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THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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— an analysis

Rebbe Yochanan and the Substance of Life
— A Shavuos essay

The American Jewish Community
— as the AJC sees it

Gateway to the Past
— a man views his old seforim

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THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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Nosson Scherman

The Crisis of Leadership

Leadership in Jewish society traditionally commanded a respectful following. Today—as teachers, principals, rabbis, and communal leaders testify—this leadership is suffering a loss of authority.—What is the source of this phenomenon?—What are its implications?

Teachers and Students

"If the teacher is like an angel of the Lord of Hosts, seek to learn Torah from him; and if not, seek not to learn Torah from him." *Chagiga 15b*

THIS MAXIM OF OUR SAGES is often used to exhort Torah leaders and teachers to perfect themselves lest they be unworthy of their august calling. Anyone who, in effect, says, "Do as I say, not as I do" is justly reviled, but this truism is far more valid when applied to the teacher of Torah. While Torah is the loftiest and deepest form of wisdom, it is far more than mere wisdom. "If someone tells you that there is wisdom among the nations, believe it; but if someone tells you that there is Torah among the nations, do *not* believe it." Torah elevates and purifies; to learn Torah merely as an intellectual exercise is to degrade it. So it is not at all surprising that the highest standards are required of those who would undertake the task of teaching it — even that they be comparable, as much as any human being can be, to Heavenly angels.

There is another side to this saying of our Sages. It is equally true that in order to accept Torah from a teacher, the student must look upon the teacher as being on a par with the angels. The *rebbi-talmid* relationship must imply a hierarchical relationship: the student is exhorted to accept his teacher as a model.

RABBI SCHERMAN, *principal of the Yeshiva Karlin-Stolin of Brooklyn, serves as editor of* Olomeinu, *Torah Umesorah's magazine for children. He is a frequent contributor to these pages.*

The Talmud and Jewish history tell of students who served and observed their teachers even in the most mundane activities. If the teacher is like an angel, then all of his acts are angel-like. If he is truly a product of Torah, then Torah values permeate every part of him and make his every act worthy of emulation. A teacher of Torah is also a role model for his disciples.

Leaders and Followers

THIS IS AS TRUE in society as a whole as it is in the classroom. To lead, one must strive to live up to the role, but he must also be accepted and followed.

Our Sages tell us how some Jews in the desert criticized every aspect of Moshe Rabbeinu's conduct — even his personal life; in fact, Moshe rendered a detailed accounting of the gifts collected for the *Mishkan* lest he be accused of diverting funds for his own use. We can be certain, however, that the prevalent attitude of the Jews in the desert was not one of loss of trust. Had it been so, even Moshe could not have led them, as was demonstrated by a telling aspect of Korach's rebellion.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch points out that when Korach and his followers challenged the legitimacy of the leadership of Moshe and Aaron, Moshe did not answer him; he fell to the ground silently. Hirsch explains that there was nothing for Moshe to say. If Korach were truly sincere, as Moshe originally thought he was, then what could Moshe say? — "No, Korach, I am not a charlatan"? — "I did not seek glory for myself

and my brother"? — "I was truly carrying out the commands of Hashem"? No protestations of innocence would have mattered if there had been a lack of confidence in Moshe's honesty. Rhetoric and polemic alone do not constitute leadership, and they can never compensate for the lost allegiance of the governed. If, as Moshe feared, he had lost the trust of the people, then he had also lost the ability to lead them. It was only when Moshe realized the insincerity of Korach and his people that he replied that they were but selfish would-be usurpers of power.

There is no need to document the ceaseless striving of our great men to be "angel-like" in their character and behavior. It is axiomatic to the Torah Jew that a *Gadol B'Yisroel* must be great not only in learning, but in character, consistency and behavior, as well. But those who were leaders as well as great men would frequently also impress the duty of subservience upon their followers.

* When a *halachic* dispute arose concerning the date of Yom Kippur, Rabban Gamliel, the governing *Nasi* (prince) ordered his disputant to travel to him with stick in hand on his (the disputant's) Yom Kippur, to demonstrate that the authority of the *Nasi* must be respected.

* The Talmud relates of a teacher who asked his questioner to render him a personal service before his question would be answered. Here, too, the rabbi felt that subservience must be expressed before he could gain the necessary degree of acceptance from his questioner.

The Fall of Leadership

A SIMILAR TWO-PRONGED APPROACH is generally accepted by non-Jewish cultures. A leader, a public official, a teacher is expected to maintain higher standards of conduct than others. He is expected to grow into his office and be worthy of it. In equal measure, the follower, the citizen, the student is expected to observe certain conventions of respect and obedience. If not, the system would break down.

For example, the judiciary is expected to command the greatest respect of all branches of government. In no small measure this is achieved by surrounding the judge with an aura of majesty — his special garb, his formality, the extraordinary respect that law and custom demand for him. This is successful despite the tendency, at least in the United States, to award judgeships for faithful and obedient political service, rather than for superior intellect and competence in the law.

The same expectation of higher standards of conduct has traditionally attached itself to everyone in the public eye — not only teachers and political leaders, but even sports stars and entertainers. Times are changing, though, and the vibrations are being felt in almost every layer of society. Some leaders have proved themselves unworthy of adulation. The public has ceased to expect exemplary behavior from either Caesar or his wife. And the super-structure of society seems to be wavering.

Sports Heroes. . .

LET US EXAMINE SOME of the specific attitudinal changes that have taken place in American life — and have spread like an epidemic to the rest of the world — in recent decades. Most Americans over thirty-five recall the public relations image of the sports heroes of their youth. They were really heroes, both on and off the field. They would visit sick youngsters in hospitals, bringing autographed baseballs and promising to hit homeruns. They were faithful husbands and doting fathers. They sometimes had a weakness for inhuman amounts of frankfurters, but that was just about it.

Reality was usually far from the candy-coated images. They had all the weaknesses of the flesh and spirit, and were subjected to — and often conquered by — the temptations that follow every human being who is suddenly overwhelmed by an excess of money and adulation without having the education or guidance to cope with it.

Millions of Americans were raised with Babe Ruth as their idol — a superbly successful athlete with all the nice-guy instincts that have been baked into the centuries of apple pie America. A recent biography of the Babe reveals him to have been a lecherous, selfish, inconsiderate glutton who drove his first wife to the verge of a nervous breakdown.

But to kids, the Bambino, like the other Pied Pipers of sports, represented morality, generosity, and good humor, leading youthful followers down a road of clean living. Of course, American life was far from an unflawed idyll; nevertheless, the image concocted by press agents did much to perpetuate the "nice-guy" characterization of the nation that was so commonly accepted at home and abroad.

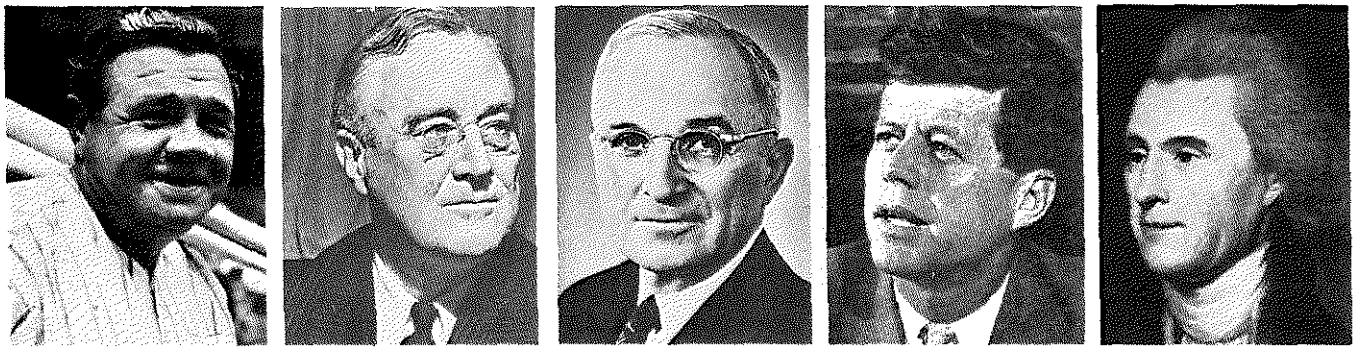
Contrast that with the image today's sports heroes project. The world heavyweight boxing champion is a racist braggart. Baseball stars outdo one another in pursuit of the buck. Football and hockey players glory in their ability to maim opposing players. Basketball players revel in their reputations as swingers. What matters is not whether they are worse than their forebears, but that violence and vileness are projected as legitimate means to success and reputable fruits of its attainment.

. . .And Political Idols

SPORTS IS VERY SIGNIFICANT because of its attraction to young people and the role of star athletes in molding the thinking and values of youngsters. But the same shifts of attitudes are found in most other fields. Even outside the current post-Watergate backlash, there is scarcely a great or near-great President who has not become the whipping boy of a school of historians.

The so-called revisionist historians are turning Truman, not Stalin, into the villain of the Cold War.

Where have all the heroes gone?



. . . and how has this effected Jewry?

Franklin D. Roosevelt has been exposed as a heartless philanderer in Joseph P. Lash's *Eleanor and Franklin.*

The much adulated John F. Kennedy has recently been reviled in *Conversations With Kennedy,* by Benjamin Bradlee, one of his cohorts, and portrayed as a worse cusser and conniver than any of his successors.

Thomas Jefferson, perhaps most brilliant and surely most versatile of all American presidents, was also admired for his exemplary morality and unmarred loyalty to his wife — even after her passing. And now, in *Jefferson — An Intimate Biography,* Fawn Brodie attempts to prove that Jefferson had a darker, less savory side. The end result is one more hero cut down to size. His frailties and hypocrisies illuminated, Jefferson becomes just another hustler who won high office by hiding the truth from his adoring countrymen.

Moral Outrage and Disintegration of the Law

MANY THINKERS HAVE TRIED to trace the beginnings of the current malaise of leadership and followership, the willingness to debunk heroes and the unwillingness to follow leaders. One astute social commentator remarked that the seeds of disaffection were sown by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Martin Luther King who legitimized lawbreaking. In protesting unfair and discriminatory practices by violating laws, courting arrest, and eventually winning vindication in the courts of public opinion and of law, King made it respectable to give conscience (real or imagined) ascendency over the established order.

When the Reverend King became accepted as a great moral leader, it was almost inevitable that others would emulate him. Their ends were different from his — and so were their means. So the headlines told of lawbreaking on a world-wide scale, for furthering causes like pot smoking, ending the War, breaking the authority of school officials, restoring power to the people, and so on. And the methods extended to bombing, destructive sit-ins, hijacking, and taking of hostages. The rhetoric was always that of peace, freedom, and equal rights, resulting in a Doublespeak that has given currency to such outrageous concepts as "Jewish oppression of minorities" and "unfair exclusion" of unqualified people from jobs and professions traditionally associated with merit and skill.

The once revered symbol of national legitimacy and greatness, the Presidency of the United States, was also pulled down from its lofty pedestal and pelted with ridicule and contempt. Lyndon Johnson was, in effect, forced to abdicate the Presidency; he declined to run for re-election in 1968 because he was physically unable to campaign. So virulent and violent had the anti-war movement become that the President of the United States was virtually a prisoner in the White House. He could not even appear at the national convention of his own party for fear of sparking riots.

Watergate, and the unsavory behavior it came to symbolize, drove the prestige of all levels of government and general leadership to new lows. Watergate investigations and prosecutions are praised as a great triumph for freedom. But like most victories, it was bought at a heavy price. The President, governors, mayors, and legislators simply do not command the trust and allegiance effective government requires. They do not even get the benefit of the doubt.

The range of crises that face every nation boggles the mind. They can not even be dealt with, much less be solved, unless the people have confidence in those charged with finding the solutions. Yet, the last few decades have left political leaders with less credit cards than they have had in a century.

Of course, arguments are made, and legitimately so, that the disgrace of government is a product of its own arrogance, bad judgment, and ineptitude. That may well be the case. But the end result is still that the old respect

and acceptance has ebbed, leaders do not necessarily feel the moral weight of their calling, the broad masses do not feel compelled to follow, and the wheels of society are no longer geared to interlock and turn.

A Transfer of Learning to Jewry

THERE IS A TIME LAG, of course, but Jews do manage to be affected by prevalent attitudes. Disrespect for law and vested authority has crept into our own outlook. And it has infected our feelings toward Torah leadership too. To be sure, there are more differences than similarities between a Torah leadership and a secular leadership. The whole range of pettiness, self-service and duplicity is not present, nor is there opportunity to dupe the people into submission, for Torah leaders are not elected by popular appeal, but by recognition of their superiors and their peers. And the standards of selection encompass perfection of character and adherence to *mitzvos* as much as expert command of the area of leadership: Torah knowledge. Personal charisma and marketability of smile simply do not enter as selection criteria. Yet the social disorder of the market place has entered the Torah society.

The problems facing society at large weigh heavily upon Jews and we are often confused between a general and a Jewish response to these problems. The media invade our homes and minds to an unprecedented degree. Countless more Orthodox Jews carefully read *The New York Times Magazine* than read the handful of serious Torah-oriented publications. We are preconditioned to accept currently fashionable views and policies. Add to that the general breakdown in the acceptance of authority and tradition that is seeping into Jewish society, and there is a crisis in the acceptance of leaders. This is felt by parents, teachers, rabbis, roshei yeshiva, and chassidic leaders, and the pronouncements of Gedolei Torah have the scales heavily weighted against them at best. Of course, this crisis is not equally prevalent in all quarters of Jewish life. The great yeshivos and chassidic communities, among others, are still, relatively speaking, bastions of strength. But the problem exists and unfortunately may become even more acute, even threatening to erode the most secure strongholds, as any teacher, rebbe, or principal, any rabbi or community leader could verify.

The Torah Stake in Leadership

WHILE SOCIETY AT LARGE desperately needs strong and effective leadership to function, Jewry can even less afford a breakdown in authority. The Book of Ruth begins, *"And it was in the days of the judging of the Judges, and there was a famine in the land."*

The Talmud asked, what is meant by "judging of the Judges"? Rabbi Yochanan replied that it was a generation that judged its leaders. If the judge said (figuratively), "Remove the splinter from between your teeth," a person would answer, "Remove the beam from between your eyes" (*Baba Basra* 15b).

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Chasman זצ"ל, the great *Mashgiach* of the Yeshiva of Chevron, commented on the connection between this lesson and the coming of a famine: When a person dies of starvation, he may look perfectly well to the casual observer. His body will not be mutilated or mangled by wounds, but he is dead just the same, for hunger kills as surely as a bullet. The prophet is telling us that a lack of respect for leadership — the arrogant response that the leaders are even worse — is akin to death by physical starvation. The generation without leadership may seem healthy. It may not be obviously decadent or corrupt. But if it refuses to accept the authority of its leaders, it faces a spiritual death just as surely as the victims of famine face physical death.

History bears out Reb Leib. The decline of contemporary society bears him out further.

There is little that we Torah Jews can do to strengthen the moral authority of secular leaders. We should never forget, however, that the destiny of the universe is not determined in either the White House or the Kremlin, and the touchstone to true social stability lies elsewhere. Our sages have taught us that the Torah and mitzvos of the Jewish people are ultimately the determining factors.

Beyond this, the Torah specifically enjoins each generation to accept the authority of its own contemporary elders and priests. In this injunction there is a deeper motive than the plea of a former President that the nation support him because "I'm the only President you have." To the nation of Torah, leadership has far greater significance. As the first *Mishna* in *Avos* makes clear, succeeding generations are Hashem's means for perpetuating Torah. The concept of *Mesora* contains far more than adherence to tradition through ancestor worship. "The Torah that is in our hands today is the one that was given to our teacher, Moshe" — this is one of the basic elements of our belief. And it is in our hands today because of the chain of the *Mesora* — the Torah authorities of each generation who received the Torah from their predecessors and hand it on to their successors. Through the spectrum of our leaders the light of Torah is refracted to illuminate the problems and conditions of each generation. But always there was the firm belief that "The Torah that is in our hands today is the one that was given to our teacher, Moshe."

Without this belief, we could not claim legitimacy as a Torah nation. Without the concept of *Mesora* we Jews would be left with an august group of founding fathers who somehow met the needs of their own particular times and whose views could scarcely have validity, much less be binding, on later generations.

Particular Needs of Each Generation

THE CHAZON ISH HELD that recently discovered *halachic* manuscripts could not be used to change the accepted and defined *halacha* because Divine Providence has made available to each generation whatever texts were

necessary for its *poskim* to decide the law. A corrollary of that view is that the decisions of each generation are endowed with the Divine guidance to chart the course of Jewry and Judaism. This is reflected in statements such as "The emanations of Moshe exist in every generation" and "Yiftach (one of the minor Judges) is as great in his generation as Shmuel in his."

The meaning is plain. Leadership has a special meaning to Torah Jews. It is our link with Sinai, our grip on Torah, our guarantee of eternity. Spiritual anarchy is expensive enough a luxury for any people; for Jews it is nothing less than suicide by means of starvation

The pitfalls of every age are a Heavenly test of the nation of Torah. Whatever the lapses society displays, we are challenged to rise above them. Of all society's ills, none is more grievious than the fall of leadership; for us to follow their lead like a nations of lemmings is far worse than folly. Lest we fall into the worst kind of trap, we must raise our sights to the Torah leaders, and reaffirm our allegiance to the *Mesora* they embody.

On the practical level, we must — as an item of first priority — strengthen our acceptance of the moral authority of our own Torah leaders and act to enhance their prestige. We must consciously and constantly seek ways to teach *emunas chachomim* and *derech eretz* to our children, and structure our society under a hierarchy crowned by our Torah leadership.

It is not sufficient to rejoin, as so many do, that there is a shortage of great leaders. Of course there is; as a nation we have hardly begun to recover from the Holocaust. Indeed, the almost complete destruction of European Torah leaders is making itself felt more and more in the scarcity of Torah giants to back up those of the senior generation.

The fact is, however, that there is an emerging generation of leaders who are fully capable of taking their place in the chain of *Mesora*. Some of the most famous names on the yeshiva map under the guidance of outstanding scholars, were not even outposts twenty years ago, and premature obituaries for some historic chassidic communities have been torn up as dynamic young rebbes have risen to bring about a rebirth of faith and allegiance. However serious the real or imagined dearth of leaders may be, it is the dearth of followers that is potentially fatal.

The leaders are here; it is for us to follow. By allowing them to forge ahead without constantly looking over their shoulder to see if we are still there, we will turn spiritual famine into plenty, spiritual suicide into resurgence. □

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Nisson Wolpin

The UOJCA, The Synagogue Council of America, and the Wave of the Future

THERE IS A FLOW IN Jewish life that interlocks the current with the past and the future. Sometimes the flow is so swift that one is flooded by the rush of events. Other times there is an ebbing — a seeming retreat or tragic loss, which can be deceptive, for if it also serves as a regrouping of forces, it can prove to be only a temporary setback. Not every immediate loss is a defeat when the past is ultimately interpreted by the future.

When the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America had ended its year-long suspension of membership in the Synagogue Council of America last month, an air of gloom hung over the proceedings. Just a year beforehand, on February 11, 1974, the status quo of nearly forty years' standing was shaken and there was a hope that the Union would finally ally itself with mainstream full-blooded Orthodoxy, rather than with "mainstream American Jewry," and end its membership in the SCA with unequivocal finality.

There Was Hope. . .

THERE WAS HOPE that after two decades of silence, the proudly proclaimed spokesbody for Orthodox synagogues would take to heart the *psak din* (reprinted at right) of eleven leading Roshei Yeshiva, which twenty years ago declared in no uncertain terms that it is forbidden by Torah law to belong to the SCA — or to any formal religious group with membership from both the Orthodox and deviant groups (i.e. Conservative and Reform).

There was hope that its leadership would admit to what so many other groups saw as obvious: working in concert with Conservative and Reform groups in a religious framework grants them recognition, notwithstanding all protestations to the contrary. Membership in the SCA *prima facie* accepts that there are three branches of Judaism, that Reform and Conservative Judaism are just alternate strains of Judaic worship; while the *Mesora* (the Sinaitic tradition) says that there is no branch of Judaic thought that countenances partial acceptance of Torah — picking this, rejecting that, denying the divinity of the Torah — even in some cases denying a personal G-d. . . .The Reform and Conservative Movements are guilty of these deviations. They may be religious expressions, but they are *not* branches of authentic Judaism.

To be sure, there are those who beg the issue, claiming that the Synagogue Council of America is an impotent relic from earlier days; if so, what compels the UOJCA to maintain its membership in it? Others apologize, saying that unity is of highest priority during these current crisis-ridden times, and promoting divisions among Jews is destructive; yet, a Jewry in trouble must be all the more certain that it understands itself, that its unity is authentic and is fully based on Torah-structured values, that it does not sell its soul for "unity." For a unity that embraces non-Judaic values, that denies R' Saadia Gaon's "We are only a people because of Torah," is a unity that destroys the very fabric of Jewish nationhood.

There was a hope that the Union would stop pretending that the Synagouge Council of America (a council of *synagogues,* mind you) is not an organization based on *religious* cooperation, as its very name implies, but simply a *klapei chutz* — outward-directed organization, as it has been maintaining over the years; that it is no different from the countless religiously-neutral associations aimed at reaping social, economic, or political benefits for their constituent organizations. This claim is a canard as was vividly demonstrated by the meeting between SCA officials Rabbis Henry Siegman and Joseph H. Lookstein, and Pope Paul VI, as reported in the *SCA Action Memo* (February '75):

> *A meeting with Pope Paul VI culminated the fourth annual consultation between the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) and the Vatican Commission on Relations with Jews. Rabbi Henry Siegman, Executive Vice President of the Synagogue Council of America, who, together with Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, presided over the four-day consultation, attended the meeting with the Pope. Rabbi Lookstein, who is a Vice President of the Synagogue Council of America, is the current chairman of IJCIC.*

(Every leader of authority in Orthodox Jewry, without exception, condemns inter-group dialogues, and

yet the SCA, with its Union constituents in tow, remains in the forefront of promoting this "external activity" of far-reaching internal ramifications.)

> *. . .The Jewish delegation expressed appreciation for several aspects of the [Vatican's] Guidelines [on Jewry and Judaism] including the. . .call for join social action.*

Which, by the Guideline's own definition, is but a means to foster mutual understanding and esteem — in keeping, beyond doubt, with the Church's mission to "redeem" and proselytize.

There was hope that the UOJCA would finally accept the potency of the force of *emes*—regardless of relative weakness of numbers; that it would come to recognize the new-found boldness, articulation and sense of purpose that American Orthodoxy has gained since those pioneering days in America when a sense of inferiority compelled the UOJCA to seek coverage under interreligious associations. But unfortunately, this was not yet the case.

Flying in the face of emerging realities and a long-ago issued written *psak halacha*, a majority of the UOJCA Board of Directors — convening on the mandate of the membership body's decision at its biennial November

---

To dispel the confusion in the minds of many Jews as to the precise nature of the p'sak din, we are publishing the exact text with an English translation.

פסק־דין

בעזהי"ת

כאשר נשאלנו מכמה רבנים במדינה ומכמה חניכי ומוסמכי הישיבות אם מותר להשתתף ולהיות חבר ב„ניו יורק באארד אוו ראבייס" וכמו כן במוסדות דומים לזה בשאר עיירות, אשר הם מורכבים יחד עם „ראבייס" הריפורמים והקונסרבטיבים.

והנה בהתאספנו יחד לברר הענין יצא מאתנו כי אסור על פי דין תוה"ק להיות חבר ולהשתתף בארגון כזה.

כמו כן נשאלנו אם מותר להשתתף ולהיות חבר ב„סינאגאג קאונסיל באמריקה" אשר הוא מורכב ג"כ עם ארגוני הריפורמים והקונסרבטיבים.

ויצא מאתנו כי אסור ע"פ דין תוה"ק להשתתף עמהם בין בתור יחיד בין בתור גוש ארגון צבורי.

והשי"ת ירחם עמו ויגדיר פרצותינו ונזכה להרמת קרן תורה"ק וישראל.

ולראי' חתמנו יום ד', פ' כי תשא
ח"י אדר תשט"ז, פה ניו יורק.

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— יעקב יצחק הלוי רודרמן
— יצחק הוטנר
— מנחם יוסף זקס
— משה פיינשטיין

We have been asked by a number of rabbis in the country and by alumni and *musmochim* of yeshivos, if it is permissible to participate with and be a member of The New York Board of Rabbis and similar groups in other communities, which are composed of Reform and Conservative 'rabbis'.

Having gathered together to clarify this matter, it has been ruled by the undersigned that it is forbidden by the law of our sacred Torah to be a member of and to participate in such an organization.

We have also been asked if it is permissible to participate with and to be a member of the Synagogue Council of America, which is also composed of Reform and Conservative organizations.

We have ruled that it is forbidden by the law of our sacred Torah to participate with them either as an individual or as an organized communal body.

May *Hashem Yisborach* have mercy on His people, and seal the breaches [in Torah life] and may we be worthy of the elevation of the glory of our sacred Torah and our people Israel.

Signed this fifth day, the week of *Parshas Ki Seesoh*, the Eighteenth day of Adar, 5716, in the City of New York.

— *Avrohom Joffen*
— *Avraham Kalmanowitz*
— *Ahron Kotler*
— *Gedalia Shorr*
— *David Lifshutz*
— *Chaim Mordecai Katz*
— *Yaakov Kominetsky*
— *Yaakov Yitzchok Halevi Ruderman*
— *Yitzchok Hutner*
— *Menachem Yosef Zachs*
— *Moshe Feinstein*

The UOJCA affirmed after its vote that there was no question that "it never had and never will recognize the religious legitimacy or authority of the Reform and Conservative movements." In other words, it wanted to have it both ways: joining deviant groups, but not recognizing their legitimacy.

The Reform constituent of the Synagogue Council has its view:

> **Albert Vorspan, vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (Reform) was "delighted" that the UOJCA was "coming back," but said that to "deny the legitimacy of a movement in Judaism" was "a retrogression to some medieval time."**
>
> **The statement was "outrageous," he went on, and "strikes at the heart of the spirit of mutual responsibility and religious pluralism which should be the basis for any kind of cooperation identified with the Jewish community."**

The love generated by the U.O.J.C.A.'s unity-seeking move was none too passionately reciprocated by the Conservatives:

> **Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, executive vice president of the Rabbinical Assembly, the international association of Conservative rabbis, declared that the U.O.J.C.A. "has been consistent: the manner in which [it] announced the suspension from the Council was graceless, and [the] statement of return is equally graceless." But "we will cooperate out of love for *klal Yisroel* (the totality of the Jewish people)."**

quotations from the AMERICAN EXAMINER-JEWISH WEEKLY - *March 15, 1975*

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convention in Boca Raton — voted to resume active participation in the SCA.

Some Unusual Features

WHILE THE UNCONSCIONABLE *chillul Hashem* of actively renewing a course of conduct in defiance of Torah leadership was not muted by the circumstances of the vote, the pain was somewhat softened, for there were some unusual features surrounding the UOJCA's vote.

First of all, almost all of the delegates who were forty or under voted for permanent withdrawal from the SCA. Those over fifty voted overwhelmingly for a return to active participation. The implication is obvious. The generation of yeshiva-educated laymen is coming of age, and the wave of the future is with them. These are American Jews who are secure enough in their own convictions not to feel impelled to seek the acceptance of their spiritual opponents—the Conservatives and the Reform. More important, they revere the word of the Torah leadership, and would not contemplate defying a *psak halacha* rendered by the Brisker Rav, Rabbi Aharon Kotler—and the other great leaders who joined in issuing the *psak*—a written *psak*, incidentally, which in two decades has not been challenged by any other leading Torah authority, notwithstanding whisper campaigns to the contrary.

Another element to consider: the pro-SCA forces were mainly mustered by the members of the Rabbinical Council of America — the rabbinical arm of the UOJCA, which consists of American educated rabbis, primarily graduates of Yeshiva University. It is unlikely that the leadership of the RCA considers itself the equal of the Torah giants who had issued the *psak halacha* twenty years ago, or of those who have maintained the leadership of the Torah community. The members of the RCA are endowed with the ability to communicate effectively to their congregants and it is bitterly disappointing when they do not use the opportunity to direct them toward firmer loyalty to Torah — even inviting them to emulate their own rabbis' conduct in defying Torah law. It is a sad comment on the communal scene if the rabbinical group proves to be an albatross around the neck of the lay body. It will be even more ludicrous if, when the Union ultimately quits the SCA, the Rabbinical Council of America repeats its conduct of the past year, and remains an active member there.

But the gloom surrounding the UOJCA's recent vote hopefully will be of short duration, for if the indicators are being interpreted correctly, the tally of 68 to 56 eventually will be more than reversed, and the overwhelming majority of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America will respond to the voice of Torah, taking yet another step toward fulfilling its professed role as an authentic central body for Orthodox synagogues. □

A Shavuos Essay

Rebbe Yochanan, Torah, and the Substance of Life

based on a lecture by Mordechai Miller

"Who is the man wise enough to understand why the Land was so utterly destroyed? G-d answers, It is because they left My Torah." (Jeremiah 9;11)

IT IS NOT difficult to understand that *Eretz Yisroel* was destroyed by Nebuchadnetzar because the Jews left the Torah. Why is a particularly wise man required to understand this? The Gemora says *Eretz Yisroel* was not destroyed because people stopped learning Torah—indeed, there was much *limud HaTorah* in Jeremiah's time—but because when people learned, they did not make a *bracha* first. That is, adds the Gemora, Torah was not important enough in their eyes to warrant saying a *bracha* over it.

Let us look at the life of one man for whom Torah did have a consuming importance: Rebbe Yochanan. The *Medrash* says that Rebbe Yochanan was once walking in the country with Rebbe Chiya Bar Abba. They passed a field and Rebbe Yochanan said, "I used to own that field, but I sold it so that I could learn Torah." They passed a vineyard, and Rebbe Yochanan said, "I once owned that vineyard, but I had to sell it so I could continue to learn Torah." Finally, they passed an olive grove, and Rebbe Yochanan told Rebbe Chiya that he had once owned that olive grove as well. Rebbe Chiya shed tears out of sympathy for Rebbe Yochanan. "You once had so much property," he said, "and now you are an old man unprovided for, and you have nothing left!"

Rebbe Yochanan assured Rebbe Chiya that his pity was misplaced, saying, "I did not sell my property for a light sum. I sold something that was created in six days for something that was created in forty days." Rebbe Yochanan's land was created in the first six days of Creation; but Moshe Rabbeinu spent forty days on Mount Sinai before he received the Torah.

Forty days is also the period of the formation of a child; for example, for forty days after conception, an expectant mother can pray that the child will be of the sex she desires, but after that time, the child is formed beyond possible change, and it is useless to pray further. When one buys land, one remains the same person, with more property. But when one acquires Torah, he is not the same person with more knowledge; he is a new person, like a child newly formed.

Rebbe Yochanan had no regrets over having sold his land, because he felt he had acquired in exchange something infinitely more precious.

A GEMARA in *Baba Metsia* sheds more light on the extent to which Rebbe Yochanan prized the Torah. This *Gemara* tells us that Resh Lakish was a student, a close friend, and a lifelong learning companion of Rebbe Yochanan. But Resh Lakish died young, and Rebbe Yochanan was overwhelmed with grief. The *rabbanan*, worried over Rebbe Yochanan's health, decided that his grief could only be assuaged if a suitable learning companion could be found for him, to replace Resh Lakish. They sent Rebbe Elazar ben Padas, who had a brilliant mind, to learn with Rebbe Yochanan.

Whatever Rebbe Yochanan said, Rebbe Elazar would say, "Yes, you're right," and immediately cite twenty-four sources supporting Rebbe Yochanan's statement. Rebbe Yochanan became terribly annoyed and said, "Do you think you're consoling me? When I learned with Resh Lakish, he argued with everything I said. No matter what I said, he had twenty-four questions, doubts, arguments. He forced me to defend every step of my reasoning, until we achieved a deeper understanding of the topic." Rebbe Yochanan began to walk agitatedly up and down the room, tearing his clothes, and crying, "Where are you, Resh Lakish? Where are you, Resh Lakish? I can't live without you, I must have Resh Lakish to learn with!" When the *rabbanan* saw how inconsolable Rebbe Yochanan was, they asked G-d to take his soul away, and their prayer was answered.

THE MERE FACT that Rebbe Yochanan could not get over the loss of his *chavrusa* does not in itself show the depth of Rebbe Yochanan's devotion to Torah. There

RABBI MILLER, *is vice-principal of the Jewish Teachers Training College of Gateshead, England. His two-volume* "Shabbos Shiurim" *is a collection of essays on* hashkafa. *This article is based on a lecture delivered during a recent trip to the United States.*

are, after all, very emotional and sentimental people who are completely wiped out by the loss of anyone close to them. Was Rebbe Yochanan that sort of person?

A *Gemara* in *Brachos* answers that question. It says that Rebbe Yochanan once paid a sick call on Rebbe Elazar, and found the latter not only ill, but deeply depressed. Rebbe Yochanan attempted to comfort him. "If you are crying because you think you have not learned enough," he said, "there's no need. 'Whether one offers more or less does not matter, as long as each person directs his heart to heaven.' That you did your best is what counts. If you're crying over poverty, you can at least take comfort in the fact that you *are* a *talmid chochom,* and your reward is yet to come. Or are you crying because you have no children?" And here Rebbe Yochanan took a little bone out of his pocket. "This bone is all I have left of ten children. All my children died in my lifetime, yet you see I can still learn, I am still cheerful, I go on living."

A soft, sentimental person would not carry around the bone of his tenth child; he would not want to be reminded of his loss. Any time he thought of his children, he would burst into tears; and he would never recover enough to be able to visit others in distress and attempt to comfort them. Clearly, Rebbe Yochanan was a man of iron. He could stand the loss of his ten children . . . but he could not stand the loss of his friend, the person with whom he had learned Torah. To Rebbe Yochanan, Torah was life.

WHEN NAOMI tried to persuade Ruth to return to her own homeland Ruth said, literally, "Don't press me, don't press me to go home." But in *Tanach,* the word אל תפגעי בי has another meaning: פגע בו means "He killed him." To Ruth, following Naomi was a matter of life and death. She felt that if she could not live a life of Torah, she would die. Torah is life; it is not just one *way* of life among many; it is not just a *preparation* for life.

One does not make a *bracha* on a *hechsher mitzva,* on a preparation for a *mitzva,* but only on a *mitzva* itself. For example, one does not make a *bracha* on a *succah* when he begins to build it, but only when he is sitting in the completed *succah.*

The Jews of Jeremiah's time learned Torah, but they did not make a *bracha* on it. They felt that learning Torah was a *hechsher mitzva,* a preparation for life, an education. They did not understand that Torah was—and is—life itself. □

prepared for publication by TOBY BULMAN

The American Jewish Community

— *an AJC View*

IMAGINE A CLEARLY WRITTEN, well-organized booklet describing the nebulous American Jewish Community, in forty handsomely laid-out pages. What a boon it would be to outside groups attempting to deal with Jews; to government agencies and philanthropic organizations responding to Jewish needs; to Jews trying to understand how their own community functions. The America Jewish Congress, in conjunction with the World Jewish Congress, has recently published a handsome booklet, prepared by Will Maslow, under the title "The Structure and Functioning of the American Jewish Community." Unfortunately, instead of filling the need, Mr. Maslow's booklet only makes the prospect of such a publication much more unlikely—the appearance of one such booklet will discourage any attempts to bother with another attempt. In addition, a host of misinformation is contained in its pages, and most likely it will be taken at face value. Especially since the World Jewish Congress has added its imprimatur to this booklet.

It is simple enough to thumb through the pages and find either distortions of fact or omissions. And it is not much more difficult to find a distinct pattern of prejudice and bigotry. We will sample from the errors, and the pattern will prove itself.

- In his chapter on "Social Characteristics," Mr. Maslow finds that *"The high intermarriage rate among Jews has brought about . . . [a] situation in which a high proportion of non-Jews married to Jews are willing to raise their children to the Jewish faith—with or without their own formal conversion to Judaism"*(p.10). Is it conceivable that a non-Jewish father can succeed in bringing up a child Jewishly?—that his wife, who married out of her faith, would even care to try? And when the wife is the non-converted non-Jewess, how does she raise her non-Jewish child "in the Jewish faith"?

- *"Cleveland, St. Louis and Newark have practically no Jews left in the cities proper"* (p.10). The Cleveland Heights section of that city is the scene of an unusually vibrant Jewish community in a racially mixed area. . . .It makes one quick to agree that, as many claim, Establish-

ment Jewry *preaches* integration while Orthodox Jewry *lives* it—unbeknown to the people in the "high windows."

• In "Organizational Variety," Mr. Maslow gives no mention to such active Orthodox groups as Young Israel, Association of Orthodox Jewish (Public School) Teachers (AOJT), and the Commission on Law and Public Affairs (COLPA). *("Only the Conservative and Reform groups have established commissions on social action"*—Maslow, p.23.) Perhaps his concept of the full expanse of the Jewish Community is based on his automobile trip from his home on Manhattan's East 86th St. to the AJC offices on East 84th and Fifth Avenue—with occasional side trips to the American Civil Liberties Union. So he may simply be unaware that they exist. But the AJC has vigorously opposed Agudath Israel's stand on government aid to private education in courts up and down the land, and both organizations have been sparring publicly for many years. Maslow's failure to mention Agudath Israel could not simply be ignorance. True, Agudath Israel does not meet Maslow's criterion of "being well-funded," as are the other national agencies; its concept of "separation of church and state" would not agree with AJC's—but certainly no legitimate treatment of the Jewish community could ignore the effective national role played by Agudath Israel.

• The Synagogue Council of America is made of *"three major congregational and rabbinic bodies"* (p.13). Why are there only *three* major rabbinic groups? What makes Agudath HaRabonim, Hisachdus Horabonim (an organization of some 100 European-born rabbis), and the Rabbinical Alliance of America *minor*? Their combined congregational constituency is probably much more ethnically Jewish than those of the other three. Are they actually "rivals" to the RCA, (as Mr. Maslow describes the Rabbinical Alliance, which he does mention), or do they simply service different elements?

• The vibrant Chassidic communities merit half of one sentence, dominated by the dropping of one solitary name: Lubavitch — as if Satmar, Skver, Vishnitz, Bobov, *et al,* are non-existent.

• The UOJCA is noted as living on *"the sale of the privilege of using its kosher mark on kosher foods"* (what an unkind mercenary smack that has!); whereas for a compensatory fee, it really provides an important supervisory service, to which the emblem bears testimony.

• The Jewish education scene is given a real topsy-turvy treatment, with reference to *"340 Jewish Day Schools"* instead of the 420 that grace the scene; *"Apart from elementary schools there are few secondary schools and only two universities under Jewish control"* (p.28), ignoring over forty yeshiva high schools, and numerous rabbinic seminaries granted university status by the United States Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, never even mentioning the word *yeshiva* except as a source for alleged JDL membership! And the phenomenal growth of the Jewish Day Schools is attributed to one negative factor *("dissatisfaction with public school education")* and one dubious factor *("the successful promotional effort by Torah Umesorah"*—if that has educational implications, that's fine; but if it means hucksterism, it is grossly unfair)—totally ignoring the resurgence of Orthodoxy as a vital force in America.

• The "Youth Groups" chapter gives a nod in a dozen directions, including AZA, BBYO, SSSJ, and NCSY — but the Agudath Israel Youth groups, literally encompassing the activities of over 20,000 children, is not even blinked at.—Lack of knowledge? Then do not print a book with professed authority.—Prejudice? All the more reason the author is disqualified.

• The "Cultural Agencies" listing goes from A to Y — from the AAJR (American Academy for Jewish Research) to the 92nd St. Y, but not one Orthodox agency is mentioned. Frankly, a Daf Yomi Commission deals with Torah, not "culture," but I doubt if Mr. Maslow would understand that rationale, much less present it.

• "The Jewish Press" discussion discusses everything from Irving Spiegel's religious coverage in the *N.Y. Times* to Pittsburgh's *Jewish Chronicle* (circulation 15,000), through the *Reconstructionist Magazine* (6,000), and the AJC's *Judaism* (2,300) — but nary a mention of *The Jewish Observer, Jewish Parent, Jewish Life,* or the Yiddish Press. Why?

• A chapter on "Jewish Leadership" analyzes the difference between a society that produces Dayan's and Meir's and one that breeds Fisher's and Weiler's. Fine. The essay is expanded to the grouping of names like Arthur Goldberg and Arthur Hertzberg. "Leaders" with shadow constituencies, and intellectuals like Himmelfarb with no "positions of leadership," are given their due. Why does this booklet omit names like Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, other Roshei Hayeshiva, and the host of Chassidic Rebbes—men of intellectual stature as well as acknowledged leaders? Are they not Jewish enough to find their way into Mr. Maslow's book—or are they *too* Jewish?

• In "Political Behavior" Mr. Maslow intones: *"Jewish identification with candidates perceived as liberal-internationalist will probably continue, but with heightened emphasis on a candidate's views about American support for Israel and Soviet Jewry—the only national political issues with which Jews have a distinctive concern"* (p.40). Mr. Maslow seems totally unaware of the creeping disillusionment with the *liberal internationalism* that is spreading among American Jews. *Liberalism* has become infected with an arrogance and an overcompensatory prejudice against groups that can help themselves—namely the Jews. And *Internationalism* offers scant message of hope to the security

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of Jewry in general and to Israel in particular. But Mr. Maslow's orientation is strictly AJC-ACLU, circa 1960, and not up to the realities of 1975.

To sum up, the Jewish world Mr. Maslow inhabits is one that sees *itself* and feeds *itself*, to the exclusion of others more authentic or more in need. As he puts it: *"Even in organizations where the chief emphasis is not on fundraising, presidents are usually chosen from the top economic bracket"* (p.22).

"Another American phenomenom is the lateral movement of leaders from one organization to another—UJA to JDC to Israel Bonds, etc.—in a kind of interlocking directorate" (p.37).

"Major national agencies like AJCommittee and the Anti-Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL) together receive nearly $2 million in welfare federation allocational annually. . . ." (p.21).

Seeing itself and feeding itself. . . .

It brings to mind the comi-tragic view of Jewry that the *N.Y. Times* had: It never knew of the dynamic and much revered leadership of Reb Aharon Kotler. . . , even at the time of his passing, except as "a dean in a small rabbinical college in Southern New Jersey." When two of his *talmidim* (disciples) visited the office of the newspaper to suggest that it cover his funeral, the editor in charge checked his file, and said, "What for? We've got absolutely nothing here on him." It was only when the streets of Manhattan were choked with twenty-five thousand mourners that the Times realized that Reb Aharon had more than an eight-line-obituary constituency. So the *Times* wrote an expanded story... Mr. Maslow ought to wake up now. □

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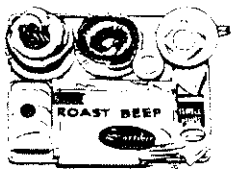

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Arye Kaplan

Gateway to the Past

A Collection of Old Seforim Speak to Their Owner

Introduction to a Pastime

THERE IS A *seforim* store down the block where I frequently drop in to make purchases to add to my library. In addition to recently printed works, the store had a large number of older items, some in high piles on the very top shelf, well out of reach. Whenever I entered the store, these always aroused my curiosity.

One day, the piles were gone. They had been moved to the basement to make room for newer books. I finally had an opportunity to examine these old *seforim,* and as I did, I found myself walking through a gateway to the past.

Most of the *seforim* were some thirty years old, but some were much older. Many were pamphlets, published by obscure authors, but others were important classics that are no longer readily available, and older editions of popular *seforim.* I only picked up a few items on this first visit, but eventually I was drawn back, to what was to become an exciting adventure.

A number of *seforim* seemed very old, and I had assumed them to be too expensive. On second thought, I priced a few and, to my surprise, found them to be no more expensive than their modern counterparts.

RABBI KAPLAN *is a writer and lecturer on numerous Judaic topics. Among his books is* Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom, *a translation of Rabbi Nachman of Breslav's* "Sichos HaRan."

My First Purchase

MY FIRST PURCHASE was a *Gemora,* the last volume of a Sulzbach *Shas* (complete set of Talmud), printed in 5518 (1758). It was an uncanny feeling, owning a *sefer* that could have been held by the Vilna Gaon or the Baal Shem Tov! A comparison with my Vilna *Shas* showed no important differences, except in illustrations in *Seder Taharos.* In the older edition, they are larger and more detailed — of considerable help in understanding obscure and difficult texts.

I later learned that the Sulzbach *Shas,* one of the most esteemed editions, was the standard reference until the Vilna *Shas* was published in 5640 (1880). Sulzbach, Germany, had an active Jewish community, and was the site of an important Jewish printing concern between 1669 and 1851. Its *seforim* were renowned both for their accuracy and high quality.

The *Gemora* was fascinating to sight and touch. It has the original binding, in exquisitely hand-tooled leather, with wooden cover boards, and brass clasps for holding it closed. Embossed on the spine is "David Bamberg (the original owner), 1759." The loving care and craftsmanship that went into every facet of the book's construction spoke volumes. A *Shas* such as this cost a working man a year's wages; and the set would then become a valuable part of his estate, lovingly handed down from father to son.

This *Gemora* was printed by Zalman Madfis (Hebrew

for "printer") of Sulzbach. I later found a *Machzor* (a prayer book for festivals) printed ten years later in Sulzbach by Reb Itzak ben Leib, son-in-law of Zalman the Printer, who was evidently still alive. Apparently, he had set up his son-in -law in business, and he began with smaller things, such as prayer books and *Machzorim.*

An important feature of every *sefer* is its *haskamos* - letters by prominent *Gedolim* endorsing to its publication. This *machzor* has a *haskama* by Rabbi Nasanel Weil, known for his major work, the *Karban Nasanel* on the *Rosh.* Rabbi Nasanel passed away in 5529 (1769), just a year after this *Machzor* was printed.

A Sulzbach "Shas" cost a working-man a year's wages.

I was now fascinated by this family of printers. The *Machzor* showed that Itzak ben Leib also had a printing concern in Fürth, a printing center for *seforim* between 1690 and 1868; and sometime later, I picked up a *Reishis Chochma* printed in Fürth in 5523 (1763) by this same Itzak. A note at the end of the *Machzor* announces that Itzak has many other *seforim* for sale at reasonable prices on Alexandrus Street in Sulzbach. . . .All these discoveries, however, were made much later, after my collection had increased.

The Fine White Paper of Old

MY SECOND IMPORTANT acquisition was a *Rashba,* printed in Fürth, Germany in 5511 (1751). It was printed on fine white paper and is in almost perfect condition. Using it is a profound experience. I have a newer *Rashba,* but learning in one that was in existence when the U.S. was still a British colony heightens my awareness of my link with the past. I was learning in a *sefer* over two hundred years old, while its author lived almost another five hundred years before it was printed!

Another early find was an *Eyin Yaakov* (a compilation of Talmudic Aggados), printed in Amsterdam in 5501 (1741). Unlike present editions with commentaries surrounding the text, this edition places them sequentially. Much to my surprise, I found commentaries from Rabbi David Oppenheimer and Avraham Broda of Frankfurt, which are not in my newer editions of *Eyin Yaakov.*

I also found that the *sefer* consisted of two parts, and that the second portion was printed a year earlier. Particularly interesting were *haskamos* on the second part that were absent in the first portion. Most prominent of these is a *haskama* by Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua of Cracow — best known for his *Pnai Yehoshua.* There is also a *haskama* by Rabbi Eliezer of Amsterdam, author of *Ma'ase Roke'ach,* who, as the printer notes, was then in the Holy Land. The rest of his story is found in *Shivechei Baal Shem Tov* (p.126). Rabbi Eliezer had gone to the Holy Land especially to meet Rabbi Nachman Horodenker, a prominent disciple of the Baal Shem and grandfather of Rabbi Nachman of Breslav.

Also of Chassidic interest is a Rambam — not nearly as old, but equally fascinating — printed in Berditchev in 5568 (1808), with the *haskama* of the renowned Rabbi Levi Yitzchok. In his *haskama* he declares his pleasure that the Rambam is being reprinted in his community, especially since it is using "good paper, black ink, and large, clear type" — no small consideration before these items were mass produced. The print is actually clearer and more readable than my Vilna edition, and I have gotten into the habit of using this older Rambam, especially for the *Mishne L'melech,* which is more legible in this older edition.

Having done considerable research into the life of Rabbi Nachman of Breslav, I was delighted to find in this Rambam a *haskama* from Rabbi David Zvi Orbach of Kremnitz. This *gaon* and *tzaddik* was the father-in-law of Rabbi Nathan of Nemerov, the chief disciple of Rabbi Nachman. Although Rabbi David Zvi had been an important leader in his generation, virtually nothing is known of him today outside of Breslaver circles. This *haskama* is significant to me as the only writing I have ever seen from Rabbi David Zvi; it records that he was rabbi in Kremnitz in 1802 and that he was important enough for his *haskama* to appear in a Rambam.

"So pleased that a Rambam is being printed in Berditchev with good paper, black ink,. . . large, clear type."

—Rabbi Levi Yitzchok

Detective Work

ALL THESE SEFORIM were fascinating, but easy to identify. I later came across items that required some detective work, especially so where the title pages were missing.

The first such *sefer* that I acquired looked like a *Gemora* or *Rif* with the text printed in large square Hebrew characters, except that it was surrounded with the *Ma'adnei Yom Tov* and *Divrei Chamudos,* instead of *Rashi* and *Tosfos.* It was obviously a *Rosh,* but with no title page, how could I tell when and where it was printed?

It was definitely pre-1867, the year that the acid process of making paper from wood-pulp was invented, for wood-pulp paper yellows rapidly and becomes brittle. Prior to this, paper was made from rags, and such paper has a distinctive soft feel, retaining its color and strength for hundreds of years. That is why *seforim* hundreds of years old are often in better condition than those printed a few decades ago. This mystery *Rosh* was definitely printed on the older rag paper, and closer ex-

amination revealed that it was most probably the hand-made paper used in the 1700's.

More important — until 1820 *seforim* were printed completely by hand. It was considered both an art and a sacred task, and all involved would print their names on the last page. Fortunately, this signature page was still intact, with the names of the *zetzer* (typesetter) and the *druker* (press operator) signed as living or "now working" in Fürth. The first part of the puzzle was unravelled: This *Rosh* had been printed in Fürth.

To discover the actual date of publication, I had but to consult Ben Yaakov's *Otzar Haseforim*, a remarkable book listing each edition of every *sefer* printed until 1863. Looking up the *Rosh* and *Maadnei Yom Tov*, I found that the only edition ever published in Fürth was printed in 5505 (1745). I now knew exactly which edition I had.

The publisher of this *Rosh* was Tzvi Hirsch, son of Reb Chaim of Fürth. The copy of the *Rashba* mentioned earlier was printed in Fürth in 1751, just six years later,

Why was the name of the Sefer changed in the Fürth edition?

and its publisher was "Chaim son of Zvi Hirsch z"l." During the interim, Reb Zvi Hirsch had passed away, and the publishing house had been taken over by his son Chaim.

The "Yom Tov" Puzzler

WHILE DELVING INTO this volume, I discovered another interesting fact. The *Ma'adnei Yom Tov* was written by Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller, best known as the author of *Tosfos Yom Tov* on *Mishnayos*. Yet, in his introduction, Rabbi Yom Tov calls his commentary on the *Rosh "Ma'adanei Melech"* (not *Ma'adanei Yom Tov*). Behind this name change is an interesting story. The first edition of this commentary was published by the author in Prague in 5388 (1628), but it was denounced by the author's enemies before King Ferdinand II as anti-Christian and anti-government. As a result, in 1745, the Fürth publishers feared they would not gain the necessary government permission to print the second edition. They therefore decided to change the title to *"Ma'adanei Yom Tov"*, and included a note that no anti-Christian or anti-government sentiments were in the work. This second edition was the one that I had purchased.

The Berlin "Yerushalmi"

A SECOND MYSTERY SEFER that I obtained was one that had been rebound, and bore the label, *"Talmud Yerushalmi, Seder Nashim,* Berlin." The title page was missing, and there was no signature page at the end of the volume. I was hard pressed to even verify that it had been printed in Berlin.

A quick comparison with my Vilna *Yerushalmi* showed that the two commentaries surrounding the text on the page were the *Korban HaEida* and the *Shiurei Korban*. In the Vilna *Yerushalmi*, this latter is printed in the back, rather than on the page. In addition, the paper again showed me that this *sefer* was at least two hundred years old.

Carefully examining the volume, I discovered that the binder had inadvertantly (?) placed *Nedarim* at the end rather than *Kiddushin* — which should be the last *Mesechta* in the volume. There on the last page of *Kiddushin* was a clear signature of the typesetter and press operator: Yisroel ben Moshe of Breslau, "now engaged in the holy work in Berlin the capital." The *sefer* had indeed been printed in Berlin.

Ben Yaakov reports that the only time the *Yerushalmi* had been printed in Berlin was in 5517 (1757), and that this edition had been published by Rabbi David Frankel, author of the *Korban Ha'eida* — then rabbi of Berlin. He was quite wealthy, and had the wherewithal to print his own commentary, this being the edition that I had in hand.

Rabbi David Frankel had originally been rabbi of Dessau, and when he moved to Berlin, he brought along a favorite pupil, Moses Mendelssohn. The differences between master and disciple are remarkable. Today, anyone studying *Yerushalmi* finds the *Korban Ha'eida* indispensable, while Mendelssohn's works are all but forgotten. I came across a few ancient copies of his *Bi'ur;* highly controversial in their time, they have not been reprinted for over a century, and are now virtually unconsulted.

Sheimos Hunting

WITH MY NEW INTEREST in old *seforim*, I sought to add to my collection, but limited funds severely circumscribed my search. I then had a stroke of luck. A few individuals heard of my interest and permitted me to look through their *sheimos* — old *seforim* designated for burial. This was no Cairo Geniza, but if one knows what to look for, fascinating finds can be made.

The first batch of *sheimos* came from the flooded basement of an old *seforim* store, and had been sitting around for years. Many of the *seforim* were mildewed, and as I searched I had to cover my face with a handkerchief to protect my lungs from the dust.

An Ancient Nach

MY FIRST IMPORTANT FIND looked like a leather-covered lump of paper. Taking great care not to tear anything, I was able to open the volume, and recognized the book of Joshua, with Rashi, and an old Yiddish commentary. The *sefer* was badly water damaged and the first few pages were missing, but it was clearly very

old. By trial and error and with much painful effort I learned to separate the stuck pages without tearing them. It was a tedious process, and for several weeks, whenever I wanted to relax at night, I would separate a few pages.

At the end of the Book of *Melachim* (Kings), I was greeted with a pleasant surprise. The *sefer* had a second title page — not unusual among old *seforim* — with the place and date of publication: Wilhelmsdorf, 5449 (1689). Here in my hands was a *sefer* printed before the Baal Shem Tov was born! Also, the Yiddish commentary, *Hamagid,* which was a compilation of classical commentaries and Midrashim, was written by Rabbi Yaakov ben Yitzchok of Yanov.

Before long, I discovered that the author of *Hamagid* — who had died in 5386 (1626) — also wrote *Tzena U'Rena,* a popular Yiddish comemntary on the *Chumash.* His *Hamagid,* following the same style, is on the later books of the Bible. According to Ben Yaakov, the last time this *sefer* was printed was in 5478 (1718), and it is thus virtually unknown today. (I later discovered an abridged edition, published in Kapost in 1818, not mentioned by Ben Yaakov.)

The Commentary From Ismir

IN ANOTHER BATCH of *sheimos* I found what may be my most valuable acquisition. It was folded in half and covered with mildew from years in a damp basement, but it looked promising and I took it home. Carefully straightening out the pages and cleaning off the mildew, I discovered that I had a complete *sefer,* including the title page: *B'ney Chayay,* by Rabbi Chaim Algazi of Ismir, printed in 5477 (1717) in Ortakieva, near Constantinople. It is a commentary on the Four *Turim* (forerunner of our *Shulchan Aruch*), and according to Ben Yaakov, was printed just this one time.

I had never heard of either the *sefer* or its author. Going through the *sefer,* I found that the author frequently quotes as his master Rabbi Chaim Benveniste, author of the *Knesses Hagedola.* Another of his teachers was Rabbi Shlomo Algazi, who served as chief rabbi of Egypt for 48 years.

Rabbi Chaim Algazi was born in Ismir, Turkey, had served as rabbi of Rhodes, and in his old age returned to Ismir as chief rabbi. *B'ney Chayay* was then edited by his granddaughter's husband, Rabbi Aaron Alfandri, author of the *Yad Aaron.* This *sefer* thus opened up an entire chapter in Sefardic Jewish history, and was of special personal interest, since my grandfather was born in Ismir.

Enter "The Seven Shepherds"

THE JEWEL OF MY COLLECTION is a small *sefer* also found in a *sheimos* sack designated for burial. I had been going through old *sidurim* and pamphlets, when suddenly the unusual square shape of a small *sefer* caught my eye. It was a copy of *Amudeha Shiva* by Rabbi Betzalel Darshan of Slutzk, in almost perfect condition. When I looked at the date, I could hardly believe my eyes: "Prague, 5434 (1674)." This *sefer* was over three hundred years old!

The *sefer* consisted of discussions and *derashos* regarding the "Seven Shepherds": Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, David and Solomon. As with most unfamiliar *seforim,* I first examined the *haskamos.* Most prominent was that of Rabbi David ben Shmuel of

Consigned for burial:
a 301-year-old Sefer.

Ladmir, the author of the *Turei Zahav* on the *Shulchan Aruch.* Another was from Rabbi Moshe ben Yitzchok of Lublin, son-in-law of the *Maharsha,* and author of the *Mahadura Basra.* One of the printers signed at the end of the volume is Reb Avraham, son of *"Horav HaKadosh,* Rabbi Aaron of Uman."

At first I learned little about the author of this small *sefer.* The *haskamos* mentioned that Rabbi Betzalel was from Kovrin, and the *Shem HaGedolim* states that he had written other *seforim,* the most important being *Korban Shabbos,* published in 5451 (1691). Other references mentioned that besides Slutzk, he had been *Maggid* (preacher) in Boskovitz and Premishla. Then I recalled seeing his name in the *Lubavitcher Rabbi's Memoirs* (Vol. 1, p. 208): In his travels, Rabbi Zecharya Yeruchem of Nemerov had visited this very same Rabbi Betzalel! Also prominent in the account are the authors of *haskamos* on this *sefer,* such as Rabbi Zvi Hirsch of Brisk and Rabbi Naftali Hirsch Ginsburg of Pinsk.

My copy of *Amudeha Shiva* was from a second edition, the first having been published in Lublin in 5426 (1666). According to Ben Yaakov, this *sefer* was printed for the third and last time in Dihrenfort in 5453 (1693). A few phone calls to extensive libraries convinced me that I may well have the only copy of this *sefer* in the United States.

Some people might consider this inconsequential, but there is something very special about owning any *sefer* over 300 years old, even if it were not rare or valuable. We all are aware of how ancient our heritage is, and even the briefest visit to the Holy Land provides one with visable proof of this, stretching back thousands of years. Still, our sages teach us that "hearing is not the same as seeing," and, as in the case of many other things, a constant reminder is most helpful.

I must also emphasise that this relatively rare *sefer* was found in a sack of *sheimos,* consigned for burial. Had I not gone through these *sheimos,* it would have been permanently lost, together with a number of other interesting *seforim.* This should provide an object lesson that before any *sheimos* are buried, they should be gone over by someone familiar with old *seforim.*

Although many of these *seforim* do not have a high monetary value, they form part of our irreplaceable heritage from Europe, a world that no longer exists. Anything buried and lost from this heritage is lost forever.

Private Lives

MOST INTERESTING about old *seforim* is the private history and lore they reveal. The name of an owner long gone stares up at you, and you wonder who he was, and how the *sefer* passed from hand to hand. Sometimes a string of names is found, as in one *sefer* presented as a gift in 1798, 1845, and again in 1932. Another *sefer* was owned by M. J. Loeb, and the inscription tells us that in 1870 he lived in Beaumont, Texas — just 25 years after Texas had joined the Union. If one had the time, he could spend many hours merely studying the inscriptions in *seforim.*

A striking example is a *Machzor* that I have, printed in Offenbach in 5563 (1803). This *Machzor* belonged to Samson Sichel, and in the back, we find an entire family history. A daughter Miriam is born in 1860, Gittel a year later, and a son, Berman, in 1863. The birth of three other sons, Hirsch, Avraham and Yonah is also noted. Then, in blurry, tear-stained letters, we find the record of the death of three of these children; and later, in happier strokes, the wedding dates of the other three. The last entry was in 1900, when the family apparently was preparing to emigrate to America. One could construct an entire family history from these notes alone.

Compared to some great collections, my accumulation of old *seforim* is not extensive, nor does it contain any really ancient samples. It is not a collection worthy of a great museum or library, but rather one to which an ordinary individual with limited resources can aspire. Before becoming involved with these *seforim*, my library was meant to be learned, and most of my *seforim* were in constant use. These older *seforim* occupy a high shelf, and while occasionally used for learning, they mostly serve as a special inspiration. Somehow, they make the ages in which they were printed and written all the more immediate. □

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The Kopishnitzer Rebbe

זכר צדיק לברכה

— a Reluctant Heir

It is said that the *neshama* of a true leader encompasses the *neshamos* of all his followers. Few realized the extent to which Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Heschel זצ"ל, the late Kopishnitzer Rebbe, had captured the hearts of so many thousands, until his funeral on Sunday *Chol HaMoed Pesach* — one of the largest Jewish funerals Brooklyn had ever witnessed.

He had not wanted to be a Rebbe. When his sainted father passed away eight years ago, he held off pressure to don the mantle for a full year. After all, he had grown up in New York's East Side, had attended American yeshivos, and was now in the business world. That's not the setting from which Chassidic leaders emerge.

True, his early years with his father in Vienna, and later on East Broadway, had indeed molded him in a certain cast: When his father found it impossible to step outside of his home on Shabbos because the open desecration of automobile traffic shook his heart, Reb Moshe too felt the tremors. And when his father's door would swing open to welcome all who sought warmth, guidance, inspiration, comfort or shelter, Reb Moshe's hand would be on the knob. As for his involvement in business...

> *A young yeshiva teacher had hoped to devote afternoons to earning a few extra dollars in the diamond market, and had approached friends and relatives for leads. They only responded with, "Best wishes, but you don't expect me to give away customers, do you?" When the young man confided in Reb Moshe, he produced his entire list of clients and contacts. "Which ones shall I try?" the young man asked.*
>
> *"Any of them. All of them, if you have time."*
>
> *"All of them? I don't want to take away your business!"*
>
> *Reb Moshe laughed: "Our* parnossa *(sustenance) is in the hands of the* Ribbono Shel Olam, *and He has enough for both of us. . . .Don't worry."*

So after a year of refusing — when just forty years old — Reb Moshe finally consented to step into the vacuum left by his father, never expecting in the least to fill the void.

* * *

What in his view had been his greatest shortcoming proved his strongest asset. He knew of the collision of cultural streams that marks American Jewish life, and he had deep insight and compassion for the hapless victims being sucked down by the undertow. Who knows how many split families, broken hearts, ruined careers, soiled reputations, tarnished hopes came to his door for the healing smile, glowing voice, understanding tears that were his — to become theirs?

No formal training in "Rebbisteve," no pretenses, no ambitions — but he did tell a member of his family, "I had always thought I had no right to be Rebbe, but now that I can be of help to so many people, I'm beginning to understand why I am. . . ."

> *One week before his passing the Rebbe asked an old friend — a prominent yeshiva educator — to come in to see him. His soft features were creased with pain. "I devote eighteen hours a day.—Is it enough?" he asked. "Bayit Vegan has half the population of Boro Park, and there are 300* sheurim *(Torah classes) there every night. Our people here don't learn enough Torah.—Are we doing everything we can?"*

* * *

The regal sweep of the House of Ryzhin, of which he was a descendant, was not present in any of its external trappings of majesty, but it was there in the commanding gesture at the appropriate moments.

> *Remember Charlie? He was nobody—except on Purim, when everybody needed him for "giving alms to the poor". . . . And the time Charlie discovered his long-lost daughter, a grown woman, and the yeshiva fellows bought him a suit to make him presentable. . . . And then Charlie's funeral. They came from this yeshiva, that* shtiebel, *to make a* minyan. *His daughter came. And the Rebbe was there...The mortician wanted his fee. The daughter shook her head. The fellows shrugged their shoulders. The men knocked their heads together. And the Rebbe pulled out his checkbook and asked, "How much did you say?"*

* * *

The scope of his *chessed* was so far-reaching, it will probably never be fully known....

A man weeping uncontrollably at the funeral, when asked if he were a member of the family, replied, "No, closer." A native of Tiberias, Israel, he had met the Rebbe at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. The Rebbe, recuperating from open heart surgery, was in a wheel chair. Upon inquiring, he learned that this man's son was undergoing a similar operation. "Don't worry. The G-d who helped me will see him through, too. . . .But, wait," he added, and wheeled himself to his room, returning with $500 in cash, which he pressed into the palm of the man. "Take this."

"But, you don't even know me, and I don't know you, either," the Tiberian protested.

"You are a Yid without funds, and I have more than I need, right?—My name?—Moshe Heschel. Take it and be well."

"I thought Moshe Heschel was a wealthy merchant. Then when I checked my son out b'sha'a tova umutzlachas, *I went to negotiate for payment — I really* was *penniless. The cashier smiled, "Mr. B.? Your account is clear. The Rabbi took care of it last week."*

When his brother accompanied his *aron* to *Eretz Yisroel* for burial, he found that families of twenty-six victims of the Yom Kippur War were among the Rebbe's mourners — they had been receiving stipends totalling IL52,000 every month from the Rebbe — how raised, from whom, was his own private knowledge.

* * *

The Rebbe had no savings or insurance policies in the conventional sense. Then again, he was far from poor in his own currency. After his surgery last spring, his doctor warned him, "If you want to recover, forget about other people's problems—for at least one year." But he simply could not ignore his "true holdings."

Only weeks later, the Rebbe visited Milty in a private camp in the Catskills. Milty's father had been a frequent visitor of the old Kopishnitzer Rebbe, and often consulted with his son. . . .Now Milty was graduating a co-ed day school and was planning to attend a "modern" yeshiva high school. The Rebbe sat on a bench with his arm on Milty's shoulder and confided, "I've been inactive for two months now. I haven't sold a single policy in all this time."

"Policy?"

"Yes. Helping people do what they really know is right — that's my insurance premium. . . .We know the type of genuine Torah school you should be going to next year — Won't you help me, Milty?"

Milty knew. And the Rebbe was back in business.

* * *

The storms of modern society kept coughing up flotsam at his door, and the casualties of life's shipwrecks drifted to him for repair. His heart, with the acrylic valve pumping valiantly away, seemed to handle the flow. But a vessel burst in his brain on the eve of Pesach. And on Sunday *Chol HaMoed*, when the *Sefirah* Count coincided with "*Tifferes she-b'chessed*—Grace in loving-kindness," the streets outside his Boro Park Bais Medrash were crowded with thousands of Jews. — The kids the Rebbe had taken out of prison in his cognizance, now on their way to an honest, G-d-fearing life. — The families held together by his patient counseling or his generous support. — The old Chassid who had heard about the Apter Rebbe — the *Ohaiv Yisroel;* who remembered his direct descendant, the late Kopishnitzer Rebbe; and now was weeping for their offspring taking leave.

Young, old, men, women, mods, Chassidim, yeshiva-types, sages, leaders, followers, drop-outs, drop-ins.— They were all saying farewell to the heart that had encompassed them all.

— Were 5,000 there, or 10,000?

Into how many pieces can one heart be shattered?

BOOKS

On Teaching Belief

THE NAME OF Feldheim Publishers is closely linked with the flowering of Torah Jewry on American soil. Throughout the centuries of Jewish dispersion, it has been recognized that there was a need to present the masses with the teachings of the Torah in the vernacular; in fact, many of our classics were written in the language of the author's country of residence, while others were translated into different languages, as the centers of Jewish life shifted. Feldheim's *Torah Classics Library* has provided us with a series of outstanding translations that have made the treasures of Jewish thought accessible to those who could not have explored them in the original Hebrew. The volumes before us, in contrast, represent an effort to formulate anew, in modern terms, a philosophy of Judaism based on the authentic Torah sources. Both are well-written and beautifully produced. Here, however, the similarity ends. Different goals are pursued by the two authors; much more important, there are differences of outlook that, ultimately, decide the value of each book.

LIVING JUDAISM, *by Paul Forchheimer* (Feldheim Publishers, 1974; $9.75)

DR. FORCHHEIMER constructs a firm foundation by translating the five *perokim* of *Mishna Avos*, together with the commentary of the *Rambam*. (This reviewer only regrets that he did not include what is commonly called the sixth *perek*.) He also includes the *Rambam's* outline of the chain of tradition (from his introduction to his *Mishna* commentary) and the *Rambam's* famous introduction to the last *perek* of tractate *Sanhedrin*, in which he formulates and explains the thirteen basic principles of faith. Upon this foundation, Dr. Forchheimer draws an outline of Jewish philosophy for modern man, through his annotations to the *Pirkei Avos*, and, in the second half of the book, by a series of essays which — one by one — take up many of the problems encountered by a thinking person in our age.

There are many among us who may be familiar with the practical requirements of Torah law but are desperately in need of guidance to an overall world-view as drawn by the Torah. Moreover, since we live in the age of science, or, more exactly, "scientism" (science cast in the role of a secular religion), there is a special need to define the Torah world-view in relation to the teachings of science. Dr. Forchheimer demonstrates his familiarity both with classical Jewish thought and with the latest findings of science and philosophy, in discussing such topics as the relationship of religion and science, and the place of reason in either; the meaning of history and providence; prophecy and freedom of will; creation and evolution, particularly as seen in the light of the concept of entropy. Concluding chapters deal with the Jewish view of the human personality, and with some insights into Jewish symbolism.

The author stresses that he did not seek originality but merely aimed to restate traditional Jewish ideas, the embodiment of divine truth. However, his application of these ideas to modern issues is sure to open new vistas of thought to every reader. Generally speaking, the style and the translations are most readable, though a few mistakes have crept in and occasionally things could perhaps have been put in somewhat easier form. The only major recommendation by this reviewer is that future editions should have a much more complete index; this would greatly enhance the usefulness of this fine volume.

I BELIEVE, *by Rabbi Moshe Max* (Feldheim Publishers, 1973; $4.95)

RABBI MAX, in contrast to Dr. Forchheimer, has concerned himself primarily with the needs of American Jewish youth. He, too, uses the thirteen principles of the *Rambam* as a starting point, discussing each in turn and then showing how each of these principles finds its practical expression in specific *mitzvos*. Having previously published *The Way of G-d* as a *hashkafa* text for youngsters, Rabbi Max presents this book as a sequel, designed to serve as a basic guide and textboook for young adults who seek to familiarize themselves with the main concepts of Judaism; toward this end, each chapter is followed by a list of assignments for further reading and discussion, and a basic bibliography is attached to the book.

The plan laid out by the author is excellent, and the technical execution is good. Moreover, there are many fine discussions in this book — for instance, on the relationship of faith and reason, and the belief in a Creator in contrast to the idea of evolution. Presenting various *mitzvos* as expressions of basic beliefs is a very effective device (though I was somewhat puzzled to read that "Dr. Samuel Belkin. . .says that the Sabbath dramatizes the idea that G-d is the Creator of the world" — surely not Dr. Belkin's original thought).

However, the book is fatally flawed by a basic shortcoming. A *hashkafa* text must first and foremost be sound in *hashkafa*, free of all error and confusion. This acid test the book before us does not pass.

The bibliography refers the reader to a number of excellent works — but also, for instance, to the En-

cyclopedia Judaica (1971 edition), and to the histories of Marx and Margolis and of Elbogen, which are full of totally unacceptable material. The confusion here reflected crops up again in various places in the book. Sometimes this may be a matter of inept formulations; but in other places it is a question of unclear thinking. As one example, it is very misleading — and dangerous — to write about the delegated power of the rabbis to make enactments without introducing the principle of *"sof hahora'ah,"* as if this power still existed equally today (pp. 177-9). To give another example, it shows an odd obtuseness to turn our aversion to proselytizing into a "basic Jewish doctrine of tolerance," which finds its proper expression "in the maintenance [by the government of Israel] of the holy places and services for all its various constituents" (pp. 200-201) — making it appear to be an ideal rather than a forced accommodation (see *Devorim* 12, 2).

Actually, in this instance the author is probably guided by his adulation of the State of Israel concerning which he unequivocally concludes, with Rabbi Lewittes, that it represents the beginning of the redemption (p. 233). He is so caught up in this conviction that the discussion of practically every one of the thirteen principles leads him somehow to Zionism and the State of Israel. At a time when all Jews devoted to Torah, no matter where they may stand politically, are, for instance, so concerned over the question of "Who is a Jew" and the failure of the State to recognize *halacha* even in religious matters, it is surely ludicrous to say that by and large "the law of the land convincingly dramatizes a national peoplehood that links the individual to G-d and His Torah" (p. 47).

This uncritical attitude toward anything connected with Zionism leads him to interpret the rabbinical opposition to prayer in Aramaic "as a glorification of the Hebrew language and an attempt to preserve it" (p. 147), ignoring the fact that prayer in all other languages is accepted; or to follow Lewittes in his tendentious interpretation of the blessings of the *Amidah* (p. 143) — to the point of omitting *'Refoeinu"* because it does not fit into the desired pattern. It is indeed a great pity that a work so well conceived should founder on this issue — but then perhaps this is merely another reflection of the confusion that pervades Jewish life in almost every nook and cranny.

CONCEPTS OF JUDAISM, *by Isaac Breuer, selected and edited by Jacob S. Levinger* (Israel Universities Press, 1974; distributed by Feldheim Publishers, $7.95)

ISAAC BREUER was without doubt one of the most brilliant and creative personalities in 20th century Torah Jewry. The publication of the present volume, which contains a representative selection from his wide-ranging and profound writings, is therefore to be welcomed most heartily.

The author was, at one and the same time, a man of thought and action. Nurtured on the rich Torah legacy of his grandfather and father, Rabbi Samson Rapahel Hirsch and Rabbi Shlomo Breuer, he deeply felt the need of providing a response to the intellectual and communal ferment of the World War I era.

He readily perceived and used the opportunity provided by Kantianism, with its distinction between essence and appearance, to express the traditional Jewish rites in modern philosophical terms; nature and divine providence, miracle and prophecy, reason, religion and law.

Against this background he set out to define the character and destiny of the Jew, and the meaning of Jewish nationhood and anti-Semitism. Clearly recognizing World War I and the Balfour Declaration as turning points in Jewish history, he sought to outline a program of action for Torah Jewry at this time.

As the practical forum for the expression and application of these ideas he saw the Agudath Israel World Organization, with its aim to gather the Jewish people around the Torah. With the coming of the Hitler era, Isaac Breuer moved to Eretz Yisroel, where he strove, until his death in 1946, to bring his ideas to practical execution. He actually drafted a suggested constitution for a Jewish state in Eretz Yisroel; political developments, however, overtook and passed by his proposals.

Professor Levinger has chosen selections from his writings which reflect all the various facets of his life and thought, through putting primary emphasis on sections dealing with world creation, nature and miracle, and the epistemological formulations of the Law. For a reader not used to philosophical writings they will make demanding reading, but he will be well rewarded. (He will e.g. find it most interesting to compare and contrast Breuer's juxtaposition of Nature and Creation with the concepts of *Olam Hadimyon* and *Olam Ho'emes*, and to follow the author in resolving the conflict between religion and science on this basis.)

The other parts of the book treat of the nature of Klal Yisroel, of the Torah as its Law (not religion), and of the challenge posed by Zionism and the return to Eretz Yisroel. Here, in particular, one could take issue with Professor Levinger's selection: for instance, the essay on Theodore Hertzl is purely of historical concern, while the inclusion of some of the more "practical" writings, such as Breuer's outline of a constitution for the State of Israel would have been of great and immediate interest.

It is this reviewer's impression that Professor Levinger, who is head of the Department of Jewish Philosophy at Tel Aviv University, has been guided to some degree, both in his selection of material and in the writing of the biographical introduction, by his own outlook. His primary concern is with Isaac Breuer as a philosopher rather than as a political thinker; moreover, he is basically not in sympathy with Isaac Breuer's un-

broken loyalty to Agudath Israel and cannot therefore do justice to it.

The truth is that Isaac Breuer was an original thinker who expressed his ideas in a most effective manner; but these ideas themselves flowed from an intense and burning inner commitment to Torah in the fullest sense, and therefore necessarily led to his total involvement in Agudath Israel as the organized People of the Torah. The essay on Herzl included by Professor Levinger is a good example of Isaac Breuer's making a point by shocking the reader; taken at face value, and in isolation from his other writings, however, it is most misleading. This reviewer ventures to think that, if Isaac Breuer himself had selected the material for this book, the Herzl essay — and perhaps part of the overlong selection from the New Kuzari — would have had to yield to some more concrete expressions of his fervent involvement in what was happening to *Klal Yisroel.*

THE HAFETZ HAYIM ON THE SIDDUR, *arranged by David Zaritsky, translated by Charles Wengrow* (Jerusalem Academy Publications, 1974: distributed by Feldheim, $9.00)

WHEN THIS VOLUME first appeared in its original Hebrew, it was immediately acclaimed as an outstanding contribution to the existing literature on the *Siddur.* It is not a running commentary on our prayers, but a series of explanations, interpretations, and parables, culled from the various writings of the *Chofetz Chaim* and ranging across the entire Jewish year as it is reflected in our *Tefillos.*

The present English edition follows in every detail the Hebrew original, and does justice to it through the smooth flow of the translation. It is impossible to leaf through it without encountering one striking remark or touching personal anecdote after the other, and without being inspired by them. A list of all the 373 entries in the book precedes the text; however, when a new edition is published, a complete index of topics discussed should be added, for it will undoubtedly add greatly to the usefulness of this work.

THE CARLEBACH TRADITION: THE HISTORY OF MY FAMILY, *by Rabbi Dr. Naphtali H. Carlebach* (N.Y., 1973: Joseph Carlebach Memorial Foundation)

AT FIRST GLANCE, this might seem to be merely a pious personal tribute to earlier generations, of interest only to the family with whose ancestors it deals. Nothing could be further from the truth. Even though this book is only a fragment — the author passed away before he could complete it — it provides a fascinating insight into a world passed by, highlighting the way of existence and the personalities of the leaders that characterized Jewish life in the small communities, the backbone of German Jewry. We see the rise of Reform, the problem of civil rights, the question of secular studies, as well as many other issues emerging from these pages.

But it is not only this historical material that captures our attention. There are, above all, the human aspects that remain in the reader's mind. Thus, when Solomon Carlebach, in his early youth, had to attend school in a town some distance from his parents' farm, "the question as to how he was to get there every day arose. His parents had a comfortable coach: but his mother was afraid of an *ayin horah* if he arrived at school like a baron. She was also afraid that he might become haughty. . . .It was his mother's love that compelled her son to go on foot to Bruchsal" (p.64).

Or take another story, many years later, when Solomon Carlebach was Rabbi in Luebeck and had a house full of children and boarders; "Shul began at 6 A.M. and whoever was not there on time (at least before *Yishtabach*) received no butter on his first breakfast roll. How much it pained our father to withhold any pleasure from his children could be seen from his refusal to butter his own bread when it was denied any of us" (p.85).

Gems like these, that we would do well to keep in mind when bringing up our own children, are the special reward for picking up this fine little volume. The author, of sainted memory, devoted his life to Torah; it is most fitting that he should have left us this book as a last contribution. □

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New Era for Women?

The current struggle to pass the Equal Rights Amendment seems to be aimed at enhancing women's status in American society. Critics (JO among them) have pointed out that the apparent gains from ERA have long been guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. There are also some losses, however, that passage of the Amendment would usher in. The following letter submitted by AVROHOM YOSEF KLEIN *of Brooklyn, New York, spells out one of these losses.*

A seemingly insignificant act can have awesome impact at some future date. My wife recently had to appear at the United States Immigration offices to complete her naturalization process to become a citizen of the United States. Aside from the usual questions about background and history of the United States, she was asked if she was prepared to take the usual mandatory oath of allegiance.

The middle of the oath states, *"I will bear arms on behalf of the United States...."*

In the official forms it states that if because of religious training or beliefs one can not promise to bear arms or perform non-combatant service, one may omit this part of the oath. My wife, of course, said she would like to omit this section on bearing arms because of her religious beliefs. This was disallowed by the examiner on the grounds that the religious belief contention was questionable, and had to be approved by his superior.

It would appear that for a woman this issue is only a tempest in a teapot. Not so! At the present time the country is in the process of ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment for women, which would in effect make every female in the proper age group subject to a military draft in an emergency. It is absolutely necessary to determine now if religious belief is a valid basis for refusing to take an oath for bearing arms, since a Jewish woman may not be opposed to warfare *per se* on religious grounds—only against her participation in war. Even more important—in the women's liberationists' head-long rush for equality, in every shape, form, and manner, the women are making themselves vulnerable to military duty. No one has to be reminded of the recent war in Indo-China to realize how a call-up is always a possibility. It would be wise to fully evaluate the potential implications of the Equal Rights Amendment *now* before it is too late.

Avraham Yosef Klein

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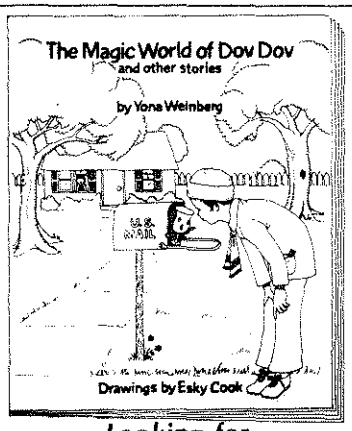

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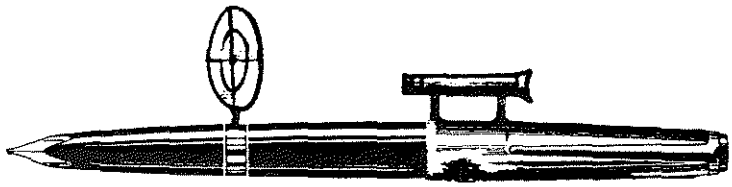
Letters to the Editor



Conservatives: Trying To Interpret Halacha

To the Editor:

I find your magazine interesting and unusually well edited. Though I do not, of course, share your point of view in many matters, I am concerned to learn what Jews are thinking about.

I am writing you about your comments on the Summary of Decisions of the Committee of Jewish Law concerning kashrut which appeared in the March issue of the Jewish Observer.

I do not complain that you do not agree with our decisions. I do not expect you to agree with our interpretations of Jewish law. But I do think you owe us the obligation of recognizing that we are seriously interested in Jewish law. What I find annoying is that you cannot bring yourself to admit that we are really trying to interpret *halacha.* We are not pandering or using ploys to entice Jews. I know how difficult it is for you to admit that there is some rectitude in camps other than yours. But as observant Jews you might try to obey the admonitions of the rabbis to judge everyone on the scale of merit.

(Rabbi) SEYMOUR SIEGEL
THE (CONSERVATIVE) RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY

(The writer of the above letter is chairman of the Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.)

Editorial Response:

If the Conservative Movement were seriously interested in Jewish Law, as we are asked to believe, it would be most encouraging. But is it really? Evidence points to the contrary.

To begin with, *halacha* is not simply a body of general rules open to anyone's interpretation. *Halacha* is extremely precise in regard to *how* it is interpreted and *who* may do the interpreting. There are imperatives handed down at Sinai that can never be abrogated; and there are rabbinic interpretations and rulings that have become codified for centuries and cannot be "re-assessed" by any modern personality. These guidelines are very much part of *halacha.*

Thus, when the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Law permits a *kohain* to marry a divorcee, in direct opposition to openly-stated Torah Law (Leviticus 21,7), it cannot be called *"halacha."* To call it so is an outright deception — or a ploy to keep the more tradition-minded followers in their camp.

(Incidentally, there is every indication that Conservative sanctioning of invalid marriages is to become a trend that will spread beyond this one category. At the recent 70th Anniversary Convention of the Rabbinical Assembly, Rabbi Siegel called for a campaign to interpret Jewish Law so as to achieve greater observance by—among other efforts—*"elimination of the disabilities of individuals in such areas as marriage and divorce by Jewish Law no longer practiced in modern life."* (April 21, 75). That is, practices common in modern life dictate the Conservatives' approach

to the point that marriages *not* valid by Torah Law would be permitted by up-dated Conservative interpretation!)

When the Committee on Law authorizes turning an automobile ignition to drive to the synagogue on *Shabbos*, in direct violation of every authoritative interpretation of *halachic* Sabbath rules, and describes the process that results in such decisions as *"halacha,"* it is beyond tolerant acceptance.

Moreover, the decisions to permit such prohibitions are not simply inadvertant errors. They are deliberate attempts on the part of the leaders of Conservatism to satisfy the inclinations of their uninformed congregants.

As Dr. E. M. Gershfield, member of the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary and Consultant to the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Law and Standards described the process:

> *"Congregations form their own way and in the course of time the Rabbis accept the fait accompli. As in general society, some leaders note which way the people are moving, and then rush out in front to lead them. The Rabbis guide, educate, persuade and preach; the Law Committee debates, writes, votes; but the people decide."*
>
> *Women's League Outlook*

It is indeed an obligation to judge everyone on the scale of merit—but this only applies when the circumstances are clouded by doubt. Tragically, the Conservative Movement leaves no doubt as to where it stands in regard to fidelity to *halacha*. As the Rambam says in *Hilchos Teshuva:* "One who denies the validity of even one passage in the Torah...(or) in a single explanation that is part of the Oral Law is an *apikores* (infidel)" (III:8). The Conservative Movement has already proved itself in this regard, and its pretenses to label its legislation of religious law as *"halacha"* can only earn our condemnation—beyond any doubt. *Nisson Wolpin*

"Two Chinuch's"—Which Americans?

To the Editor:

It is hard to disagree with a number of points Batsheva Grama raises in "A Tale of Two 'Chinuchs' "as to the value of Bnai Brak education and the positive influence it has on the children. More power to her and to those living there!

However, I must take issue with a number of generalities she mentions regarding American Orthodox life. Firstly, it would benefit the readers if Mrs. Grama would define:

a. "The American Orthodox child,"
b. "The American community,"
c. "The American teenager."

It is not clear whether she is referring to the youth of small suburban communities where the Jewish population is sparse, or whether she means those living and learning in Orthodox sections of New York City—the center of Torah in America. For, it would be irresponsible for the writer to draw comparisons between Israeli and American *Chinuch* using the imprecise term "American Orthodox child" as the counterpart to the Bnai Brak child. The Bnai Brak child is clearly described in her article, but who is this "American Orthodox child"? Surely, she must know that the American Orthodox youth is a splintered group, differing in many ways and attitudes. Differing, too, is its education.

Another general comment which is troublesome is the statement, "The average Orthodox Israeli visiting America would certainly be shocked" (seeing T. V. in houses when it is clearly prohibited by the *Gedolim*). My question is: Who is this "average Israeli" and whose house is he visiting in America? Isn't Mrs. Grama's "average Israeli" a Bnai Brak resident? Of course he would be shocked about the T.V. in the house. But, is he truly the "average Israeli"? I would guess that the average *Israeli* Jew is very much like the average *American* Jew with the same attitudes and rationalizations.

A third comment, also very general in nature and quite disturbing, is her statement decrying the "tolerance of American Jewish children" towards the non-observant Jewish neighbor. As she writes, "Only a very unusual American child (or adult) would have the nerve to be so intolerant"—as the Israeli boys did when they invited a child to play only if he puts on a *kipa*. Mrs. Grama is probably not aware of the myriad activities organized by many Orthodox Jewish children and young adults. These children are not unusual nor few in number. Like the boys in her article, these American boys of J.E.P., Lubavitch and other worthwhile organizations are also saying, "We can't have a boy without a *kipa* in our yard." They, too, insist on absolute observance of our laws when they invite the non-observant into their homes and schools.

Mrs. Grama is justified in praising the Bnai Brak life and Chinuch. But, in her zeal to laud, she carelessly used some meaningless generalities.

GITEL KLEINBARD
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Not The Bnei Brak I Knew
Not The Jewish Music I Love

To the Editor:

I would like to express my appreciation to you for expanding the themes of your articles to topics of broad enough interest to excite ever more members of the family. I refer particularly to your recent Pesach issue — especially two articles that generated a lot of heated discussion in our home. Not all of our reactions were favorable, of course.

Mrs. Grama's "Tale of Two Chinuch's" seemed like a very tiny sampling (her own experiences with her own children) magnified through a lens of wishful thinking.... In *my* experiences, the mini-skirt was, sadly enough, not a stranger to Bnei Brak. And the low-keyed reception tendered the Lonely Shabbos Rider was an exception. . . .The Bnei Brakis I knew would have knocked him off his cycle first and reasoned with him later — much later. I always feared that intolerance breeds smugness, which breeds *more* intolerance, which in turn spawns an intolerable smugness. . . . It strikes me that Mrs. Grama is (understandably) so intoxicated with the high religious level of Bnei Brak that she is unaware of how much she owes her enviable blend of firmness and understanding to her Scranton upbringing, rather than to the "sensitivity to others' faults-to-sensitivity to one's own shortcomings" cycle she claims to have found in Bnei Brak.

Another column that sparked discussion with us was Mordechai Schiller's dressing-down of pseudo-Chassidic music. I am sorry that he stopped at the concert hall and did not attack some of the ridiculous "Jewish" music at weddings. No one forces us to purchase a ticket to a concert, but we all happily respond to wedding invitations, and then find ourselves captives in an Orthodox discotheque. Suddenly the *mitzvah* of rejoicing with bride and groom comes to mean swiveling to the "Alley Cat" and stomping with "Zorba the Greek," as if the wells of Jewish music have gone dry. The band strikes up a rock beat and propriety is thrown to the winds (and the brass).

Are all the guests really subterranean "Rolling Stones"? I think not. But in the meantime — and I never thought I would ever say it — for the sake of our sons' innocence and our daughters' reputations, three cheers for the *mechitzah* at weddings!

MRS. ZEHAVA WAGNER
East Meadow, Long Island

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Mrs. Grama replies;

The two *chinuch's* of my article were not meant as "Israeli" as opposed to "American" in the broad sense, for the two types could as easily be switched from Bnei Brak-vs.-Centerville to Monsey-vs.-Haifa. (Or vs.-Bnei Brak, too, as Mrs. Wagner writes). By the same token, when I say "the average Israeli," I refer to the religious person who identifies with *"da'as Torah."* I regret that this was not clear.

In the long run, there are certain factors that the specific corner of Bnei Brak of my reference can contribute to raising children, and that is the unrivaled atmosphere of Torah loyalty. The reader may object and argue that the parent contributes nothing to the auto-free street of a Bnei Brak *Shabbos,* so why speak of this as a factor in education? This is not a valid argument, for *chinuch* is not simply the results of deliberate actions and lessons. It is also the interaction of the child and his surroundings. Of course, parents do not create the broad community environment — be it Scarsdale, Tel Aviv, or Skvertown. But it's there, and it influences the child. And, in the final analysis, the parents do select it. Perhaps one can even call the choice of community where one decides to raise a family a *"chinuch"* decision. It should certainly be taken into account.

Batsheva Grama

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"The Miracle and After"

To the Editor:

Regarding your article, "The Miracle and After," in March '75, I was not suprised to find that the date of Stalin's stroke, February 28, 1953, happened to coincide with Adar 13 and 14 — the Fast of Esther and Purim.

NAFTOLI LEHMANN
New York City

A Disparaging Bon Mot

To the Editor:

Although I agree with Mordechai Schiller's viewpoint in his article "Chassidus in Song," I was dismayed and angry at his closing sentence: "If that's *Chassidus*, maybe the Vilna Gaon was right, after all." This statement was totally irrelevant and a slur on Chassidim. No one can be more dismayed over the course that Chassidic music has taken than the Chassidim themselves.

The Vilna Gaon's adverse feelings toward *Chassidus* were rooted in the fear that people being so devoted to a "Rebbe" might *challila* vest all feelings of greatness in him, thereby weakening their *avodas Hashem*.

Surely had the Vilna Gaon lived today, he would have concluded as the Chofetz Chaim did: that *Klal Yisroel* has been upheld through *Chassidus*.

Mr. Schiller's statement had no bearing on the matter under discussion and simply showed his lack of feeling for *Chassidus*.

CHANA WAXMAN
Monsey, New York

Mordechai Schiller's closing remark was made with tongue-in-cheek, and surely was not meant to express judgment on an historic controversy. Had he anticipated any ill-feeling, I am certain that he would have omitted the remark.

The Editor

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10,000 TORAH HOURS IN PIRCHEI'S NATIONAL LEARN-A-THON

MORE THAN 500 YOUNGSTERS from yeshivos and Talmud Torahs from coast to coast participated in the third semi-annual National Hasmoda Contest, sponsored by Pirchei Agudath Israel of America. This semi-annual event on the holidays of Succoth and Pesach encourages youngsters to spend their vacation days delving into Torah study. It serves as a means of preparing them to assume self-responsibility in Torah without supervision. The Hasmoda contests are taken very seriously by the youngsters and there is a high degree of competition amongst them. The youngster with the most hours learned, certified by parents and teachers, wins the grand prize of a complete twenty volume set of the Talmud. Other prizes are given to those learning fewer hours.

The 500 youngsters who participated in the latest Hasmoda Contest, the largest number of participants ever, studied a grand total of 10,000 hours during the Pesach vacation. The Hasmoda Project was originally launched in New York, but has since spread to such cities as Philadelphia, Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Montreal, and is on the drawing board in a number of other cities. Huge festive gatherings attended by a total of 1,000 Pirchei Agudath Israel members and leaders were held after Pesach in each city to culminate the Learn-a-thon. In its first year, on Pesach 1974, more than 6,000 hours were learned by over 300 participants. The enormous response from youngsters in cities around the country has increased the number of participants.

Rabbi Joshua Silbermintz, the national director of Pirchei Agudath Israel of America, summed up this unique event by stating that the Hasmoda Contest "was yet another educational aid for parents and teachers in raising children with a greater responsibility in Torah study and in living a life as a Torah Jew." Pirchei Agudath Israel is part of the National Youth Commission of Agudath Israel of America which consists of over 25,000 youth nationally, led by over 2,000 volunteer leaders.

AUTHORS מחברים

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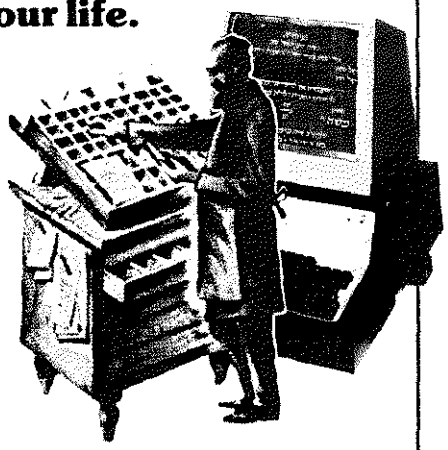

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AGUDATH ISRAEL'S GLOBAL PASSOVER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS ENRICH THOUSANDS OF LIVES

THOUSANDS OF JEWS in the United States, the Soviet Union and Israel benefited from an unprecedented international Passover assistance campaign sponsored by Agudath Israel of America. In this country, nearly 2,000 senior citizens participated in a host of special holiday programs sponsored by the Commission on Senior Citizens of Agudath Israel of America.

Over 200 elderly Jews participated in two community Pesach sedorim in Boro Park and Flatbush. A large number of the elderly Jews participating in the community sedorim had not been to a seder in many years because of loneliness or ill health. The sedorim were conducted in a family atmosphere in which many senior citizens assisted in the preparation of the holiday meals.

During the days proceeding Pesach, over 1,000 senior citizens participated in model sedorim at the five centers for the elderly in the City of New York, sponsored by the Commission on Senior Citizens of Agudath Israel.

Senior citizens who could not leave their homes because of ill health received the Holiday meals in their homes through the volunteer girls of Bnos Agudath Israel's NAJR ongoing homebound meals program. The assistance program for the elderly also included the distribution of food, valued in the thousands of dollars.

In New York Agudath Israel also helped distribute Haggados in the Russian language published by Rabbi Pinchas Teitz of Elizabeth, New Jersey.

In the Soviet Union, hundreds of Russian Jews received matzohs and other food parcels through the annual effort of the international Agudath Israel network. Subsequent reports received by Agudath Israel indicate that these Iron Curtain Jews would not have had matzohs if not for the efforts of Agudath Israel.

In Israel, hundreds of Russian immigrants participated in community sedorim organized by the Russian Immigrant Rescue Fund of Agudath Israel. For a large number of the immigrants, the community sedorim marked the first time that they had ever participated in the traditional holiday seder. The Russian Immigrant Rescue Fund also distributed thousands of food parcels to Russian Immigrants who could not otherwise afford the holiday meals, as part of its year round complex operation to aid in the spiritual absorption of the Russian olim.

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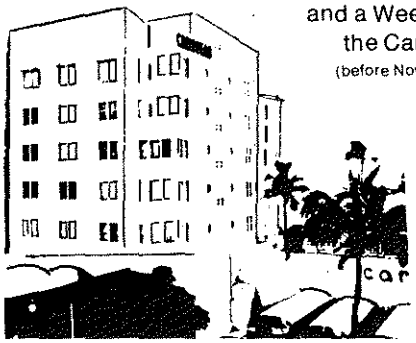

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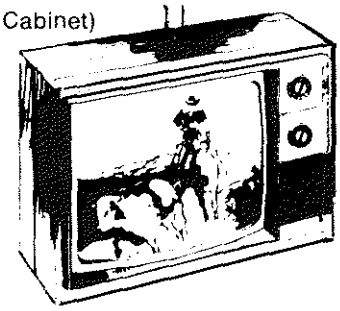

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