an in-depth investigation to identify the inner fermentation among those who had once believed in the *Medina* as *As'chalta d'Ge'ula* for "religious" reasons for forty, fifty years. Perhaps they are inwardly shattered to the degree that they would respond to an open hand from the Torah camp, offering brotherhood and possibly even spiritual community to them without compromise. Perhaps, for openers, we should engage in an open dialogue, for we have much in common with them. For certain, if these two camps were to find a way to reunite—taking into account that beyond doubt *chiloniyut* is on its last legs in Israel—we may be on the threshold of a new era.

### Recapturing the Initiative

At this point let us return to our earlier premise, and the challenges it presents: There was a time when because others preempted our attachment to *Eretz Yisroel* and secularized it, we felt threatened, and distanced ourselves from open expression of *chibas ha'aretz*—for justifiable reasons. But things have changed since.

Sometimes a chance occurrence can convey a major shift of perspective in microcosm. Ten years ago, when I still lived in Kiryat Nachliel, in the Galil, we used the services of an electrician who was an old Vilna maskil. He was as proud of the random quotes he could cite from the Gemora studies of his youth as he was of the "new" path he had chosen for himself. One particular time, he came to my apartment, clearly agitated. "There is a six-year-old child downstairs who really upset me," he reported, recounting the following exchange. The old maskil had asked the child, "Do you love Eretz Yisroel?"

The child answered him, "Yes, I do."

"If so, then you are a Zionist," the old man said triumphantly.

"No I'm not," he replied.

"But you love Eretz Yisroel, don't you?"

They repeated the little dialogue once more, at which point the yeled stretched himself to his full height. He looked up at the old man's face and said to him, "Adoni. Aleph: Ani ohev et Eretz Yis-

roel. Beit: Ani lo tzioni. Achshav atta meivin?" ("Sir, please listen. One: I love Eretz Yisroel. Two: I am not a Zionist. Now do you understand?")

Are we capable of making the same distinction for ourselves?

This brings us to a piercing question regarding our own genuine feelings toward *Eretz Yisroel*, a question that was powerfully articulated by the *Yaavetz* in the *Sulam Bets Kel*, the famous introduction to his *Siddur*, which he wrote over 200 years ago:

"We are suffering because of the sin of thinking that this or that city in Germany, or Prague, or some other city can replace Yerushalayim! We built palaces and stone houses in these places. Because of this terrible sin we have been experiencing a renewal of antisemitic persecution, so much overt hatred once again."

It had happened at the end of the Middle Ages, and after a respite, there were suddenly new outbursts of antisemitism, writes the *Yaavetz*, "Because we have forgotten Yerushalayim!" Three hundred of the *chachmei haTosefos* (12th-13th Cen-

Yes, the Land possesses that *Nitzutz Ohr Eloki*—the spark of Divine Light. But only people and their supporting actions can make the Land into a positive, potent spiritual force.

turies) once "walked on foot" across Europe, many of them falling victim to plague and violence along the way, to be buried in alien soil. But they had seen a possible opening in the walls that had excluded them from *Eretz Yisroel*, so they stormed heaven and earth to reach the sacred shores. *Where are we?* We are the real *Bnei Eretz Yisroel!* Why should there be

**WHAT TYPES OF INFORMATION MAY ONE NOT ACCEPT**

- Any speech which falls into the category of being forbidden, may not be accepted.<sup>1</sup>

This includes:

- Any topic about which one may not speak because of the prohibition of *lashon hora*.<sup>2</sup>
- Any form of speech that is prohibited as *lashon hora*; e.g., through *gezeiras* rather than through speech.<sup>3</sup>

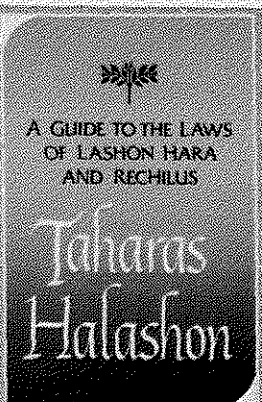
- Under *lashon hora*, *hinnah*, *perp*...

**IF TWO PEOPLE RELATE INCIDENT OR IF THE PERSON SPEAKING IS ESPECIALLY RELIABLE**

- One may not accept *lashon hora*:
- Even if the incident is related by two or more people.<sup>1</sup>
- Even if the person speaking is especially reliable; e.g., one's father, mother or close relative.<sup>2</sup>

*Resh Lakish* said: what is the meaning of the verse, can the serpent strike without a whisper, and there is no benefit to he who can speak, (Koheloth 20:13). In the time to come, all of the animals shall gather and shall approach the serpent and say to him: "The lion preys and eats, the wolf attacks and eats, but what enjoyment do you have?" The serpent shall respond: what benefit is there to one who speaks (*lashon hora*) . . .


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among us a dimming of this holy spark, a diminution of this hallowed flame? Is it because of the fact that we were involved and we will be involved in battle after battle for our spiritual integrity? There is so much that needs to be done—there, by us.

**A Summons From Fifty-Seven Years Ago**

Reb Moshe Schonfeld, זצ"ל, wrote an essay before World War II, addressed to the last Knessia Gedolah (International Congress) of Agudath Israel before World War II, which was held in Martenbad in 1937. Reb Moshe Schonfeld was the right hand of the *Chazon Ish* and the *Brisker Rav*, and his brilliant writings, which transcended polemics, were recognized as piercing analyses of whatever topic he approached. (The following is translated directly from a chapter in *Sefer Hashkafaseinu*, which is recognized as containing definitive perspectives of *chachmei haTorah*, the recognized leadership of the *olam*

"I wish to bring these tidings to you; that you be inflamed with a passion, be filled with a yearning for the Land, thirsting for it as a parched person thirsts for water.... That it be the burden, the challenge of your soul, and the sweetest of your dreams, even when you are awake."—Reb Moshe Schonfeld

*haTorah*, on contemporary issues.)

I wish to bring these tidings to you; that you be inflamed with a passion, be filled with a yearning for the Land, thirsting for it as a parched person thirsts for water.... That it be the burden, the challenge of your soul, and the sweetest of your dreams, even when you are awake. Let this love not be simple rhetoric. Let it be crowned with *ma'asim*—with actions, let it come to full realization. Go up to the land so that our communities may flourish there. No, do not rush impulsively, with lightmindedness. *Prepare yourselves in both the material and*

*spiritual senses, to enable you to rise to a higher level, to imbibe kedushas ha'aretz.* [If you are not prepared to lead a loftier existence than over here, no one will urge you to transfer your piece of America there.—N.B.] You will make it possible for us also to broaden our boundaries and to protect our people, that they not sink into the morass that surrounds them. [He was speaking of "our camp," which was then but a tiny minority, while today we are an army.—N.B.] Through such actions, you will be securing your future, for you too will be coming to join us. Mobilize yourselves to form a united front for *Eretz Yisroel*. We need people who are obsessed with this one thing, who will dedicate themselves to it with all their hearts, with all their souls, with all their might. Everywhere, let it be heard, proclaim it, "The Land is good!"

It is not prudent to talk too much about stirrings of the soul, because too much discussion risks desecrating them. This is my final request: Tell it, declare it, proclaim it wherever Jews are to be found: "*Ki tova ha'aretz me'od, me'od*. The Land is very, very good, for we shall go up and inherit it."

Reb Moshe Schonfeld's words were not meant as a call for mass *aliya* on the part of *Chareidi* Jewry, without communal and individual consultation with Torah authorities. But what a stirring call they were to the core of the *Yiddishe neshama* ■



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# The Lubavitcher Rebbe, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON, זצ"ל

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As we go to press, we note with sorrow the passing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, זצ"ל, on 3 Tammuz, June 12th. His leadership and scholarship rebuilt the Chabad movement from the destruction of *Churban* Europe and molded it into an important presence on the contemporary world Jewish scene.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson became the *Nossi* of the Chabad movement in 1951, a year after the *petira* of the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson, זצ"ל. Over the course of the four-plus decades that he led his *Chassidim*, Lubavitch gained many new adherents and achieved broad influence in many circles beyond the strict confines of its own constituency.

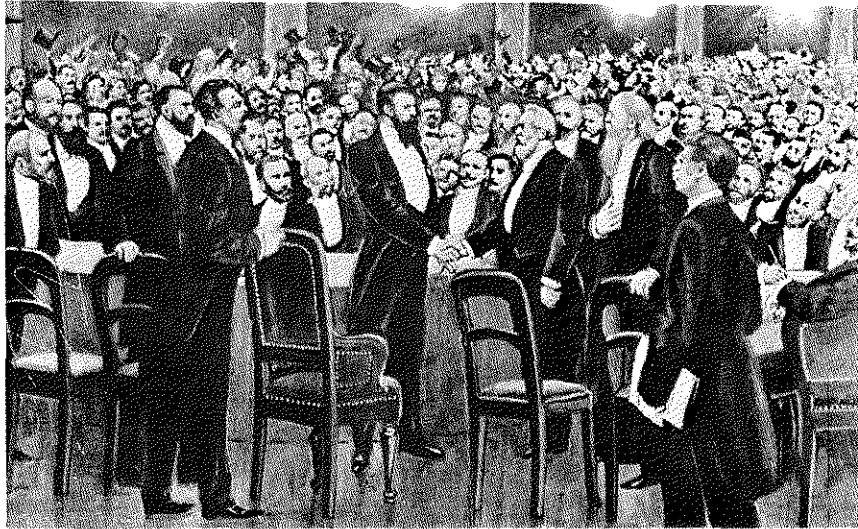
It must be noted for the record that many segments of the Torah camp had deep differences with various aspects of the Chabad movement during his tenure as *Rebbe*, particularly with the tragic rise of the misplaced Messianic fervor that surrounded him and consumed so many of his *Chassidim*. The separatism and isolation of Lubavitch from the large mainstream *Chareidi* community was also a source of pain and frustration for many Torah leaders.

At the same time, it is broadly acknowledged, that the Lubavitcher Rebbe spearheaded a significant Baal Teshuva movement, including the dispatching of unprecedented numbers of *shlichim* to far-flung corners of the world, efforts that brought large

numbers of Jews closer to their heritage.

History will record that in some of the darkest periods of Communist Russia, Lubavitch played a leading role in keeping the flame of *Yiddishkeit* burning brightly in the hearts of many Soviet Jews. World travelers will testify that Chabad is frequently the only Torah presence in cities and communities across the globe, providing religious facilities and services where none might otherwise exist. These noteworthy achievements, and others, are an everlasting tribute to the legacy of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

May Hashem comfort his many mourners among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem. ■



Theodor Herzl greets Max Nordau at the First Zionist Congress

# The Chickens Come Home To Roost

## *Zionism's Internal Contradictions and the Peace Process*

### I. THE ORIGINS OF MODERN ZIONISM

#### *Products of the Enlightenment*

Modern Zionism is a result of both the "success" and the failure of the Enlightenment—its "success" in weaning Jews from their religion by granting them the full rights of citizenship and its failure to thereby end anti-Semitism.

The founders of modern Zionism, in the words of Professor Shlomo Avineri, lacked, by and large, any traditional religious background. They "were products of European education, imbued with the current ideas of the European intelligentsia."<sup>1</sup> Yet for all that these secularized, emanci-

<sup>1</sup>The characterizations of Zionist thought and leading Zionist thinkers in this section rely heavily on Professor Avineri's *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*. Professor Avineri is a former Director of the Foreign Ministry, one of Israel's leading academic political philosophers, and an ardent Zionist.

**Yonason Rosenblum** lives in Jerusalem and is a regular contributor to JO. He is the author and translator of many works, including most recently *The Vilna Gaon*, published by ArtScroll. He is currently at work on a biography of the legendary Reb Elimelech "Mike" Tress. This article is based on a presentation at the National Convention of Agudath Israel of America and has been updated for publication.

pated Jews relished their entry into the mainstream of Western intellectual life, they were forced to recognize that the Enlightenment, and the political emancipation to which it gave birth, had not fully resolved the "Jewish question." Above all, it had not done away with hatred of Jews.

The Dreyfus affair revealed that in the very birthplace of the Enlightenment anti-Semitism remained as powerful as ever. But this was a different form of anti-Semitism. What horrified Herzl about the Dreyfus case was not the anti-Semitism *per se*, but that the wrath of anti-Semites was directed at an emancipated, secularized Jew.

In some respects, political emancipation had in fact made the position of the Jew vis-a-vis the hostile outside world even worse. By granting rights to Jews as individuals, while acknowledging no social grouping below the level of the state, the Emancipation fostered the breakdown of Jewish communal structures and the fraternal bonds between Jews. Jews were thus left to confront the hatred of the non-Jewish world as individuals, not as a community. Max Nordau, a best-selling German author and Herzl's second in command at the First Zionist conference, con-

trasted the situation of his contemporaries with that of a pre-Enlightenment Jewish community, which had provided a secure refuge for its members: "Here [within the Jewish community] were the associates by whom one wished to be valued...; here was the public opinion whose acknowledgment was the aim of Jewish ambition.... [The members of this community] were harmonious human beings, not in want of the elements of normal social life."<sup>2</sup>

#### *Nationalism versus the Enlightenment*

The eighteenth century was the age of the Enlightenment; the nineteenth century, to a large extent, the age of nationalism. The basic tenet of nineteenth century European nationalism was that mankind is divided into numerous races, and that each race is entitled to its own nation in which to maintain its homogeneity and in which its indi-

<sup>2</sup>Nordau and his contemporaries were, however, too detached from their religious tradition to recognize the extent to which his description of the pre-Enlightenment communal life still reflected the world of Orthodox Jewry. However nostalgic they might wax on the past, these emancipated Jews could not conceive of themselves returning to a pre-Enlightenment world.

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Assimilation on the individual level was impossible. But by achieving statehood, Jews would be able to collectively assimilate among the other nations of the world as equals no less deserving of respect than any other people.

---

vidual genius can flourish. The equation of nationality and race, of course, left the Jew out in the cold. No matter how assimilated, a Jew could never be a Frenchman in the same way as the descendants of the ancient Gauls. Even conversion was no solution since changing one's religion did not change one's race.

The grant of political rights to Jews, wrote Nordau, had been an exercise in the formal logic of Enlightenment principles: "Every man is born with certain rights; the Jews are human beings; consequently the Jews possess the rights of man." But such abstract principles unaccompanied, as they were, by any fraternal feeling for individual Jews, were unable to withstand the view that Jews constitute an alien race, a threat to national homogeneity.

Rather than rejecting European nationalism and its underlying racialist premises—which rendered them perpetual aliens in the lands of their birth—the Zionists embraced that nationalism with a vengeance. Vladimir Jabotinsky is but the most extreme example. "Every race seeks to become a state ... because only in its own state will it feel comfortable.... There is no value in the world higher than the nation and the fatherland, there is no



deity in the universe to which one should sacrifice these two most valuable jewels," he preached. He accepted the right of each race to maintain its racial purity, and thus became a fervent champion of the flowering of Ukrainian national sentiment despite its strong anti-Semitic component. "I am a Zionist," he wrote, "because the Jewish people is a very nasty people, and its neighbors hate it, and they are right; its end in the Diaspora will be a general Bartholomew Night, and the only rescue lies in general immigration to Palestine."

For many Zionists, the successful war for Italian independence provided the heroic model for which they were searching. Thus Moses Hess began his *Rome and Jerusalem*: "With the liberation of the Eternal City on the Tiber begins the liberation of the Eternal City on Mount Moriah."

Though the racial thinking that underpinned nationalist thought was the cause of anti-Semitism, that same nationalism seemed to offer the solution to ongoing hatred of the Jew. If hatred of the Jew was an inevitable consequence of his being an alien race in his host country, then the solution lay in the creation of a state of his own. Assimilation on the individual level was impossible. But by achieving statehood, Jews would be able to collectively assimilate among the other nations of the world as equals no less deserving of respect than any other people.

### *K'Chol Hagoyim Yisroel*

The acceptance of nineteenth century nationalism further alienated westernized, Jewish intellectuals from their roots. Nationalism's emphasis on the possession of a land and state as the highest expression of the destiny of the race only served to emphasize the anomalous position of the Jew in Exile, without a land or state of his own. As other people won their independence, the tides of history seemed to be passing the Jew by. Exile, wrote Leo Pinsker, had deprived Jews of their active role in history and turned them into objects and not actors.

Above all, the Zionists sought to prove that the Jewish people were as worthy as other races that had achieved nationhood. Of necessity, this process caused them to deemphasize Jewish religious identity and to attempt to portray Jews as no less brave and strong than other races. In their efforts at Jewish self-definition, they paid scant attention to the great expressions of Jewish religious life over three millennia, and their treatment of Jewish history tended to ignore the extent to which that history is one of the preservation of faith under conditions of adversity. In general, the spiritual character of the Jewish people was viewed as a reflection of the effeminization caused by the artificial conditions of Exile, and it was systematically downplayed.

In the words of Israeli historian Anita Shapira:

The lost pride of the Jewish people was the subject that almost obsessively occupied Pinsker, Herzl, and the rest of the generation.

[Their goal was] to see the rise of a generation from whom spiritual characteristics would be completely shed; one that would be outstanding in its lusts, its physical bravery, and its belligerence.

Thus from its inception Zionism developed as an alternative to the traditional conception of Jewish nationhood in religious terms. As Chaim

Hazaz, one of the leading Zionist writers put it pithily, "When it is difficult for a person to behave like a Jew, then he becomes a Zionist." Even Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook was forced to admit, "The writers ... connected the success of Zionism and its flowering among our people with the uprooting of the Torah and its laws."

Ahad Ha'am, viewed by many as the spiritual mentor of modern Zionism, was once asked whether there is an inherent contradiction between Zionism and Judaism. He replied that it would be possible to bring any

number of proofs that no such contradiction exists. "But," he continued, "sometimes there exists a hidden contradiction in the depths of the soul that leads to rejection of demands of faith even if there is no obvious contradiction. [That was true of the Enlightenment] and it is true of Zionism. It addresses the whole of Judaism as a complete system; it is not merely a drive to settle *Eretz Yisroel*."

One of the central doctrines of nationalism was that each race possesses its own unique character that can only flower under conditions of national sovereignty. But the visions of the future state portrayed by Zionist writers were frequently nothing more than projections of various contemporary European ideologies, owing nothing to Jewish sources. Thus the hero of Theodore Herzl's utopian novel *Altneuland* tells his fellow commune members: "Don't imagine I am jesting when I say that Neudorf (i.e., the ideal Jewish community) was not built in Palestine, but elsewhere. It was built in England, in America, in France and in Germany. It was evolved out of experiments of practical men and dreamers who were to serve you as object lessons, though you did not know it." A.D. Gordon's *Religion of Labor*, which inspired the kibbutz movement, was little more than warmed-over Tolstoy in his prophetic mode. The most common vision of the Zionist state was some form of socialism—whether of the utopian socialist or Marxist variety.

In sum, Zionism was the product of Jews shaped by one set of European ideas—the Enlightenment—who were inspired by another set of European ideas—nineteenth century nationalism—and whose visions of the state they wished to create were almost wholly derivative of contemporary European ideologies.

## II. INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS

### *Jews without Judaism*

A contradiction lies at the very heart of Zionism. On the one hand, Zionism claimed to be a movement of Jewish national revival. On the other hand, its values were, as we have seen, almost exclusively de-

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rived from contemporary European culture.<sup>3</sup> Yossi Beilin, one of the leading architects of the current peace process, is a typical product of an ideology devoid of Jewish content. Asked recently how he would explain to his children why they should not intermarry, he admitted that he had no ready answer.<sup>4</sup>

The contradiction of a Jewish nationalism devoid of any intrinsically Jewish content did not go entirely unnoticed even by the early Zionists themselves. Herzl's state, warned Ahad Ha'am, may be a State of the Jews but it will not be a Jewish State.

<sup>3</sup> Amos Oz, Israel's best-known novelist and sometime spokesman for Peace Now, permits himself a long diatribe on Zionist history in the middle of his non-fiction work, *In the Land of Israel*. In the course of that harangue, he identifies Zionism exclusively with European humanism dating back to the Renaissance. Not once does he seek to imbue it with any specific Jewish content.

<sup>4</sup> Beilin's response represents no betrayal of traditional Zionist values. Prior to the First Zionist Congress, Herzl wrote to Nordau that he should not fear that his gentile wife would impair his service to the Zionist cause. In "the Jewish state," Herzl assured him, there would be nothing wrong with intermarriage and the offspring of such intermarriage would be fully recognized as Jews.

**The attempt to divorce Jewish nationalism from Jewish religion has proven futile. Thus the Zionists have consistently had to appropriate traditional religious symbols. That is why the creation of a Chief Rabbinate as an arm of the state was of such importance to the founders of Israel.**

But confronted with the enormous challenges of building a country from scratch, Zionism managed to sweep its philosophical problems under the rug for a time.

Indeed, few ideological movements have proven such an initial success. With the creation of the State of Israel, who could gainsay that the tides of Jewish history were with the Zionists. There was scarcely a house in Me'ah She'arim in which a child was not lost to the Zionist cause. One of Israel's leading *roshei yeshiva* recalls that of his classmates in Eitz Chaim, the

most established *cheder* of the old *yishuv* in Jerusalem, barely a handful remained religious.

But for all its original power, the Zionist ideal proved also to be one of the shorter-lived in Western intellectual history. Though the *chareidi* community in Israel continues to fear the contaminating influences of the "street," there is no fear of Zionism as an ideological movement appealing to the idealism of religious youth.

With the task of state-building largely behind it, the contradiction at the core of Zionism can no longer be

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ignored. Its manifestations are found everywhere in Israeli society today.<sup>5</sup>

The attempt to divorce Jewish nationalism from Jewish religion has proven futile. Thus the Zionists have consistently had to appropriate traditional religious symbols. That is why

<sup>5</sup>The treatment of the definition of "Jew" under the Israeli Law of Return is an example of the ideological confusion of Zionism. Consistent with origins of Zionism in European nationalism, the definition is racial, not halachic: anyone with a Jewish father or grandfather is automatically entitled to Israeli citizenship. Another strand of Zionist thought is also reflected in the judicial interpretation of the Law. Zionism has always made identification with the Jewish people—preeminently expressed by living in the Jewish state—the most important determinant of one's Jewishness. Under the Law of Return, anyone who expresses any sort of nebulous identification through "conversion" under the auspices of one of the so-called "streams" of Judaism is also eligible for Israeli citizenship. (Given the lack of halachic mooring to these conversions, the conversion requirement makes little more sense than permitting a personal declaration of one's Jewish identification.)

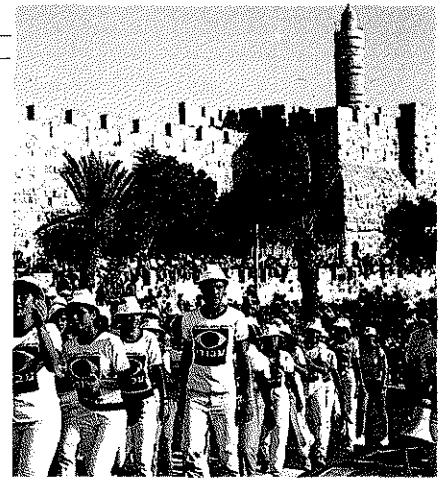
Such confusion of Jewishness with identification with the State of Israel is common in Israel today. Witness the furor that erupts whenever the religious authorities balk at burying non-Jewish IDF soldiers in Jewish cemeteries. What is less often noticed is that Jewishness as identification directly conflicts with the racial definition of Jewishness. A race is not something that can be joined at will. Interestingly, Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban, of the left-wing Meretz party, has recently expressed the fear that Israel will be overrun with immigrants if it agrees to provide refuge to anyone willing to live there no matter how spurious their claim to being Jewish.

the creation of a Chief Rabbinate as an arm of the state was of such importance to the founders of Israel. Today the *Kosel* is the scene of military ceremonies, and the Maccabees are the greatest of national heroes. Conveniently forgotten is that the *Kosel* is the painful reminder of the intimate connection with *Hashem* that the Jewish people once experienced and which has been lost, and that the Maccabees were preeminently leaders of a civil war against Jews who had appropriated the ideals of the dominant Hellenistic culture.

Israelis today sense the ersatz nature of this appropriation of religious symbols. The furor with which they respond to the challenge to define what other than the accident of birth makes them Jewish is in direct proportion to the discomfort the question causes them.

#### Loss of Meaning

The widely noted loss of idealism among Israeli youth and the failure to create any indigenous Jewish culture both point to the empty vessel that Zionism has proven to be. The *kibbutzim*—by far the most ideological sector of society—are unable to hold half their young people today. What was once a relatively puritanical society—particularly in its



reverence for physical labor and sacrifice for the greater good—has developed into one in which drugs are rife, pornography produced by the country's leading newspapers is the standard teenage reading fare, and the courts have ruled that adultery is not against public policy.

The nadir, hopefully, was reached this past February when two young teenagers from affluent Tel Aviv suburbs murdered a fifty-year-old cab driver, and father of three, purely for the thrill of it. Perhaps most shocking was that they boasted of what they had done to their friends and printed up cards with the logo Murder, Inc., without fear of disapproval or of being turned in to the police. Commenting on the incident, the former head of the juvenile division of the Tel Aviv police said, "I envy the Palestinian youth. They still have something they believe in."

There is unfortunately no comfort to be had in the loss of idealism among Israeli youth. Though Zionism may have lost its hold, nothing has replaced it besides emptiness. Contemplating the pictures on the walls of Acco prison of six Jewish boys hung by the British for their activities in the Irgun, one has no trouble discerning the Jewish soul in their eyes. On the streets today, all one sees are blank stares, dead eyes.

On the verse prophesying the return of "all the lost ones from Assyria and those who have been pushed away from Egypt," the Ishbitzer explains that the "lost ones" refers to those who deliberately rebelled against G-d, while "those who have been pushed away" refers to those who have lost all concern with *Hashem* by virtue of having become mired in material pleasures. But

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Early Zionist thinkers tended to emphasize the supremacy of public, communitarian, and social values at the expense of personal ease, bourgeois comfort, and the good life for the individual. That value preference may today characterize religious communal life, as it has always done, but everywhere else those value preferences are in retreat. Chaim Ramon, who in a few short weeks managed to wrest control of the Histadrut Labor Federation from the Labor Party for the first time in history, represents the new Israeli politician. Far-left in his views on the peace process, his economic views, like most of those in Meretz, tend to favor free-market capitalism over the traditional social-

ism of the Labor Party. He and his Meretz allies are preeminently the champions of individual rights, with scant regard to communal responsibility. In short, Israeli yuppies.

### III. THE PEACE PROCESS

#### *An Overnight Revolution in Israeli Policy*

This is hardly the forum for a full-blown consideration of the negotiations begun in Oslo with the PLO. But a brief overview of the distance travelled over the past nine months is in order prior to a consideration of the relevance of that journey to the trends in Zionism un-

der discussion.

Ever since 1967, Israeli foreign policy has been characterized under both Labor and Likud governments by certain fixed principles—no return of the Golan Heights, retention of the Jordan River as Israel's security border, no Palestinian state, and the indivisibility of Jerusalem. Not one of these principles still seems sacrosanct today. The government has made all but explicit its willingness to withdraw entirely from the Golan Heights in return for full normalization of relations with Syria. And though the government continues to insist that it opposes the creation of a Palestinian state, such a state is the logical conclusion of all that has been conceded thus far. The Palestinians have already been granted many of the trappings of sovereignty—the right to issue passports, territorial waters, their own flag and uniforms, etc. And that is only an interim agreement. Broader grants of territorial authority to the Palestinians are explicitly contemplated under the terms of the agreement. Having raised the expectations of both the Palestinians and the rest of the world as to further far-reaching territorial concessions, it is hard to see how the genie will be put back in the bottle. Israeli negotiators profess surprise at the audacity and self-confidence of their Palestinian counterparts, but only their surprise is surprising.

In the last weeks, the degree to which the current government feels it has passed the point of no return has become all too apparent. Having sold Arafat to the public as a worthy negotiating partner, Rabin and Peres have no choice but to turn a blind eye to all evidence to the contrary. Thus Arafat tells a Moslem audience that he is engaged in *jihad*—"a holy war undertaken by Moslems as a sacred duty"—for Jerusalem, and the Israeli Foreign Minister allows him to hide behind the skimpiest of fig leaves and clarify that he only meant a *jihad* "for peace," something heretofore unknown to scholars of Islam.

Two days later, it is revealed that Arafat publicly compared the agreement with Israel to that of Mohammed with the Koreish tribe in Mecca, which Mohammed unilaterally abrogated

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**The State has embarked on a course in direct contravention to the supreme value in national religious thought—a value transcending even the command to preserve Jewish life—the sanctity of the Land.**

two years later, prior to wiping out the tribe. This time the government does not even bother to respond. In his expressed view of the Cairo Accords as merely expeditious for the time being, Arafat, incidentally, fully represents Palestinian opinion. In a survey by an Arab sociologist, 92 percent of Palestinians say that if Palestinian goals could be achieved by other means they would favor doing so. Peace has become for Arafat and the Palestinians war by other means.

The same week, two Israeli reservists are killed by Palestinian terrorists at the Erez checkpoint outside of Gaza and the murderers flee back into Gaza. To date not only have the Palestinian police not apprehended the terrorists, there is no indication that they have attempted to do so. But of course that response was inevitable. Arafat has no interest in being portrayed as the agent of Israel or in precipitating a blood bath among Palestinian factions, unless it is to further his own authority. That is particularly true when the government has made it clear that he will not be held to account for the failure to control terrorism against Jews, just as he has not been held to account for the terrorist actions of his own Fatah legions since the beginning of the current peace process or for his failure to even condemn the Afula and Hadera bombings.

All the Prime Minister can tell the public is that more Jewish blood will



inevitably be spilt as long as we are perceived as occupiers in others' territory. He seems incapable of grasping that, to the Palestinians, every inch of Israel is occupied territory, and that is precisely what Arafat meant in his call to *jihad*.

What does all this tell us about the state of Zionism today?

### **The Blow to Religious Zionism**

One of the first casualties of the peace process was Religious Zionism. From the beginning of the State, the National Religious Party has imbued the State with religious significance. Once the State itself was granted intrinsic religious value, it became much easier to accommodate the demands of the *halacha* to the needs of the State.

Today, however, the State has em-

barked on a course in direct contravention to the supreme value in national religious thought—a value transcending even the command to preserve Jewish life—the sanctity of the Land. The crisis reached a head two months ago when the three leading rabbinic authorities in the national religious world, including former Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapira, issued a *p'sak* that soldiers are halachically forbidden to obey orders to remove Jewish settlers from Hebron. That unambiguous challenge to the authority of the State sent the National Religious Party's political echelons into emergency session. At the end of the meeting, the party's Knesset faction was unable to agree on any position. The party in short refused to endorse the position that *halacha*, as interpreted by its leading halachic authorities, takes prece-

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dence over the laws of the State.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Attempt to Rekindle Lost Idealism**

**T**he peace process to date seems more a leap of faith than a hard-headed political bargaining designed to protect Jewish lives

<sup>7</sup>There is another, more subtle, way in which the peace process has called into question NRP ideology. The NRP has always taken the view that fully participating in all aspects of national life—in particular the army—is the best way to positively influence non-religious Israelis. Yet from the beginning of the process, settlers on the Golan Heights have enjoyed a far greater degree of public support than those on the West Bank. That difference in support, argues *Jerusalem Post* columnist Yosef Goell, is explained by the fact that the West Bank settlers are perceived as being mostly religious and those on the Golan Heights are perceived as mostly non-religious. Thus, after more than forty years of full participation in Israeli life, the wearers of knitted *kippot* remain "the other."

better than at present. How else can one explain the government's decision to rescue the politically and financially bankrupt PLO from the brink of oblivion, at a time when Arafat enjoyed pariah status in most Arab capitals and American pressure on Israel had never been at a lower ebb? The military was completely left out of the negotiations leading up to Oslo, and time and again since then, upper echelons in the army have professed surprise at government positions inconsistent with the army's strategic thinking.

Though it is the Arabs who have all the tangible gains from the process, it is the Israelis who have negotiated as if a failure to reach agreement is unthinkable. Thus rather than start negotiations by stating the optimal Israeli position, Israeli negotiators content themselves with telling the

Palestinian negotiators the "red lines" beyond which they cannot pass.

The presence of Israeli artillery on the Golan Heights poised within easy range of Damascus has preserved quiet on the Syrian front for more than twenty years. Yet in return for the promise of a "full peace" with Syria, which might last no longer than it takes the ink to dry on the paper, the government is prepared to give up all the strategic advantages the Golan Heights afford, and which were won at such a high price in Jewish blood. Never once has the government explained why we should prefer "full normalization of relations" with Syria—shopping in the boutiques of Damascus?—over the *de facto* peace prevailing at present.

"Peace treaties" have taken on a life of their own in the government's thinking, as if they could be somehow divorced from the men and women whose lives will either be saved or sacrificed as the dynamics of the peace process unfold. In return for a piece of paper stamped "Peace Treaty," signed by a negotiating partner viewed even by his Arab brothers as notoriously untrustworthy, the government has granted the Palestinians power unimaginable a year ago.

In all this, one senses some desperate attempt to once again create something grand and epic in Israeli life, to rise to a challenge comparable to draining the Hula swamps and triumphing militarily over numerically superior foes. The peace process is thus a hoped-for antidote for the loss of idealism in Israeli life. The open-ended Oslo agreement with Arafat, Ruth Wisse has written, was an attempt by the government "to stir messianic longings within a population starved for peace."

### **Zionism's Dark Secret**

**T**he dark secret in the Zionist closet is that most Israelis are not really sure their land was not stolen from the Arabs. Having rejected, or not even being aware of, the first *Rashi* in *Chumash*, in which *Rashi* makes plain that the Jewish claim to the Land is predicated on *Hashem's* absolute dominion over the entire world and His right to give His

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Land to whomever He chooses, they must base their claims solely on the principles of nineteenth century nationalism.

But if the Jewish people seek to have their national claims recognized by the nations of the world, consistency requires that they also recognize the national aspirations of other peoples, however belated the development of their sense of national identity. Thus Jewish nationalism has to recognize the parallel claims of Palestinian nationalism. Once both claims have been put on the same level, the issue of title to *Eretz Yisroel* boils down to the question of who got there first, i.e., squatter's rights. But when dealing on the basis of squatter's rights there is a limit to the kinds of sacrifices one is willing to make.<sup>8</sup>

The Prime Minister's own casual reference to our occupation of land belonging to others with respect to territories seized in a defensive war in 1967 reveals how tenuous is his own sense of the Jewish claim to *Eretz Yisroel*.

### All for the Approbation of Others

As we have argued, the fatal weakness of Zionism is that its ultimate source of values is the Western intellectual tradition and not Judaism. Zionists left Europe for Palestine in order to prove themselves equal to the other nations of the world—possessors of their own sovereign state. Only when they had achieved that, argued Pinsker in *Auto Emancipation*, would they be worthy of the respect of the other nations of the world.

By adopting the values of Europe as their own, the Zionists made themselves dependent on the good opinion of the bearers of the Western intellectual tradition. Since 1967, the Shimon Peres's and Yossi Beilin's—men of culture and broad secular learning—have been galled to find themselves representatives of a nation that is the subject of widespread opprobrium wherever men of culture

<sup>8</sup>Rabbi Zvi Wainman, a leading student of Zionism, argues that Peres and Rabin may have felt forced into the current peace process by their perception that there will soon be few Israelis willing to undertake the sacrifices of war and onerous reserve duty. In such a situation, they decided to cut a deal while the PLO is comparatively weak.

and understanding gather to discuss the great issues of the day. Rather than being looked upon as in the vanguard of political liberalism, as it was in the heady early days of the State, until it made the mistake of winning one too many wars, Israel has become the most frequently condemned nation on earth.

The peace process is Peres' and Beilin's means of recapturing Israel's lost lustre in the eyes of the world. As *New Republic* editor Martin Peretz, a skeptical supporter of the peace process, put it, in the first days after Oslo:

These Zionists acted as they did because they valued something more than territory, more even than the protection that territory gives. They wanted recognition of their legitimacy.... This is perhaps a weakness of the Jews worrying far too much whether others acknowledge their peoplehood.<sup>9</sup>

**T**he peace process is thus a hoped-for antidote for the loss of idealism in Israeli life.

The Zionists always laughed at the "Ma Yafis Jew" who sang and danced to avoid the beatings of his drunken *poritz*. But the Jew who paid external obeisance to the *poritz* never doubted in his heart of hearts that he was the member of a people infinitely superior to his oppressor. Never would it have occurred to him to look to that *poritz*

<sup>9</sup>Shortly after the Washington signing ceremony between Prime Minister Rabin and Arafat, I happened to meet an advisor to the Justice Minister on international law. He explained to me how important it was in the government's eyes that Israeli troops leaving the Gaza Strip be defined as "withdrawing" rather than "redeploying," for then Israel would cease to be a "belligerent occupier" under the terms of the Geneva Convention. When I asked him whether a country that seizes land in a defensive war could really be a belligerent occupier, he replied with a straight face that "we fired the first shots in 1967."

No other nation in the world, it is safe to say, would have been so caught up in the minutiae of international law when it felt its vital national interests to be at stake. Certainly the U.S. was not when it mined Nicaraguan harbors. That is just one more example of the concern with what the nations will think.



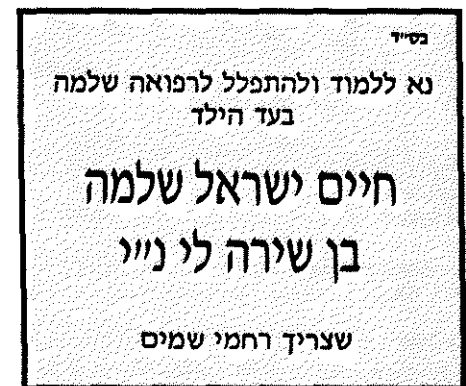
for approval. Surely that represents a higher level of independence than the modern Israeli who boasts of his powerful army and yet still finds himself constantly looking over his shoulder for the approval of the non-Jewish world.<sup>10</sup>

Zionism today is a spent force. It has lost all power to stir the spiritual longings of the collective Jewish soul in a matter of just a few generations. But just as a wild animal in its death throes is never more dangerous, and may lunge and strike with great force at any moment, so may the death throes of Zionism, which the peace process in many ways represents, prove dangerous to all Jews living in the Holy Land. ■

<sup>10</sup>As a young man, the *Pri Megadim* was invited to Berlin to rekindle the religious enthusiasm of the Jewish youth. While there, he ran afoul of Moses Mendelssohn and his followers. One day, two of those followers approached him and asked him to explain the meaning of the verse, "Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz" (*Bereishis* 36, 12). He told them he had no explanation for them. They promptly went to the *Rav* of Berlin and told him to dismiss the *Pri Megadim* since he had shown himself unfamiliar with the commentary of *Rashi* to the verse.

The *Rav* summoned the *Pri Megadim* and asked for an explanation. The *Pri Megadim* replied that *Rashi* explains that Timna preferred being the mistress to the lowliest of Avraham's descendants to being a princess among the nations. This teaches us how elevated are the Jewish people, the chosen descendants of Avraham, over all the peoples of the earth. But for those for whom the gentiles are everything and the Jews nothing, there is no explanation of the verse.

It is our misfortune today to be led by those for whom the gentile world is everything and the Jewish world nothing.



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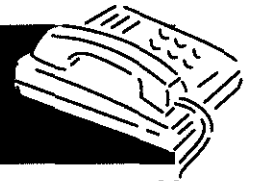
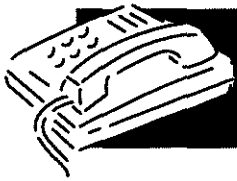
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# What Do You Say To That?

## Opening Channels For Posing Questions Regarding The Halachos of Permissible and Forbidden Speech



*The Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation has been responsible for the furtherance of Shmiras Halashon awareness in many ways, including publications, seminars, regular telephone shiurim, and their increasingly popular Machsom L'fi (a commitment to self-discipline in speech, scheduled during the Nine Days and during the Aseres Y'mei Teshuva). Recently, the Foundation has instituted an additional tool in the furtherance of shmiras halashon: the Shmiras Halashon Hotline, which has opened a venue for people*

**Rabbi Dovid Weinberger** studied many years in Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim, maintaining a close relationship with the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Henoah Leibowitz, אה"ת. A popular lecturer and seminary teacher, Rabbi Weinberger also served as Rav in a Manhattan congregation, and then as Assistant Rabbi of "The White Shul" in Far Rockaway. Author of numerous seforim, notably *Shema Beni*, on the halachos of child rearing, Rabbi Weinberger is currently co-authoring a *Siddur* for a house of mourning, to be published jointly by the U.O.J.C.A. and ArtScroll.

**H**ow often has it happened that a *shidduch* was broken or a potential business deal shattered because someone said something detrimental about the other party? Yet, we are all aware of the fact that there are times that we are obligated to divulge information to others to avert a potential calamity from occurring. Keeping silent in certain instances is in clear violation of the Biblical prohibition of "*Lo sa'amod al dam rei'echa*—Do not stand by when your friend is at risk" (*Vayikra* 19,7).

It is virtually impossible for one to speak on matters that involve others until one is totally familiar with the intricate laws of *shmiras halashon*. The *Chofetz Chaim*, זצ"ל, authored the definitive *sefer*, *Chofetz Chaim*, in which he delineates in great detail various real-life scenarios that confront us on a day-to-day basis. This halachic masterpiece must become part of our very fiber for us to speak in keeping with the *halacha*.

In the interim, the hotline offers anyone the opportunity to discuss delicate issues with a rabbinic authority who will guide, advise and instruct the questioner as to how to deal with these complex questions.

The following is but a brief sampling of some of hundreds of questions that have been called in to the *Shmiras Halashon Hotline* over the past few months. (Please Note: Due to the sensitivity of halachic questions in general, and the fact

that even a slight differentiation could give rise to a different halachic response, I specifically am going to outline the halachic issues surrounding the question, and not offer a definitive halachic answer.)

**1.** A woman called saying that she was asked about a *shidduch* for a particular boy whom she knew well. An interested party had asked her all types of questions regarding the personality, intelligence and *middos* of the boy. The woman knows that the boy has a serious illness, and if she discloses this information, the *shidduch* will never evolve. Is she permitted to relate this information?

**Answer:** The *Chofetz Chaim* states explicitly that if one is aware of a serious disorder or illness (that is not overt), not only are you allowed to tell a perspective inquirer, but you are obligated to do so. The *Chofetz Chaim* adds that you should offer this information even if it is unsolicited. There are four conditions, however, that must be met before you can relate this to another party:

- a) It must be ascertained that indeed it is a serious illness.
- b) The information being told is said with extreme accuracy, without any distortion or exaggeration.
- c) The intent of the communicator should be solely for the benefit of one or both parties involved, and not, *chas v'shalom*, out of revenge or spite of the prospective *chassan*, *kalla*, or their parents.
- d) The person sincerely believes that he will accomplish something beneficial by relating the information.

**2.** A woman was asked to set up a young man with a particular girl who she knows has a physical defect (e.g., a limp or a slight stutter). Can she rightfully

*who want to ask a she'eila of an expert in this delicate and sensitive area. An individual may be embarrassed to ask his own Rav a she'eila in shmiras halashon, which may involve a family member, another congregant or a friend. Additionally, not every Rav is well versed in the complex laws of shmiras halashon. The Hotline offers total anonymity for both the caller and expert rabbinic authority.*

*Sefer Chofetz Chaim* delineates in great detail various real-life scenarios that confront us on a day-to-day basis. This halachic masterpiece must become part of our very fiber for us to speak in keeping with the *halacha*.

set them up without divulging this information, or must she tell about this problem in advance?

**Answer:** It seems quite clear from the *Chofetz Chaim* that the only type of blemish that can be discussed is one that is hidden and would otherwise not be seen or known to the prospective spouse. One should not speak in advance of a defect that is visible, for they will later see it on their own and determine if it disturbs them. Telling such information in advance could quite often deter the potential of such a *shidduch* ever evolving. In some cases, however, the person to be informed may be deeply upset for not being told of an obvious handicap in advance; in such cases, a *Rav* must be consulted.

**3.** Is one obligated to relate information regarding a minor illness (for example, strict diet, or some stomach-related disorder)?

**Answer:** A minor or acute illness, which would not alter the *shidduch* after being made known to the prospective spouse, would not be allowed to be told.

**4.** A boy calls about a particular girl who, he was told, was 22 years of age. In reality, she is 24. Can the *shadchan* conceal this fact from him?

**Answer:** In regard to age, there are numerous *poskim* who permit a minor distortion—something most people would not mind in reality. There are *poskim* who permit a year of two differential, unless you know that the boy or girl is insistent on knowing the actual age, at which point it would be prohibited to deceive them. Please note: It goes without saying that once a prospective *chassan* and *kalla* are already engaged, there is a major difference about what one is allowed to say. See *Chofetz Chaim* for specific details.

**5.** Is it permitted for the boy or girl (who are not continuing with the particular *shidduch*) to tell the *shadchan* the negative traits of the other individual?

**Answer:** The *Chofetz Chaim* very clearly prohibits negative information to be passed on to the *shadchan*. It is more than sufficient to say "This *shidduch* is not for me," or "It just didn't work out, and I'm not interested in pursuing it." The only situation where it would be permissible is if the information is relevant to the *shadchan* for some future reference about this party. However, once again, the intent to relay this information must be pure, accurate, and even then, the *shadchan* may only speculate about the veracity of the statements mentioned, without accepting them as absolute truths.

In general, it is good advice, when someone calls about a *shidduch*, not to offer unsolicited information about the person, but rather to respond to specific questions from the inquirer. This method affords one the opportu-

nity to think clearly about what you are answering and what you are allowed to say. Don't be caught off-guard!

**6.** A girl from a co-ed high school called before Rosh Hashana as to how she can do *teshuva* for the *issur* of *lashon hora*.

**Answer:** The *Chofetz Chaim* states that the sin of slander is to be viewed on two levels. One aspect is a transgression between man and G-d, regardless of whether people believe or totally disregard the evil gossip and negative slurs that you might have said about someone. To repent for this part of the sin, you must

- a) have total remorse of your past actions,
- b) confess to *Hashem* for your iniquity, and
- c) accept with total resolve that you

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will not speak slander in the future.

The other part of this sin is *bein adam l'chaveiro*—between man and man. This occurs when one's evil words are accepted, and hence some type of damage can occur since the person has been denigrated to the listeners. A sin between man and man can be absolved only if one goes to the person spoken about and asks for his or her forgiveness. If, however, one would be ashamed to specify what was said, or it would pain the subject to hear the details of the slander, it would suffice to mention that *lashon hara* in general was spoken about them, and proceed to ask for *mechilla*, forgiveness.

It should be noted that *mechilla* is necessary only if one's evil words resulted in definite harm to the one spoken about. In the event that no clear-cut damage has occurred as a result of the slanderous words, it would appear that one is not obligated to ask the person for forgiveness. However, it definitely behooves the speaker to go back to his audience and correct his negative remarks or find merit in the actions of the person spoken about previously.

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7. A friend comes over to you saying, "Did you hear what Chaim, our next-door neighbor, did to the landlord?" Should you listen to this story, because it might be relevant to you as a tenant in the building, or perhaps it should be viewed as outright slander against Chaim?

**Answer:** The *Chofetz Chaim* gives us some general guidelines to follow in dealing with people who approach us with conversational pieces regarding others. First and foremost, question the person as to whether this information is relevant to you or not. If the response is in the affirmative, then you may listen to what is being said, taking the precaution of only *suspecting* the information to be correct, and not accepting it as conclusive until checked further. If it is irrelevant, you should say that you are not interested, or that you are not allowed to listen. (If one is in an unavoidable situation where he must hear evil gossip, see *Shmiras Halashon*, 6:5 for further details.) Yet, in the above scenario, if you feel confident that by listening to the slander, you can find merit or correct the misconception of the rumor-monger, you then have an obligation to listen. It is a *mitzva* to correct any maligning that is based upon misconstrued or misunderstood circumstances. Once again, even here, you cannot accept what is being said as definitive fact, but only as speculation.

8. Since almost all children are mischievous at one time or other, is it permissible for people to relate what a particular child did to his or her siblings or other children? (This question presupposes the fact that there is no benefit that will be gleaned from this information, e.g., to keep your children from associating with this child, etc.)

**Answer:** Generally speaking, the *Chofetz Chaim* seems to feel that it is permissible to speak about children because it is unusual that any harm

will come to a child as a result of this conversation. Clearly, however, in any way in the future there could be detriment to the child, it would be prohibited.

9. A mother calls her married daughter and constantly speaks critically about her other daughter. How does she deal with this situation?

**Answer:** It is quite clear that there is a prohibition of *lashon hora* when speaking about relatives. It is self-evident that she should not listen to what her mother has to say, for there is no obligation of *kibud av v'eim* (honoring one's parents) when they are in outright violation of an *issur*. In the event that this is not feasible, she should attempt to listen in order to find a *tinud zechus* (justification) to correct her mother's jaundiced outlook about her other daughter. With the intent of bringing peace between mother and daughter, it would actually be a *mitzva* to hear what her mother has to say. Once again, she cannot, under any circumstances, accept what is being said as definite fact.

It is clear from the above situations, in addition to hundreds of other real-life scenarios, that we all serve as *dayanim* (Jewish judges) at one time or another. Literally, people's lives prosper or falter based upon what we say to others. It is my fervent hope that we become sensitized to safeguarding our most lethal weapon—the tongue. In this *zechus* we will not only spare much unnecessary anguish and agony, but we will purify ourselves, our families, and *Klal Yisroel*, thus meriting the coming of *Moshiach* in our day.<sup>1</sup> ■

<sup>1</sup> The *Shmiras Halashon* Hotline hours are Monday through Thursday, 9:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., and *Motza'ei Shabbos* for 1½ hours after *havdala*. The telephone number is: (718) 951-3696. In Monsey and Upstate New York call (914) 425-1667, Monday evenings and *Motza'ei Shabbos* only.

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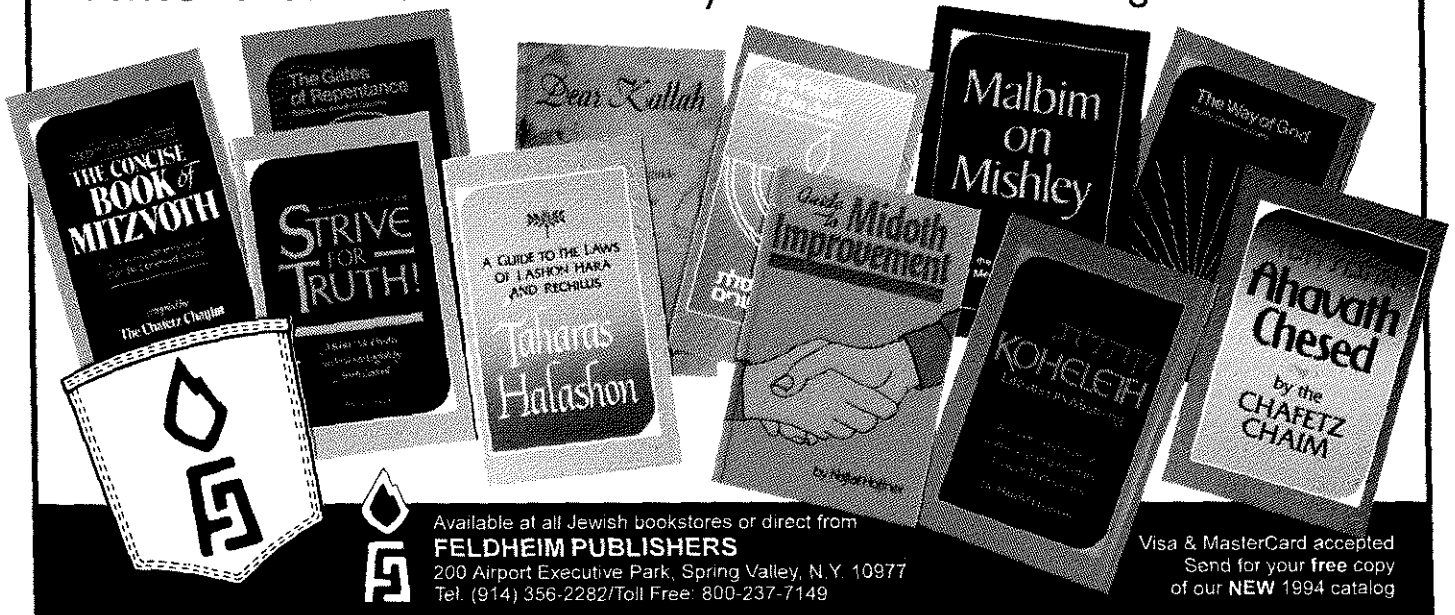
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# Problems Frequently Encountered in the Construction of Eiruv in Modern Metropolitan Areas

A certain *poseik* once took my *chavrusa* and me on a field trip around the *eiruv* of an urban community. He began by taking us to a specific street marked on the *eiruv* map as the border of the *eiruv* and offering us ten dollars if we were successful at identifying the lines of the *eiruv*. Needless to say, we did not earn that ten dollars!

It might come as a shock to anyone who has erected a private backyard *eiruv* to realize that building a communal *eiruv* usually entails little installation of wire. For the most part, resourceful *eiruv* committees spend weeks and months identifying pre-existing structures to serve as part of the communal enclosure. Such structures often are actual walls: fences, embankments, riverbanks, sides of buildings, etc., but overwhelmingly consist of overhead cable belonging to the electric or telephone utility companies. As a result of the expediency of using these pre-existing structures—stemming either from concern over funds or over municipal regulations—urban *eiruvim* often follow what seem to be illogical patterns, separating sidewalks from streets, cutting through alleys, or encompassing broad areas with few Jews. The use of wall-like structures,

**Rabbi Bechhofer**, *Rosh Kollel* of the Noble Kollel of Yeshivas Beis HaMidrash LaTorah in Chicago, is the author of *Sefer Bigdei Shesh on Masechta Bava Basra and Eruvin in Modern Metropolitan Areas*. This synopsis of several common problems is based on the latter work.

as long as they are man-made, poses few problems. It is the use of overhead cable which causes most of the problems encountered in contemporary urban *eiruvim*.

## THE TZURAS HAPESACH

The Torah forbids us to carry in any area defined as a *reshus harabbim* (a public domain) on *Shabbos*. Chazal extended this prohibition to include any unenclosed area. The most popular method of enclosing an area *al pi halacha* is a *tzuras hapesach* (literally, “the form of a doorway”—the familiar two poles with a wire across the top and the variations on that theme). The rationale of this solution is that a door frame is a halachically valid form of enclosure (*Eiruvim* 11b). *Eiruvim* of this sort enclose areas as small as a backyard and as large as entire neighborhoods.

The most basic *halacha* of *tzuras hapesach*, which the poles and wire comprise, is that the wire which crosses over the poles (the “*lechayayim*”) must pass over the top of the poles, not on or over the sides of the poles. Crossing over the side of the pole constitutes the *p’sul* of *tzuras hapesach min hatzad* (“on the side”), explicitly invalidated by the *Gemora* in *Masechta Eiruvim*, *ibid.* (and

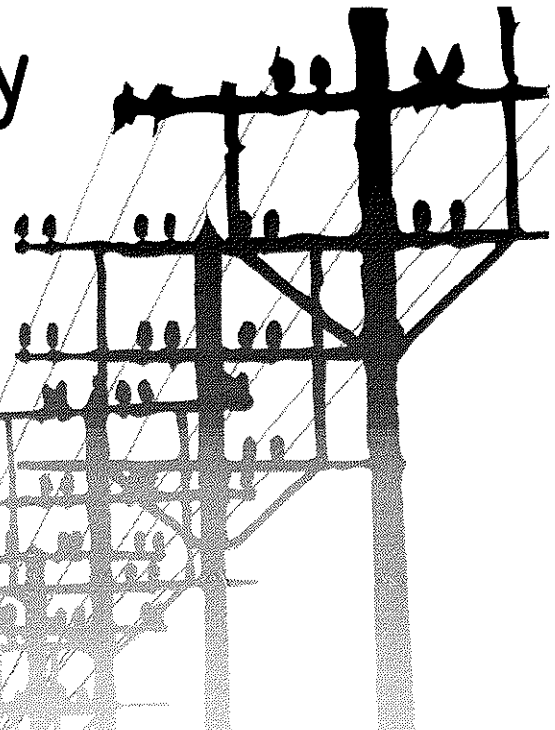
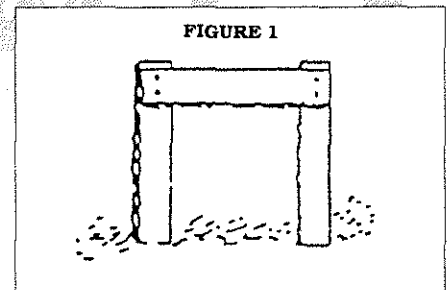


FIGURE 1

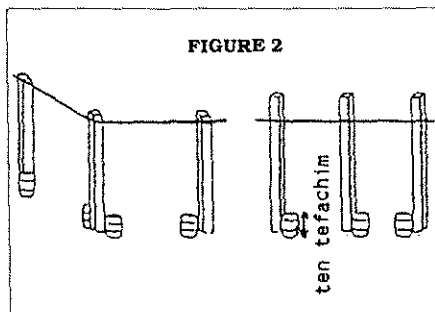


*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 362:11) (fig. 1).

This *halacha* poses a formidable problem when utilizing overhead cable in the construction of an *eiruv*. Although occasionally the cable does in fact go from the top of one pole to the top of the next, more often than not, the cable is attached to the side of the pole. Frequently, the same cable will weave back and forth, going from the top of the pole to the side of the next one, out on a crossbar and back again in quick succession!

In Israel, where the municipal authorities are cooperative, the problem of *tzuras hapesach min hatzad* is usually rectified by placing wide barrels which are at least ten *tefachim* high underneath the overhead cable. The halachic principle of *gud asek mechitza* (the wall is [halachically] extended higher) then allows us to draw an imaginary line directly up from the

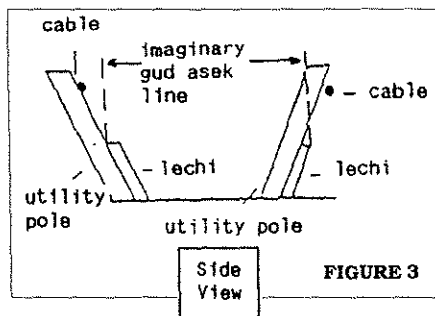
top of the barrel to the cable, allowing us to view the barrel, not the utility pole, as the *lechi* (vertical pole) for the *tzuras hapesach* (fig. 2).



In *chutz la'aretz*, however, the authorities are not as cooperative, and will usually not allow such obtrusive *tikkunim*. The usual approach here, therefore, is to bolt a plank, a rod, or tubing to the utility pole to serve as the *lechi* wherever one is necessary.

#### USING A ROD AS LECHI

The problem encountered most frequently as a result of the use of a narrow object as *lechi* is in the application of *gud asek*. The *Chazon Ish* (*Orach Chaim, Eiruv* 71:6) rules that the imaginary line is always drawn straight up, regardless of the angle of the *lechi*. Many utility poles are warped or bent at an angle, either as a result of carelessness in the original construction, weather conditions over time, or being hit by cars or trucks. The *lechayayim* attached to such poles bend with them at the same angle—yet *gud asek* still draws the imaginary line straight up from the top of the *lechi* (the *Chazon Ish* also rules that *gud asek* begins only at the top, not the middle of a pole) (fig. 3). In such a situation the *gud asek* is meaningless, as the line drawn from the top of the *lechi* will not hit the overhead cable.

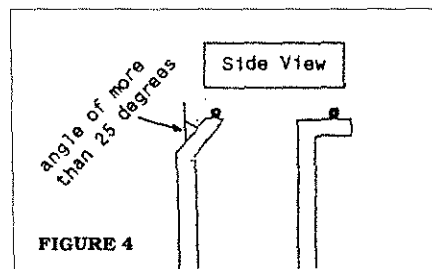


Some *Rabbonim* will, nonetheless, permit the use of *gud asek* in the construction of an *eiruv* based on utility poles. In order to prevent the bent pole problem, they require the use of a surveyor's tool or a plumb line in order to determine that the *lechi* is directly underneath the overhead cable. At best, however, this is a hazardous approach. A single invalid *lechi* can render an entire *eiruv* invalid. An average-sized urban *eiruv* may contain hundreds of *lechayayim* attached to telephone poles. The surveyor (usually a utility company employee or a hastily-trained member of the local *eiruv* committee) must meticulously check every pole—a time consuming, tedious, and sometimes expensive task. Unless one's *yiras Shamayim* is very strong, diligence tends to erode over time. A further problem is that any pole may become bent over time, necessitating constant surveillance.

Another problem which may arise when *gud asek lechayayim* are used is that often a utility company box may be attached to the utility pole between the *lechi* and the overhead cable. If the *lechi* is built all the way up to the box, or to within three *tefachim* of it, then the box may be

considered part of the *lechi* (the halachic device of "*lavud*" allows us to regard objects within three *tefachim* of each other as connected). If, however, the *lechi* ends more than three *tefachim* beneath the box, then the box is a *hefsek* which interrupts the *gud asek* (*Mishna Berura, Orach Chaim* 363:112).

Due to all these considerations, "state of the art" *eiruvim* do not utilize *gud asek lechayayim*, but rather build the *lechi* all the way up to the overhead cable. In such a case, no imaginary line need be drawn, as an actual line goes all the way to the wire. Actual lines may be bent at an angle and remain halachically valid. (The *lechi* itself, however, must be reasonably straight, not pronouncedly crooked or bent. An angle of more than approximately 25 degrees is problematic.) (fig. 4)



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**THE OVERHEAD CABLE**

The Mishna Berura (*Orach Chaim* 362:66) cites a disagreement as to whether the cable must be absolutely taut or may sag and/or sway in the wind between the *lechayayim* (fig. 5). The trend, based on the *Aruch HaShulchan* and others (*Orach Chaim* 362:37), is to be lenient—as long as when there is no wind the cable at rest runs due



FIGURE 5

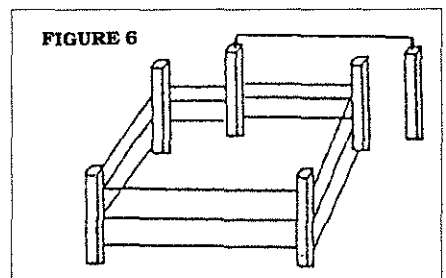
straight from *lechi* to *lechi*. The *Chazon Ish* (*Orach Chaim, Eiruvin* 71:10) considers such a *tzuras*

*hapesach* definitely invalid. It is worthwhile emphasizing again that one *p'sul* can invalidate an entire *eiruv*.

**THE POSITION OF THE POLE**

Several problems arise in regard to the position of the utility pole and/or the *lechi* attached to the pole. Occasionally the path of the utility cables requires the placement of poles on private property. In and of itself such positioning is not a problem; however, often such property is surrounded by a fence which the *eiruv* is thus forced to cross (fig. 6). The *Mishna Berura* (*Orach Chaim* 363:113) and others rule that such a

FIGURE 6



situation is invalid. A similar problem applies in a case where a hedge which is larger than the allowed measurements has grown to surround the *lechi* (fig. 7). The *Avnei Nezer* (*Orach Chaim* no. 291), however, tends to be

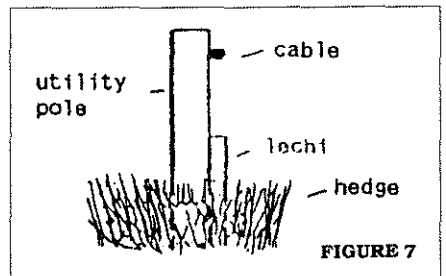


FIGURE 7

lenient so long as the height of the *lechi* exceeds the height of the surrounding fence or hedge by at least ten *tefachim*. The *lechi* is then regarded as a distinct wall above and beyond the surrounding fence whose significance cannot be nullified by an imaginary *gud asek*. Other *poskim* advance somewhat more lenient positions, but even the position of the *Avnei Nezer* is cited as a *hetter b'she'as hadechak*—a leniency one may rely upon in a difficult situation.

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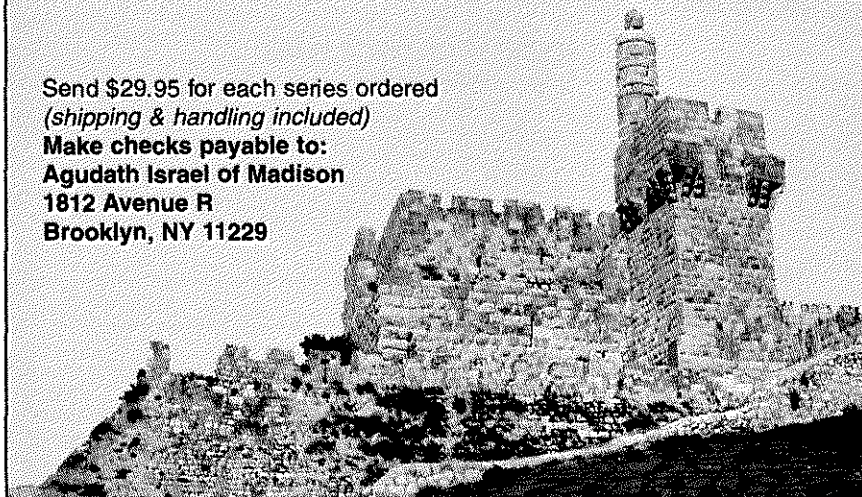
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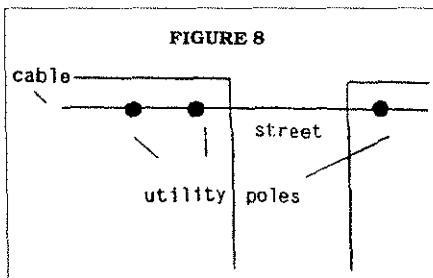
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## TRANSFERRING FROM FENCE TO CABLE

Due to the many problems involved in the use of overhead cable, it is obviously preferable to utilize fences and other such wall-like structures wherever possible. Usually, however, it is difficult to rely only on fences. For example, inevitably fences must be interrupted in order to allow streets to pass through. In order to insure that the continuous line of the *eiruv* encompasses the city, the enclosure must travel across the street, either by way of erecting a *tzuras hapesach* across the street, or, as is often the case, by jumping to an overhead cable which crosses the street. The problem which frequently arises is that the poles are usually behind and not within three *tefachim* of the fence (fig. 8). This presents the

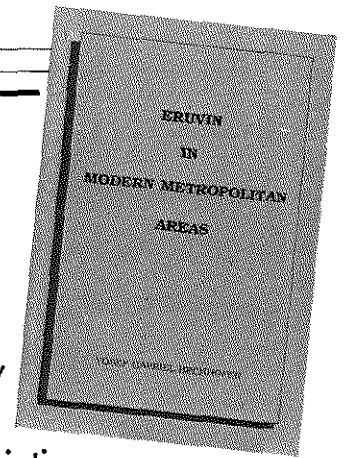


problem: what connects the fence to the overhead cable? The fence is usually unsuitable for use as a *lechi* (see below), so drawing the *gud asek* line up from the fence will not help. In the case we have presented here, a *lechi* would have to be placed on the fence directly underneath the overhead cable (thus creating a *gud asek*).

### ELEVATED TRAIN LINES AND BRIDGES

Rabbi Yehoshua Siegel, commonly known as the Sherpser Rav, first arrived in New York in 1884 and settled on the Lower East Side. The Sherpser Rav was the foremost rabbi of Polish-Chassidic origin in America at the time, and in fact was a rival of Rabbi Jacob Joseph, the Chief Rabbi of New York, who was of Lithuanian extraction. In 1907 the Sherpser Rav published a pamphlet, "Eiruv V'Hotza'a," which allowed the residents of the Lower East Side to

It might come as a shock to anyone who has erected a private backyard *eiruv* to realize that building a communal *eiruv* usually entails little installation of wire. For the most part, resourceful *eiruv* committees spend weeks and months identifying pre-existing structures to serve as part of the communal enclosure.



carry in the streets on *Shabbos*. Although the Jews of Lithuanian descent generally did not rely on the Sherpser Rav's *hetter* (one of the founders of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan, Rabbi Yehuda David Bernstein, wrote a pamphlet, "Hilchasa Rabasa L'Shabbata," disputing the *hetter*), people still were carrying on the Lower East Side as late as 1947, when Rabbi Yosef Eliyahu Henkin (*Eidus L'Yisroel*, p.151) wrote that even the original rationale for the *hetter* in any event no longer applied.

What walls did the Sherpser Rav use in formulation of his *hetter*? The Lower East Side was surrounded on three sides by the walls which front on the East River, and on the fourth

side by the Third Avenue elevated train line. An elevated train line looks just like a classic *tzuras hapesach*: the support beams might be seen as *lechayayim* and the overhead train tracks might be seen as the lintel. A similar approach is quoted by the *She'arim Mitzuyanim B'Halacha* (82:9) in the name of the *She'eilos U'Teshuvos Even Yekara*. The *She'arim Mitzuyanim B'Halacha*, however, takes issue with the *Even Yekara*. Just as a doorframe is distinct from the walls and ceiling of the room to which it is affixed, so too the doorframe effect which constitutes a *tzuras hapesach* requires that the *lechayayim* and lintel be distinct from the walls of the structure to which they are affixed. The *She'arim*

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**A**lmost inevitably, the construction of an *eiruv* in an urban setting becomes a matter of controversy. Almost as inevitably, the issues involved in the controversy cause much confusion and strife, especially among those not familiar with *Hilchos Eiruv*.

*Mitzuyanim B'Halacha* therefore rules that a bridge or overpass may be considered a *tzuras hapesach* only if it has features (such as protruding girders or supports) which may be regarded as distinct from its wall.

#### CONCLUSION

**A**lmost inevitably, the construction of an *eiruv* in an urban setting becomes a matter of controversy. Almost as inevitably, the issues involved in the controversy cause much confusion and strife, especially among those not familiar with *Hilchos Eiruv*. The focus of such controversies usually centers on the halachic definition of a *reshus harabbim*, i.e., what constitutes a public domain which cannot be enclosed *al pi halacha* with the device of *tzuras hapesach*. A common misconception is that once the *reshus harabbim* question is resolved, the actual construction of the *eiruv* is a relatively simple and straightforward matter. Perhaps our review of only a few of the possible issues involved in the construction of an *eiruv* in a metropolitan area dispels that misconception!

Many sources stress the advisability and importance of building *eiruv* wherever possible (*Shemiras Shabbos K'Hilchassa*, 14:21; *Halachos of the Eruv*, "Bemakom Hakdama"). A positive attitude towards *eiruv* is exhibited by many *poskim*. The positive attitude in theory does not, however, always translate into a positive attitude in practice. The reasons for this inconsistency should be clarified, at least somewhat, by our discussions. The nature of *Hilchos Eiruv* is such that not only must *poskim* who are well-versed in the *halachos* be consulted in all cases, but that they *must be brought for on-site inspections* of the area and the *eiruv* prior to, during, and after construction. Only in this way can the theoretical positive attitude be translated into practice, and only thus will enhanced *oneg Shabbos* not be attained at a cost of diminished *Shemiras Shabbos*. ■

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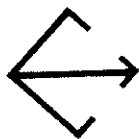
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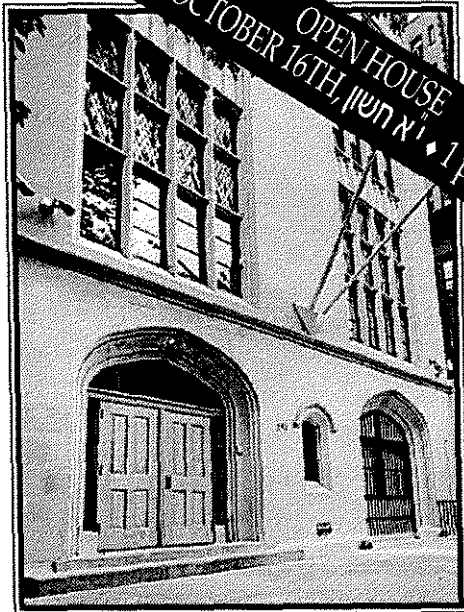
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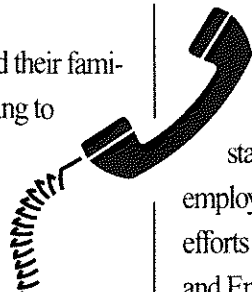


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# A Bridge Across Chasms of Divisiveness

## SECOND LOOKS

There is a conviction among various groups within Jewry that the over-arching command of our time is to respond to the call for *Achdus*. While the *Chareidi* communities regard *Achdus* as a worthwhile pursuit, there is a basic requirement—that is, commonality of belief. As much as “*Vayichan shom Yisroel neged hahar*—and Israel encamped (singular form) opposite the mountain [Sinai]” conveys that acting together as one unit was a prerequisite to receiving the Torah, the converse is also true: this *pasuk* demonstrates that the single unifying factor of *Klal Yisroel* is the fact that the people are approaching Sinai to receive the Torah [all other descriptions of Jewish encampments are in the plural]. To those others, however, the call for *Achdus* transcends all considerations: We all must be one in a religious context in spite of all sorts of differences—whether in degree of religious commitment, specific theological outlook, or chosen lifestyle.

Typical is the Interdenominational Rabbinic Study Seminar, to be convened this coming July in Jerusalem by the Shalom Hartman Institute, which is headed by Rabbi David Hartman. In a letter accompanying a press-release to this effect, the director of the Institute urges editors of various publications to publicize the relevant information “to let the Jewish public know that in this period of polarization there are also sparks of reconciliation and friendship within the Jewish rabbinic fold.” We must disappoint the folks at the Hartman Institute; we will not be urging people to be there. Rhetoric of togetherness does

not paper over irreparable differences.

We must, however, take note of the information sheet, which describes the topics on the agenda, and includes, among other items: “The sabbatical year in Israel suggests an additional subject for discussion: the disparity between ‘the letter and the spirit of the law.’ The contrast between the lofty imperatives of the Bible and their reduction to mere agricultural and dietary restrictions in rabbinic tradition invites a careful understanding of the interpretive process and how it can go wrong.”

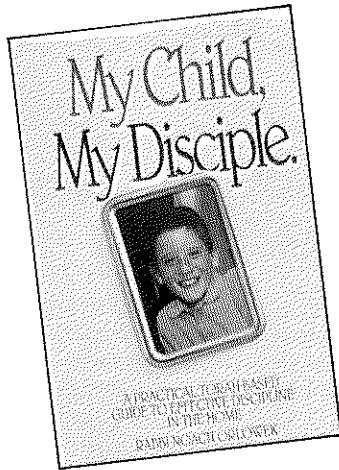
Now, there is among deviant groups a long-standing stratagem of denigrating meticulous *mitzva*-observance as an involvement in the mechanical minutiae of legalisms at the expense of the spirit of the law. This fiction was hurled at rabbinic Judaism by the Christians, at the Orthodox by the Reform, and—most recently—by “*Klal Yisroel*” Jews against the *Chareidim*. Yes, we do measure the square centimeters of the “*Motzi-and-Matza*” *matzos*, we unfurl our *marror* leaves (well inspected for insects) on graduated squares to assure minimum size, and then we pace our chew-and-swallow maneuvers to conform to the halachic time requirements. Yes, we race the clock to say “*Hallel*” by midnight. Yes, we are on the alert for extraneous ululations when blowing shofar, and we pull out our loupes to check our *esrogim* for tiny flaws. But the fervor of our *Hallel* at the *Seder*, the way we are transported to Egypt with each bite of *matza* and *marror*, the manner in which the shofar’s call rips open our hearts, and how the *esrog*, in concert with the other three species, helps us

acknowledge G-d’s reign over us from all directions—all this is also part of our experience in our exacting performance of *mitzvos*. Moreover, the prescriptions of the “how” chart the *only* path for bringing us closer to the “what.” If our brothers who have strayed from that path fail to appreciate this, it is indeed tragic. We owe them the light of our experience, but no apologies for our fidelity to *Shulchan Aruch*.

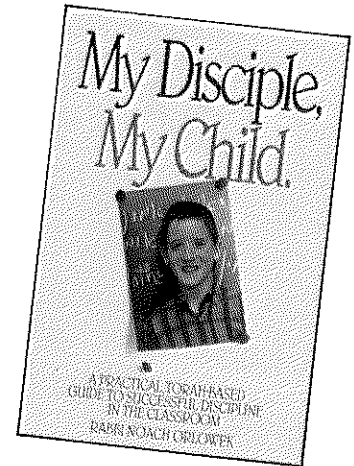
*Shmittah* is a *mitzva* that is remarkably obvious in how its mere performance summons up the resources of *mesirus nefesh* in the soul of every Jew who honors it. These men are described by *Chazal* as “[G-d’s] messengers, mighty in valor” (*Tehillim* 103.20): they cease and desist for an entire year from any agricultural activity that they would normally pursue to earn their daily bread, mortgaging their future to G-d’s blessings that are promised for the eighth year of the cycle—proclaiming with their halachically prescribed restraint that, indeed, the earth is the L-rd’s!

Who told the oracles of the Hartman Institute that the *Shmittah* observance has been “reduce[d]... to mere dietary and agricultural restrictions in rabbinic tradition”? Who are they to judge the “mighty men of valor” as victims of “an interpretive process” that has “go[ne] wrong”!

We will be following the deliberations and weighty pronouncements of the Hartman Institute with less than bated breath. In our pride in the growing ranks of *Shmittah* adherents, we unabashedly applaud the 4,000 farmers who honor *Shmittah*, the rabbis who guide them, and the hundreds of thousands of consumers who respect its dietary restrictions. And to those in the philosophical grandstands, we plead, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” ■



## Two Books on Bringing Up Children



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When reading books on *chinuch* written by professionals (such as child psychologists), one often feels that their perspective is grounded in a secular discipline, and that they are quoting selected *Chazal* to justify this or that position. By contrast, Rabbi Orlowek's writings seem to flow naturally from vast Torah knowledge and lifelong experience in Torah education and guidance. While Rabbi Orlowek lived and taught in the U.S. long enough to understand the pressures and harried lifestyle of our country, he also lectures effectively to yeshiva and seminary students in Israel where he

Mr. Avi Shulman is director of Torah Umesorah's SEED and Aish Dos programs. He writes and lectures on educational topics.

has lived for several decades, and seems to have a deep appreciation of their special world, as well.

The book for parents, *My Child, My Disciple*, has 18 chapters, some just a few pages in length, each of which provokes and molds our perception of Jewish parenting. Woven into each chapter (especially in the footnotes)

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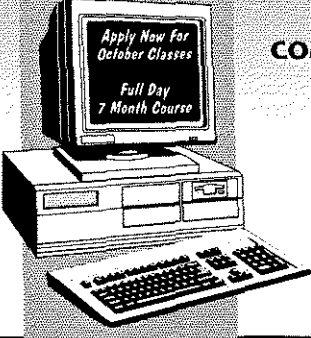
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# Letters to the Editor

## THE SHMITTAH COUNT —NOT A MYSTERY

To the Editor:

I found publication of "Mystery of the Missing Years" (Jan. '94) truly mystifying. Is it the role of *The Jewish Observer* to confuse readers and undermine their trust in the authenticity of *halacha*? This year is *Shmittah*, as had been determined by our authorities centuries ago.

In a popular journal of information and opinion, one normally begins with the *halacha* and then proceeds to discuss the implications from that point on. Any exploration of background and differing approaches belongs in a *halacha* journal. In such a

context, discussion of a *machlokes* (dispute) between *Rishonim* makes sense. For our purposes, however, one would have done well to begin by quoting the *Rambam*, whose word is the basis of our count, and then taking note of every word that he says. In the chapter on *Shmittah* (10:4), the *Rambam*, in his holy clarity, puts it this way: "Hence one learns that the year when the Second *Bayis* was destroyed, and whose start is in *Tishrei*, about two months after the *Churban*... that year was the year after the *Shmittah*." It is in this manner that the *Rambam* explains the phrase of the *Gemora* in *Ta'anis* 29: "the year after the *Churban*."

Now the *Bais Yosef*, *Darkei Moshe* (written by the author of the *RMA* on *Shulchan Aruch*), and the *Bach* all write that the *Rambam* and the *Rih* (one of the *Tosafists*) are of the same opinion (*Shulchan Aruch* 67). This means (unlike *Rashi's* view) that the *Churban* of the *Bayis Sheini* took place 421 years after its construction, in the year 3829. To this the *Rambam* adds "that the year starting two months after the *Churban*, starting with the following *Tishrei*" (2830) was the year after *Shmittah*, mentioned in *Ta'anis* 29. Hence, the previous year, 3829, was *Shmittah*. Add 275 seven-year cycles (or 1925 years) to the date, and we clearly have our present *Shmittah* year of 5754.

And thus, the *Rambam* continues (*Shmittah* 10:4), "the present year 4935 (1107 after 3828) is *Shmittah*." Add to this 22 *Shmittah* cycles (154 years), and one comes to the year 5089. Thus the *Darkei Moshe* concludes that "according to the *Rambam*, 5089 was a *Shmittah* year." Add 95 cycles to that (or 655 years), and again we clearly have our present *Shmittah* year of 5754.

The above count is apparently what the *Darkei Moshe* explains in his usual brevity. And thus, "the Arithmetic Mystery" is solved. From the *Rambam*, through the *Darkei Moshe*, to today.

### The Undignified Packaging

Now I would like to address an additional grievance with the article: the make-believe type of packaging,

which may infuse a halachic discussion with an aura of excitement, but actually compromises the loftiness of the subject matter.

The whole set of terminologies—"mystery," "the next piece of the puzzle... provided by a verse in *Melachim*," "partial resolution, but problems remain"—are an indignity to the subject matter.

In addition, it surely is odd to read "that this calculation [placing *Avrohom Avinu's* birth in 1948] is verified by *Rashi* etc." Does a count, so clearly figured out in *Bereishis* and *Noach*, really need the *hechsher* of *Rashi's* verification? Similarly, should the source of *Bayis Rishoni's* standing 410 years be quoted as "*Rashi Bava Basra 3b*" when it is so often clearly mentioned in *Chazal*? (*Yoma 9, etc., etc.*)

Furthermore, some of the elements in the article's attempt to find a proper count, such as the whole business of starting the count from Creation, instead of from the *Churban*, or dealing with *Shnos Tohu*, when the *Rambam* and the *Rih* (bases for our calculations) obviously do not do so, would be considered a Red Herring in any *bona fide* mystery. Nowhere in *Chazal* do we find any reference to the year that something occurred—the *Mabul* (in 1650), *Avraham Avinu* reaching age 52 (in 2000), *Yetzias Mitzrayim* (in 2448)—as anything but *Shnos Adam*. Nowhere do we see these events counted in the context of *Shnos Tohu* (1651, 2001, or 2449, respectively).

May I plead with our gifted teachers to please not get carried away with American-style flippancy. Let us treat sacred subjects with all due dignity.

RABBI SHLOME ROTENBERG  
Brooklyn


*Rabbi Rotenberg is author of the three-volume history, Toldos Am Olam.*

### DUAL SOLUTION TO THE "MISSING YEARS"

To the Editor:

Rabbi Yisroel Reisman's excellent article, "Mystery of the Missing Years," clarifies a difficult topic lucidly and eruditely.

As you are surely aware, however, he leaves a perplexing question unan-



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swered. In footnote 1 (pg. 19), he states that a teacher who uses the accepted date of 1948 for the birth of Avraham (1943 in the footnote is clearly a typographical error), which follows the calculation from Adam's creation (*Cheshbon Adam*), and at the same time refers to this year as 5754, which follows the calculation from creation of heaven and earth (*Cheshbon Tohu*), is being inconsistent.

What, then, shall the teacher do? Shall he (or she) change the accepted date of 5754, and write on the blackboard that this year is 5753? This is, of course, ludicrous. At the same time, it is equally untenable for the teacher to change all accepted dates of Jewish history, and stipulate, for example, that Avraham was born in 1949, Yitzchak in 2049, and that *Mattan Torah* was in 2449. Clearly, this is no solution, since almost all authentic Torah sources render these dates as 1948, 2048, and 2448, respectively (as in *Avoda Zara* 9a, and *Rashi ad loc.*).

I was confronted by this dilemma when I began to write *Legacy of Sinai*, which is a history of Torah transmission, from Creation through the close of the Geonic era in 4798 (1038 c.e.) This question arises on almost every page of this book, particularly on the numerous charts in this book. The approach I took to this question is, in my opinion, proper for every teacher and interested layman.

### Both Dates Should Be Used

It is my firm conviction that both dates should be used. I have clarified this matter at length in *Legacy of Sinai*, pp.18-19, note 1, citing many sources. I will explain briefly:

All early historical Biblical dates, as rendered in *Tanach*, follow *Cheshbon Adam*, since the Torah's chronological calculation begins with the creation of *Adam Harishon*. Thus, the Torah stipulates that Adam was 130 years old when Shes was born; Shes was 105 when Keinan was born; etc. It is clear that the Torah does not include the *Shenas Tohu*, or the Zero Year in this calculation, nor would it be proper to do so, since the Torah is stipulating Adam's biological age here. It is on the basis of these dates that all our chronological calculations, such as 1948 for Avraham, through 3828 for the *Churban Bayis Sheini*, are rendered.

This should not be changed by the Torah teacher under any circumstances. *Mirhag avoseinu beyadeinu.*

When we come to the post-*Churban* era, however, we must revert to the dating system based on *Cheshbon Tohu*, by adding one year to our calculations, much as the Rambam (*Hilchos Kiddush haChodesh* 6:8: *Hilchos Shmittah veYovel* 10:2; see *Kesef Mishna* and *Bi'ur Mahari Kurkus, ad. loc.*) and *Tosafos* do (*Rosh Hashana* 8a-b, sv., *Liteku-*

*fos*). This is imperative, so we not become confused regarding all current *Shmittah* calculations, for all *Shmittah* calculations are based on *Cheshbon Tohu*. (See *Rabbeinu Zerachiah haLevi*, in *Sefer haMa'or haGadol* on *Avoda Zara* 9b.)

While the *Shmittah* calculation is a complex one, and is based on a variety of factors, the end result for contemporary purposes can be arrived at very easily. We can simply divide the Jewish calendar year by seven. For example, our year, 5754, a *Shmittah* year, is divisible by seven ( $5754 \div 7 = 822$ ). This, however, is only applicable to *Cheshbon Tohu*, which we currently follow in our calendars.

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Since all of our calendars follow the *Cheshbon Tohu* in regard to all dates following the Second *Churban*, one year should be added to dates based on earlier calculations (i.e. the dates of the Purim miracle, Chanuka, etc.) to take into account the Zero Year of *Cheshbon Tohu*. *Churban Bayis Sheini* is a reasonable cut-off point for this purpose.

**The Chazon Ish Concur**

The *Chazon Ish*, זצ"ל, concurs with this approach. In his *Hilchos Rosh*

*Hashana* (139, 5, p.465), he explains that the Torah does not include the Zero Year in its chronological date because "it is not proper to include the year of *Tohu* in the calculation of the genealogy of mankind." At the same time, the *Chazon Ish* states unequivocally that the *Shmittah* calculation does include the *Tohu* year as the Year One (*ibid.*; also p. 468, s.v. וענין הלכה), as we have clarified above.

The teacher need not be concerned that this approach will confuse the student. I have used this dual approach with high school and seminary students for years, and they have found it fascinating.

As Torah Jews, we are certainly accustomed to various dating systems, used for different purposes. For example, we follow the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer (*Rosh Hashana* 10b) that the world was created in *Elul/Tishrei*, at which time we observe *Rosh Hashana*, and proclaim, "*Hayom haras olam*—Today is the birthday of the universe." (See *Ramban*, ח"ט ד"ה *Bereishis* 8:5; *Ritva*, *Rosh Hashana* 27a כמאן ד"ה). Nevertheless, we recognize *Nisan* as "*Rosh chadashim*—chief of all months" (*Shemos* 12,2). Indeed, the first *Mishna* in *Rosh Hashana* teaches us that *Arba'a Roshei Shanin heim*—there are four different New Years Days—each for a different purpose. Even more significantly, for centuries Jews have calculated the years ac-

cording to *minyán shetaros*—the calculation that dates back to Alexander the Great. The *Iggeres Rav Sherira Gaon* and other important primary history sources follow the calculation of the *minyán shetaros* exclusively. The *Rambam* refers to *minyán shetaros*, as well (*Hilchos Kiddush haChodesh* 11:16).

In sum, one has good basis for using a dual approach in the classroom, with no sense of conflict; and students take well to the rationale for it.

ZACHARIAH FENDEL

*Rabbi Fendel is author of a number of published works on Jewish history, hashkafa (world-view), and mussar (ethical teachings).*

**Rabbi Reisman Responds:**

I am very honored that a world-renowned historian such as Rabbi Rotenberg would take the time to comment on my article. I am surely not qualified to disagree with him on matters involving Jewish history. Thankfully, Rabbi Rotenberg's objections do not center on the historical accuracy of my article, but on its style and presentation. On these topics, I must respectfully disagree. To address the points raised:

1. Rabbi Rotenberg suggests that we prove that this year is *Shmittah* by beginning with the *Rambam*, etc. This misses the point. The purpose of this article was not to prove that this is *Shmittah* (does anyone doubt that it

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is?), but to introduce the different ways of calculating the calendar. This is a concept that, coincidentally, I first learned from Rabbi Rotenberg himself many years ago when I attended his history class in Mesivta Torah Vodaath.

2. Rabbi Rotenberg suggests that this discussion belongs in a halachic journal, not in the JO. I beg to differ. An article that breaks no new halachic ground, but seeks only to explain the accepted *halacha*, would seem to qualify for inclusion in a "journal of information and opinion." There is precedent for this type of article. The late Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's "A Get in Monsey" (JO Dec. '76) is one example that comes to mind.

3. Regarding style: on this I must disagree most strongly. This article includes no "make-believe packaging." It is an honest chronicle of my own personal attempt to find answers to the questions posed. Yes, to me this was a "mystery" and I worked hard to put together the "pieces of the puzzle" which clarified a complicated issue. I found this interesting, and was happy to share my experience with

the JO readership. Am I obligated to make *halacha* seem dull? Does it "compromise the loftiness of the subject matter" to make *halacha* interesting? Is an article that seeks to "infuse a halachic discussion with an aura of excitement" something that should be seen as an "indignity"? I understand that a scholar does not need this type of approach to appreciate the complexities of *halacha*, but the rest of us would do well to seek out opportunities to find excitement in our learning. In my view, this is a positive ingredient (of which we need more), and not an indignity.

4. Rabbi Rotenberg questions why it is necessary for me to quote a *Rashi* in *Avoda Zara* to "verify" that *Avraham Avinu* was born in 1948, since I had already shown that this can be calculated from the *Chumash* itself. This is a valid point. However, the *Chumash's* determination is not explicit; it is arrived at by adding the ages of twenty different individuals mentioned in *Bereishis* and *Noach*. One might argue that the *Chumash* is simply rounding off their ages to the nearest year, and that the "miss-

ing years" can be found by adding together the extra months which were rounded off. *Rashi* in *Avoda Zara* tells us that this argument is incorrect, and that Avraham was indeed born in 1948.

5. Rabbi Rotenberg points out that there is no reference in *Chazal* to *Cheshbon Tohu*. [Since *Rishonim* do refer to this counting—see, for example, *Rambam, Hilchos Shmittah* 10:2—I assume Rabbi Rotenberg is referring to Talmudic and Midrashic sources which use *Cheshbon Adam* exclusively.] I certainly accept this point, but this leaves me with a problem: why does our calendar use *Cheshbon Tohu*? To me (forgive me for saying this), this mystery remains.

In regard to Rabbi Fendel's letter—once again, I am truly honored to have had my work reviewed by a recognized scholar. I concur with Rabbi Fendel's suggestion, which, I believe, is common practice among teachers—although they should point out to their students that two methods of calculation are being pursued.

Rabbi Fendel mentions that *Shmittah* years are divisible by seven. It should be made clear that this is purely coincidental and is not intrinsically related to the use of *Cheshbon Tohu*.

RABBI YISROEL REISMAN

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To the Editor:

Dr. Wikler's article, "Help Me Get Married!" (Feb '94), dealt realistically and sensitively with a growing problem. Part of the solution is to gather as much relevant information as pos-

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sible (within the bounds of permissible speech, of course) so that proposed matches will at least be in the ball park.

I have two single friends who are truly lovely young ladies, yet each represents extraordinary circumstances that limit their chances in the field. I

will call them "Alice" and "Barbara":

- Alice comes from a thoroughly assimilated, liberal upper-class Jewish family from a city in the Far West. She met a non-Jewish medical student in college, whom she married with her parents' begrudging consent. On a trip through Europe and

the Mideast, she passed through Jerusalem, where she was approached by a *kiruv* professional at the *Kotel*. The end result was a visit to Neve, a drifting apart from her husband, ending in divorce. She is today, at 27, an outstanding *ba'alas teshuva*, but not suitable for a *Kohein*—not because of the "divorce" (which was not a *get*, strictly speaking), but because of the short-term "marriage" to a non-Jew.

- Barbara's maternal grandmother had converted to Judaism in 1945 to marry a Jewish soldier stationed in her community. The conversion was under Reform auspices, therefore not halachically valid. Their children were brought up Jewish, and they in turn—especially Barbara's mother—imbued their own families with a strong Jewish identity. Barbara attended co-ed Day School (her name is Goldstein, her mother's maiden name was Levy; what could be amiss?), and went on a post-high school B'nai B'rith Youth trip to Israel. She ended up in Aish Hatorah, where she discovered that she needed *giyur* (halachic conversion). She too is a "real catch," but not suitable for a *Kohein*.

Instead of embarrassing the Alices and Barbaras with up-front questions relating to their past, it would be so much more considerate if the *shadchanim* would tell them, "I've got a great guy. He's 29, a Harvard Law School dropout, now in Chaim Berlin. He's a *Kohein*, wants to go into the rabbinate, and his parents, not yet *frum*, are supportive. He's 6'2" and has red hair."

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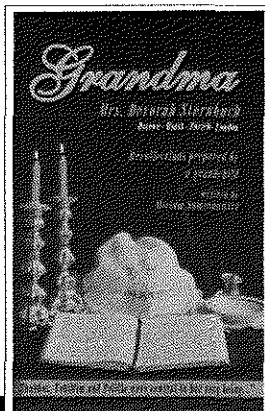
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formation that is relevant, but perhaps embarrassing when dealing with a *shadchan* that is less than a very close friend.

I was taught that "*tzeddek tzeddek tirdof*" implies that worthwhile goals must be pursued by using worthwhile, non-offensive means. With a bit of thoughtful consideration, I believe that we could all manage to do justice to the needs of our single friends, in every phase of the *shidduch*.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST  
New York City

### COMMENTS ON WIKLER'S LIST— REVISITED

To the Editor:

Before I got married, I had a fantasy checklist of what kind of girl I wanted to marry: a color war general (winning team, of course), camp actress (comedy or drama), choir leader, guitarist, soloist, sports fan (Yankees, unless of course the Cowboys), *Litvish*, *Yeshivish*, having learned a year in *Eretz Yisroel*, not from Boro Park (I come from there), not Hungarian... etc., etc.

I am, *Baruch Hashem*, happily married to a Boro Park girl whose family is Hungarian, *Chassidish* (although my wife is more American). She never went to camp, does not play guitar (she types instead), acted in a Bungalow play as the witch in *Snow White* (she was four years old), does not like the country, enjoys shopping and reading instead of a ballgame (she must be joking!). I enjoy *The Jewish Observer* and she enjoys *The Jewish Press* (I win that one), I enjoy learning,

M.B.D., playing football, while she enjoys sewing, reading about sewing and the music of Michael Streicher. (How does that saying go? "Opposites Attract." They sure know what they're talking about!)

My wife's checklist read something like this: A quiet boy (I am, during the *Shemoneh Esrei*), a lawyer (I'm in *chiruch*), serious (I am, on *Tisha B'Av*), a summer city person (I went to C.T.V., Ohr Shraga, and Dora Golding), would go out in a nice car (I dated sometimes by the F Train, which was clean and air-conditioned), would go to fine restaurants (the roast beef sandwich at Kosher Delight was great)....

My point is that the main checklist should be compatibility in *middos tovos*, *derech erez*, personality, *chessed*, *hashkofos*, etc., and that the person's looks be beautiful in the eyes of the beholder—in *your* eyes, not necessarily your friend's eyes.

It's good to speak to a *Rav*, *Rosh Yeshiva*, or *Rebbe* if there is a question regarding *hashkofos*, disregarding the fact that the person *never* went to camp and *can't* play guitar.

AVIGDOR KATZAV  
Brooklyn

### GREAT POEM, BAD PLACEMENT

To the Editor:

Miss Liba Sebrov's poem and comment (JO, Jan. '94, p. 38) don't belong on the last page squeezed in between advertisements, but rather they should have been highlighted to all readers on an earlier page.

AHRON GREEN  
Zürich

### MORE STRESSFUL FACTORS IN THE SIMCHA EQUATION

To the Editor:

Your article, "The Ultimate *Shidduch*," by Rabbi David Willig (Dec. '93), brought out some excellent points. I would like to add something to the "set of stressful questions" on the part of the guests.

What about the question, "If you invite us to your *simcha*, can we afford to invite you back to our *simcha*?" After all, that is the prevailing protocol in our circles. The problem is that there are many well-meaning hosts who *can* afford to make large *chasunas*, and therefore like to have everyone they know share their *simcha*. Perhaps they overlook the possibility that some of these people, who would not have invited them to their own *simcha*, now feel obligated to do so. (Examples: Relatives and family of *mechutanim*, old friends to whom they haven't spoken in years, people whom they see in *shul*, bungalow colony acquaintances, married friends of their older married children, children of their friends etc.)

Trends that are hard to stop are often started by people who just want to make others feel good. Another example of this would be a friend who tries to get everyone to "chip in" for her good friend's baby present, not realizing that now her good friend will have to buy baby presents for all those who "chipped in" for her present.

It is for this reason, and the other reasons pointed out in the article, that *ba'alei simcha* should not only

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consider carefully whom to invite to their *simcha*, but who *not* to invite.

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**"GOOD NEWS FROM ISRAEL?":  
A MISINTERPRETATION**

To the Editor

Although Yonason Rosenblum is most incisive in his criticism of the Guttman study in his article "Good News From Israel?" (JO, April '94), I think that he understates the assault on Torah values and the extent of the danger to Torah society in Israel posed by the study and its proponents.

The study was commissioned with a specific agenda: to demonstrate that the friction between the observant and secular in Israeli society is created by the false perception each side has of the degree to which they lack shared values. The foregone conclusion of the Report is that since "in reality" they share much in common, the observant Jews need only to learn more tolerance to facilitate *Shalom* and beneficial interaction—an approach that is in consonance with a certain prevailing religious ideology in Israel.

This ideology, however, as well as the study commissioned to confirm it, is not only flawed but potentially dangerous to the spiritual welfare of all Israeli society; the irony is that the findings that the study laud are the very elements that have created divisiveness between observant and secular groups in the first place. Torah-observant Jewry in Israel is fighting for the purity of its spiritual identity. That distinction, with all its precious and exacting nuances, becomes threatened when its ritual trappings devoid of their Torah content are coopted by a competing religion of secular and national identification. It is precisely because Jewish symbolism devoid of content pervades Israeli society that the Torah observant in Israel are instinctively so strident in their rejection of the secular community.

Indeed, observant and secular Jews do have much in common, but this commonality is not at all repre-

sented by the shared repertoire in Israel of Jewish symbols; on the contrary, this only creates spiritual confusion and foments division.

YOEL ABRAMOVITZ  
Sullivan County, NY

**Correction**

In the article on Rabbi Mordechai Schwab, זצ"ל, the name in footnote #6 (p.31) should have read: Dr. Robert Guggenheim.

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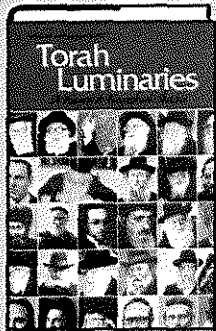
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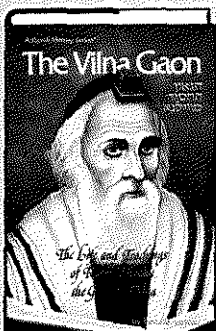
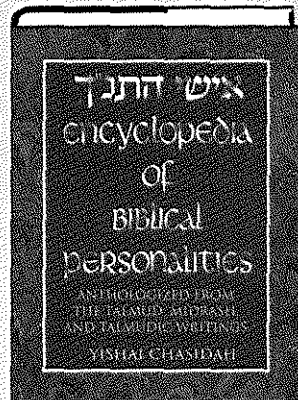
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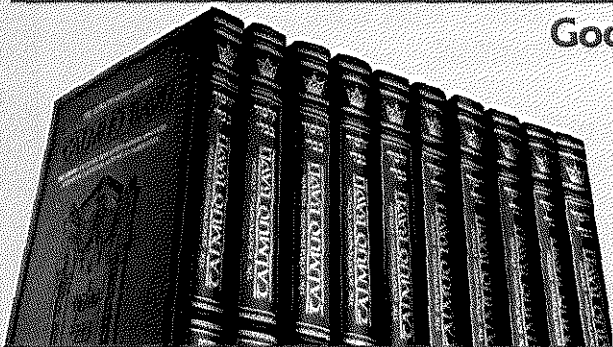


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