

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

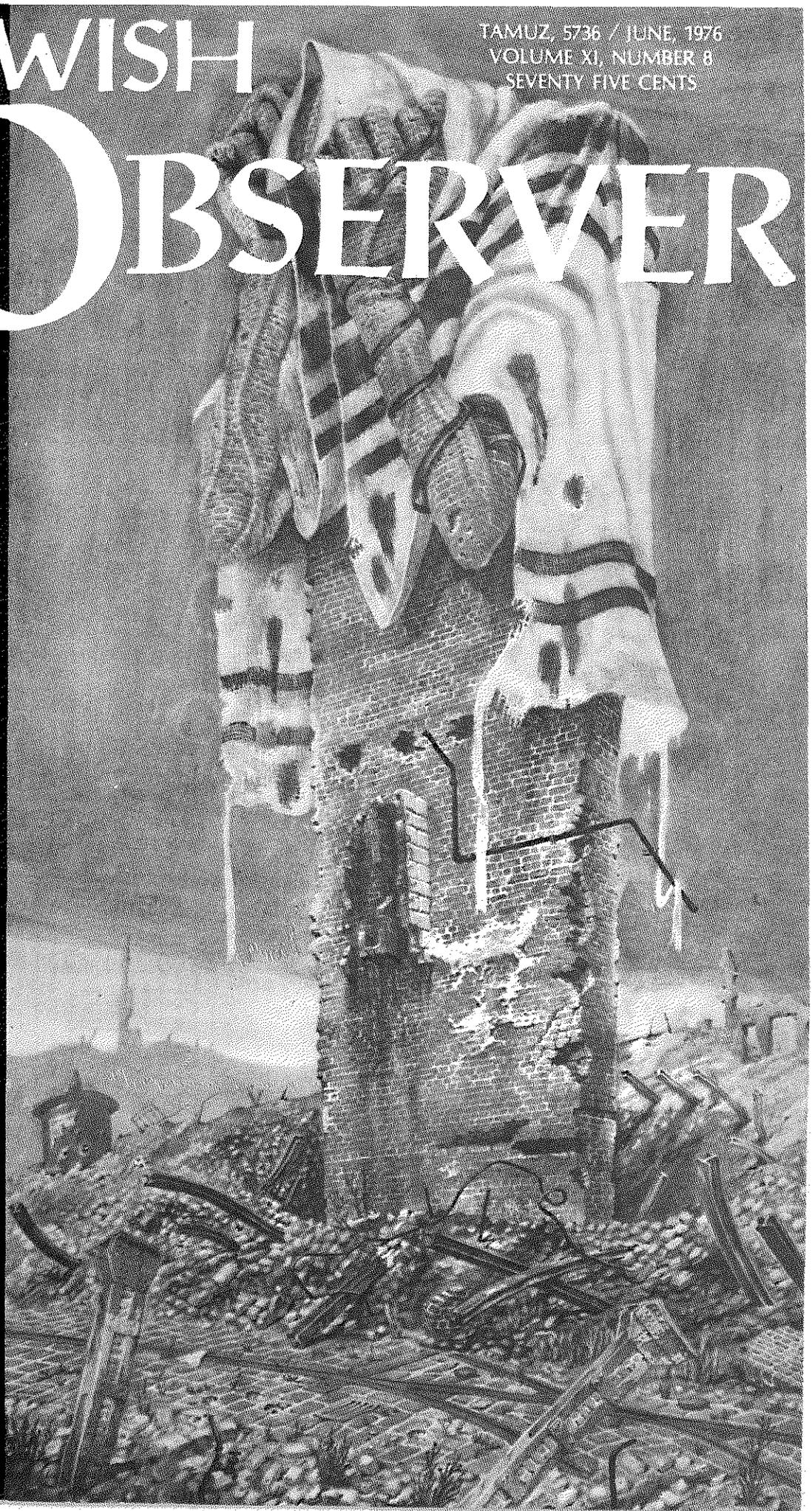
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## The Destruction of European Jewry

A Churban  
of  
Singular  
Dimensions

Our  
Generation:  
Churban  
Plus-One

“Like  
Sheep”?



# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

## in this issue

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### The Destruction of European Jewry

**A Churban of Singular Dimensions**, based on  
an address by Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg ..... 4

**Our Generation: Churban Plus-One**, based on  
an address by Rabbi Yaakov Perlow ..... 6

**The Last Mashgiach of Slobodka**, Hillel Goldberg ..... 11

**"— Like Sheep"?**, Yisroel Saperstein ..... 12

### A Guide to Reconstruction

**Waiting For . . . Ge'ulah**, based on an address  
by Rabbi Elya Svei, translated and adapted  
by Mendel Kaufman ..... 14

**Why Yiddish?**, Shimon Susholtz ..... 18

**Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzensky**, Chaim Shapiro ..... 21

**Orthodox Vocational Guidance: Is There a Need?**,  
Menachem Lubinsky ..... 28

**"In The Beginning" — A Re-run**,  
a review article by Abigail Engelberg ..... 33

### Books In Review

**The Baal Shem Tov on Pirkey Avoth** ..... 35

**The Hafetz Hayim on Pirkey Avoth** ..... 35

**The Seven Days of the Beginning** ..... 36

**Bereshith** ..... 36

JUNE, 1976 VOL. XI, No. 8

Pictures on page 28: Zelman Studios

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Right: Transport of women and children arrives in Auschwitz.

# The Destruction of European Jewry — Thirty Years Later

*May one ask why?*

*Are there any answers to the question?*

*What lessons can be derived from the experiences of 1939-1945?*

*Is Churban Europe unique in the annals of Jewish history, or one of a chain of national tragedies?*

*Do we have special obligations as members of the generation of survivors?*

*How should our personal goals be effected? — our life-style? — our sense of our place in history?*

*How do we teach Churban Europe to our children? — what do we stress?*

# The Destruction of European Jewry

## A Churban of Singular Dimensions

*based on an address by* RABBI YAAKOV WEINBERG,

*Rosh Yeshiva in Ner Israel, Baltimore.*

### **Churban — a Primal Loss**

THE DESTRUCTION OF EUROPEAN JEWRY a generation ago was one of those singular occurrences in Jewish history that left the Jewish people permanently changed in both substance and image. It falls in the category of such national tragedies as the *Churban Bayis Rishon* — the destruction of the First Temple, which brought to close an era when G-d's immediate presence had been felt in every moment of every Jew's life; and the *Churban Bayis Sheini* — the destruction of the Second Temple, which also diminished the status of *Klal Yisroel* in ways that affected its essence, removing from Jewry the vital contact with the divine that had been provided by the daily *avoda* (sacrificial service).

These changes did not merely affect *Klal Yisroel* in degree, but in essence. Loss of the *Bais Hamikdosh* not only reduced the number of mitzvos that Jewry could perform, but struck at the quality of Jewish existence. So affected, *Klal Yisroel* responded to these events by convening the 17th of Tamuz and the Ninth of Av as days of fasting and mourning; not merely for the loss of millions of lives that took place on those days, but for the loss that was suffered in our national existence, and in all Creation, as well.

And so we will continue to mourn this loss until the coming of *Moshiach*, when the *Bais Hamikdosh* will be rebuilt and Israel will be returned to its once and future perfection.

### **The Many Incidents of Churban**

SINCE THE CHURBAN NINETEEN CENTURIES AGO, *Klal Yisroel* has passed through many vicissitudes: pogroms, oppressions, expulsions, and slaughterings.

RABBI WEINBERG's address was delivered as part of a symposium: "Churban Europe — Thirty Years Later" at the 53rd National Convention of Agudath Israel of America last November.

There is no forgetting them, for each of them — the expulsion from Spain, Chmelnicki's murderous raids, the Crusades — has left its mark on *Klal Yisroel*. Each experience in its time was internalized by us as Jews — not only in our *tefilllos* and in our remembering those who were lost during each of these periods, but in terms of our own perspective, our perception of what we are. For each event, there was a spontaneous reaction from within *Klal Yisroel*: *Klal Yisroel* had understood the nature of its essence and it lived accordingly. Thus it reacted to each of these horrors as a *Klal Yisroel*, with a recognition that each event — no matter how tragic — had its place in the continuum that began at Sinai, that had its roots in the Covenant made between the Almighty and His people.

Each of these oppressions reflected the horrors of the *Tochacha*, wherein G-d foretold us at our very inception as a nation that as a G-dly people we would suffer these terrible oppressions. Thus, in the wake of each of these events, with all their attendant horrors and sufferings, the Jews were in fact strengthened, for seeing clearly the direct hand of G-d in their lives. Accepting His chastisement as an expression of His concern and closeness, they reacted with a recognition of a need for *teshuva*, with a recognition that they were treading on the road that leads to *Moshiach*; that these sufferings are the signposts that tell us of the eventuality of the day of G-d's ultimate reign.

No questions were asked, because the answers were clear before a question could be uttered. We knew the "Why"; we knew it in our beings, in our minds, in our hearts, in our souls. It was not necessary for us to articulate them, for we lived with the knowledge that the "Why" was the ongoingness of our special relationship with G-d. Thus Jewry could face tragedies with a confidence that they were a source of strength, ultimately leading to the full redemption.

## Churban With a Difference

THE MOST RECENT CHURBAN, however, is unique in many ways. It is the first time since the *Churban Bayis* that a tragedy has befallen *Klal Yisroel* that has permanently affected its very essence; since 1945, *Klal Yisroel* can never again be the same. Our areas of function, the nature of our problems, the methods we employ to solve them, even our very feelings have all undergone a permanent change because of *Churban* Europe. Not only has the focal point of *Klal Yisroel* been transferred from Europe to *Eretz Yisroel*, which brings with it a host of challenges, problems, and shifts in perspective; not only have we lost the centers of vibrant Jewish life, with all the ramifications this must have on ourselves and our children for all generations to come; but we have lost our prime source of living *Yiddishkeit*. We must now struggle on a different level not only to understand the *hashkofa* and philosophic outlook of Torah, but even to properly experience the simple awareness of our existence as Jews. Thus, our children are more impoverished than all preceding generations, for they cannot draw from this reservoir of a continuous ongoing Jewish existence *per se*. The continuity was weakened and we must now recreate it.

### The Wrong "Why"

EVEN WORSE, HOWEVER, is the extraordinary phenomenon — that for the first time in its existence, *Klal Yisroel* did not recognize with its customary clarity, certainty, and self-awareness that it was to react to events as an *Am Hashem*, a Torah nation. For the first time the question "Why" is posed because of loss of that clarity of insight. *Klal Yisroel* failed to recognize instinctively that this *Churban* also has its place in the continuity of its destiny, that its very horror is a part of our ongoing relationship with G-d, and that its very uniqueness is the truth of G-d's agonizing love for us.

Ironically, never since the *Churban* of 1900 years ago has it been so abundantly clear that all that had occurred is the workings of the direct hand of G-d. Nonetheless, the question "Why" was posed. — Not the "Why" of our Rabbis of old: "Why was the land destroyed?" — the search for the specific sin that earned destruction, which only G-d could pinpoint. But the "By what right?" — subjecting G-d Himself to our judgment, wherein human intelligence presumes to evaluate Divine justice.

### Amaleik Unmasked

PERHAPS THE UNIQUENESS of this strange response can cast a light on a major theme underlying this *Churban*. Indeed it is one with the very problems that we find ourselves facing today, thirty years later.

The *Churban* brought to the fore the total bankruptcy of the belief that Man can fulfill his potential of greatness without cognizance of G-d's existence

and His demands. This, in effect, is the Amaleik approach, and never before was it so clearly revealed and then so roundly defeated. This Amaleik — which had been manifest through Haman and his singleminded obsession to wipe out all of Jewry — was incarnate in Hitler and his murderous designs. In the earlier confrontation with Amaleik, in the days of Mordechai and Esther, the Jews were worthy of the Purim miracle wherein Amaleik was defeated, Haman was destroyed, and not one Jew suffered harm. To some extent, it was the same during this most recent *Churban*: Amaleik had wanted to destroy the totality of *Klal Yisroel* — not as a mere by-product of his desire for power, but as Hitler's primary goal. He was prepared to conquer a world to destroy *Klal Yisroel*. But there the similarity ends. For the first time, Amaleik succeeded in doing as much as it did. And if, again, we witnessed a miracle that in the end saw Amaleik's destruction and *Klal Yisroel's* survival, at what price was this victory bought!

The degree of Hitler/Amaleik's success and his final defeat would seem to put this recent epoch in the category of seminal events recorded in *Tanach* — except that we have neither the Prophets to explain the events to us nor the wise men with *ru'ach hakodesh* (divine spirit) to guide us in our response to them.

Yet undeniably, Amaleik in its ugly reality was unmasked for us. For what is Amaleik but total denial of G-d-given criteria for human conduct? This was the essence of Amaleik when it first accosted the Jews in Refidim when they were freshly redeemed from Egypt — a militant challenge to G-d's rule on Earth. And it was the hallmark of the worldview that came to full fruition in Nazi Germany. Indeed, this unique *Churban* crowned an era when Man's conduct was determined by man-made ethics, formulated by his own understanding of right and wrong . . . an era when Man believed in the greatness of his own scientific thought, his own creativity, and his own instinct for goodness.

### A Truth Still Evident

SURELY IT WAS DIVINE *hashgacha* (guidance) in recent events that displayed so unequivocally that he who depends on his own understanding and feelings rather than on G-d's command to determine good and evil will ultimately shed every semblance of human dignity, totally losing his *tzelem Elokim* (divine image). It was surely obvious thirty years ago that Man cannot depend on Man, Jews cannot depend on Man, and Jewry cannot depend on other nations — not on their humanity, their innate goodness, their sense of justice, nor on their sense of human dignity. After all, even those who did not join in the atrocities of Nazi Germany did join in the silence of complicity that viewed them, and with very few exceptions, managed to avoid even minimal expression of outrage.

Perhaps the era of good will that followed World War II allowed some of us to forget the graphic and painful lessons of the bankruptcy of a G-dless humanity. But surely it is as apparent again today as it was then, during the War. For is human dignity built on the basis of man's understanding on a higher level today than at that time? Are the concepts of truth, concepts of right . . . justice . . . ethics held by men today any more acceptable than they were then? Is it not obvious, or have we yet to learn with even greater clarity that *only* through G-d's Torah and His mitzvos can man ever be more than the beast!

It is essential — not only for Jewry to be Jews, but for mankind to function as humans — that we declare our

total submission to Divine wisdom and Divine rule. Until we accept that there is no other source of truth, no other source of right, no other criterion for human behavior, we will continue to face the very same crises affecting all phases of human existence, awakening alienation and disaffection among all segments of humanity.

We are guilty of neglecting to learn what that entire epoch was about. For our own sake and for the sake of our children we must reaffirm that truth and justice stem only from G-d's Torah and our submission to Him. This is the only source of hope for Jewry and for all mankind.

15

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## The Destruction of European Jewry

# Our Generation: Churban Plus-One

*based on an address by* RABBI YAAKOV PERLOW,

*Rosh Yeshiva of Bais Medrash Yeshurun.*

### To Dare to Comment

CHURBAN EUROPE is a topic that terrifies the imagination, for it is a topic that rests upon the ashes of millions, on the trauma of an entire people. For one who was not there, to talk about *Churban* Europe is indeed a bit pretentious. One must therefore begin by asking forgiveness of the dead and of the living for venturing to tread on this painful path; for entering a field hallowed by the *neshamos* of *kedoshim u'tehorim* (the souls of pure and sacred martyrs); for violating the deep wounds of the living who still carry the scars of agony on their bodies.

But, perhaps precisely because I did *not* suffer, because my generation knew nothing but comfort in

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those black years, I may indeed take the courage to offer a few thoughts on this awesome subject. We are the generation who is, or should be, beset with a certain unspoken anxiety, a mixture of guilt, tension, and bewilderment, who must *especially* seek a way to re-evaluate ourselves and our tasks in the wake of the recent *Churban*.

Rabbi Weinberg discussed a Torah *hashkofa* (view) of what took place. Ultimately, however, after the entire frightful unit has been thoroughly studied, and all the commentaries have been given — if this can *ever* be done — our attitude is then reduced to one of צידוק הדין: "G-d has given, G-d has taken. May His Name be blessed."

G-d blessed His people with a civilization of *kedusha* (sanctity) for 1000 years in Europe — a millennium that produced the spiritual giants and Torah culture that will nourish our people until the end of days. Suddenly,

it was His will that the hand of destruction descend upon that glorious civilization, and it perished before our eyes. "I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath." We weep with the Prophet because we are the generation who saw this calamity befall us, because even thirty years later our spirits have not yet fully adjusted to those frightful events. We are still yearning for consolation and comfort, but "I have no comforter to restore my soul," the sense of despair is still with us, and so we feel we must be mutely content by accepting the decree with deep trust forever expressing our conviction in G-d's true justice as "faithful, without distortion, for He is righteous."

### To Learn to Live

BUT IS THIS ENOUGH? Have we, the first post-*Churban* generation, acquitted ourselves by merely accepting the tragedy as the grave verdict of Divine justice and then depositing it in the annals of perennial Jewish suffering? Should not this cataclysmic event remain with us forever? Should it not have an ongoing impact and lasting effect on our lives and on the lives of our children?

By "impact" I do not mean continued grief and lamentations. *Aveilus* (mourning) has its limits and may not be overdone. But *aveilus* can have another message, besides grief and mourning for the dead: "It is better to go to the house of a mourner than to the house of revelry, for it is the end of all man, and he who is alive will take it to heart." When one goes to a house of mourning he is, of course, reminded that one day he too shall pass away. Reb Mendele Kotzker, however, drew from this passage another teaching as well: "He who is alive . . . should then remind himself that *he* lives yet." Our task, our challenge, after the plague of death, is to learn how to *live*; to *study* the plague of death and turn it into a teacher of life.

Of course, we will continue to exist and multiply and be productive in body and spirit. This is after all what the Prophet Yirmiyahu implored *his* generation to do in their period of exile. "Build houses, plant gardens, raise families," continue to live! But I would submit that these houses that we build, the families that we raise, indeed this very new society that we are hopefully building *b'ezras Hashem* in this country and in *Eretz Yisroel* — *all this dare not be done* without a conscious sense that we are building *with* the ashes and *upon* the ruins of old castles. This means that the *new* generation cannot be permitted to remain untouched spiritually by the events of the preceding generation.

Thirty years ago we were overtaken by grief and suffering. Today we must *direct* that grief and suffering towards specific spiritual ends.

As Rabbeinu Yona of Gerudni wrote in *Shaarei Teshuva*:

*The Jewish Observer* / June, 1976

In the crisis of anguish, one who has true faith sees in the very darkness itself the seeds of new light, as it says: "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; even though I have fallen, I shall arise. When I sit in darkness, G-d is a light to me" (*Micha* 7:8). Our Rabbis said, "If I did not fall, I would not arise. If I did not sit in darkness, G-d would not be a light for me."

Only when darkness leads to new light and decline becomes a harbinger of fresh growth, may one say that the darkness and decline have achieved moral redemption. The calamity of the six million will find its consolation and its ultimate restitution only when it begins to serve as a teaching source to enrich and direct our lives in the new era.

How does one draw spiritual direction from the *Churban*? Primarily by being confronted by the *Churban* with a challenge to recognize the true image of *Knesses Yisroel*, by being compelled to face up to the real purpose of Jewish existence. Modern Jewish history is indeed difficult to comprehend because so much of it is wrapped up in the mysteries of *kavshi deRachmona* and *ikvesa de Meshicha*. But we cannot seek guidelines for the future if we do not attempt to understand a little about the past. Thus, we must go back a bit in Jewish history:

### The Alien Attraction

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION and the ensuing emancipation had toppled the ghettos and exposed *Klal Yisroel* to the so-called humanism of the new era. Some welcomed the opportunity. Many resisted the change. But the universal effect of Emancipation was a newly found respect and undisguised deference for the culture of the nations of the world.

Never were Jews more intellectually at ease with the tenor of society than were the Jews of Germany in the century before Hitler. In Eastern Europe, as well, the liberalism and refinement of the "intelligentsia" was held in quiet but high esteem and even the religious masses and yeshiva students were being overtaken by a creeping, pervasive inferiority complex. A Chassidic Jew who spoke German was viewed with a certain degree of deference even in many a corner of Eastern Europe.

*Gedolei Yisroel* always recognized the fatal consequences of such trends. Study the well-known *Meshech Chochma* on *Parshas Bechukosai* (JO, Sept. '73), and see the prophetic insight with which Reb Meir Simcha illuminates the sad pattern of the times. Until history itself came along and pointed its tragic finger at us.

Those very countries that symbolized *Kultur* and humanism were the first to become de-humanized. The fires that ravaged our people originated in those very

societies with whom Jews had achieved such cultural comfort.

In another part of Europe where the ideology of Marx and Lenin had captured the imagination of the young and oppressed, where the Red flag was proudly waved as the great hope of a new era, where the Jews were in the forefront of the Revolution — for they actually were its intellectual elite — it took just a few short years to discover that this great new hope had given birth to a wild beast. The most awesome fact of our century, it would seem, is the spectre of two monsters, Hitler and Stalin, as *the* predominant figures of world history.

### The Lesson of Self Pride

IF THE EUROPEAN CHURBAN has any message that we can perceive, it is the bankruptcy of alien culture. If the *Churban* has any instruction for us, it is that we must stop revering the alien intellectual. Our entire sense of awe for the heritage of Western Civilization has left us with a malaise of religious insecurity and weak posture. It is long overdue that we begin to regain our balance and spiritual pride. (This does not touch at all upon the need for secular education and the merit of the philosophy of *Torah Im Derech Eretz*. That is quite another matter. That approach, properly understood, seeks to adapt to the *needs* of the general society, to take from it whatever elements are considered worthwhile, and, on the contrary, to master them with the values of Torah and *mitzvos*. The emphasis of this discussion is the need to eliminate from our individual and communal psyches the false notion that *Vernunft* and *Wissenschaft* of other nations possess moral virtue. Our sense of awe and our devotion, after the *Churban*, must turn *exclusively inward to our culture and our heritage*.)

יבחר לנו את נחלתנו את גאון יעקב אשר אהב סלה

"He chose for our heritage the Pride of Yaakov." Let the pride of Yaakov that He so loves finally emerge from within us in the joy of our service, in our praying and waiting for Moshiach, in our life as a Chosen People.

אשור לא יושיענו על סוס לא נרכב ולא נאמר עוד אלהינו למעשה ידינו אשר בך ירחם יתום.

We are a nation of orphans after the catastrophe, but we will not find solace in the largesse of other nations or in the high councils of the UN — *only* in G-d and His Torah. *This* is the primary lesson of *Churban* Europe.

But there are other lessons, other demands.

### To Complete Their Assignment

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SIX MILLION was a cosmic blow to the *neshama* (soul) of our people as much as it was to the nation's physical existence. The redemption

of the *Churban* will not be achieved by people of little vision and limited scope. The redemption demands an era of heroic responses. It demands that the *neshama* of *Knesses Yisroel*, so drained, so ravaged by pain and torture, be resuscitated and brought back to health. It demands that our lives and deeds replenish the treasuries of sanctity laid waste by the murders. It demands of our diminished people, of the still more diminished communities of Torah-committed Jews, that their *Yiddishkeit* and their actions must consciously replace that of our perished brethren. It demands that we continue *their* unfinished work, that we be *their* replacement.

The *Churban* of the European yeshivos must convey to every yeshiva student the constant reminder that *Klal Yisroel* can ill afford today — if it ever could — any apathy or sluggishness in devotion to Torah study. Every *ben Torah* today must live with the compelling realization that *his* learning has to make up for that of ten like him whose lives were swept up in the flames.

So great is the awesome *moral* challenge of *Churban* Europe, that it is, I think *the* most pervasive existential factor of our lives today. If this *Churban* does not somehow awaken a more profound attachment to *spiritual* living in ourselves, in our families, in our yeshivas, in our organizations, then the *Churban* is tragically not yet over, the wasteland is still with us. The ringing words of *Yishayahu!*

ובנו חרבות עולם שוממות ראשונים יקוממו וחדשו ערי חרב שוממות דור ודור.

*These* are the demands that *Churban* Europe imposes upon us — as individuals and as a community of Torah Jews.

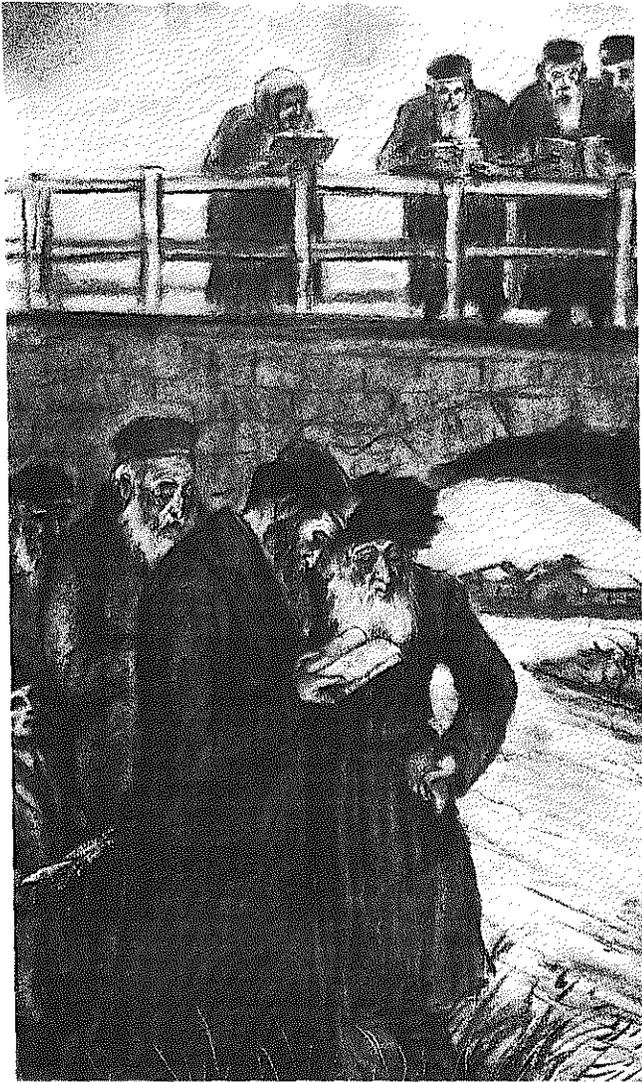
### To Relive the Glories

RABBI AHARON KOTLER זצ"ל was an individual who was, perhaps, more than anyone else, responsible for the renaissance of Torah in America. He considered it his mission to replant Kletzk . . . Lithuania . . . and the yeshiva empire of Europe on new soil. This was the unspoken meaning of his life and work in this country, to which he was truly an ordained emissary of Providence.

We small people, however, cannot allow ourselves the privilege of unspoken deeds. The education of our children and our own spiritual re-enforcement make it imperative that we *articulate* and repeatedly *re-tell* the tragedy of European Jewry. But not only of the horrors and killings should we be speaking, but also of the glory and richness of that great authentic civilization.

I envision a father, one of those who escaped from Poland, telling his son about the ghettos and death camps. If that story, however, begins and ends there, and does not depict and re-live the society that preceded the death camps, then only a half-truth has been told; and that father has done his son a grave injustice. The story of Jewish death must be placed in the panorama

It is our task to recapture the glory of that great authentic civilization of thousand years' standing that was so brutally destroyed.



of Jewish life, to which death was only the tragic finale. What preceded Auschwitz and Treblinka were the Jewish Sabbaths and festivals, the vibrancy of the Warsaw *navlohkess*, the *chassidus* of the Lodzer *shtiblach*, the beauty and vigor of a dynamic Jewish world.

I recall an old Chassidic Jew reminiscing about his years in Poland, suddenly saying: "The *Shabbosos* and *Yomim Tovim* that I saw — you'll never see the likes of them. Perhaps, however, in your lifetime, you may yet catch a taste, a semblance, a whiff of the *amol'ige kedusha* of old that we experienced.<sup>1</sup>

The Jewish Observer / June, 1976

It is this vision of the *kedusha* of old that I never saw which sustains my *Shabbos* and *Yomim Tovim* today, and which I hope I can impart to my children, as well.

For this reason, the *she'eiris hapeleita* — the survivors of *Churban* Europe — have such a vital, educative duty to fulfill in our day:

*We, the younger generation, never had the opportunity to see that amol'ige kedusha. But you, as eye witnesses, did experience the glory of European Jewry, and you can better comprehend the meaning of this disaster. Thus, you have a special obligation to us of the new era. Realize that thirty or forty years from now there will hardly be anyone to tell what it was like in Jewish Lublin, the batei midrashim of Cracow, the yeshivos of Lithuania, the kehillos of Germany. You, then, have a sacred obligation to edify us with your reminiscences, and to inspire us with your impressions of this world that no longer exists. You must continuously teach this parsha to your children, and to our children, "When you sit in your house, when you go on your way, when you repose, and when you arise."<sup>2</sup>*

### The Legacy of Greatness

HOW OFTEN HAVE WE, fathers and *mechanchim*, spoken directly to our children and *talmidim* about *Churban Europe*? Have we ever told them about the last days of Reb Menachem Zembe and Reb Elchonon Wasserman (May G-d avenge their blood!)? How much do our older *yeshiva bachurim* and *kolel* fellows know about the physical *mesiras nefesh* and *kiddush Hashem* of these towering figures? . . . It seems to me that if a *yeshiva bachur's* acquaintance with Reb Elchonon is limited to explanations in his *Koveitz Shiurim* and he has never heard or read about how Reb Elchonon lived, and how he went to the *akeida* and died, and what he spoke in his last moments, the *chinuch* of this *bachur* is deficient of a great inspirational model for how an *erlicher yid* is supposed to live — and die, if need be. Fortunately, the latest edition of the *Koveitz Shiurim* records the last words of Reb Elchonon before he was

1. אועלבע שבחים און ימים טובים ווי איך האב געזעהן וועסטו שוין קיינמאל נישט זעהן. אפשר וועסטו נאך אבער אין דיין לעבן מרגיש זיין עפעס א טעם, א מעין, א רוח פון די אמאליגע קדושה וואס מיר האבן נאך מיטגעלעבט.
2. מיר, דער אינגערער דור, האבען דאך נישט זוכה געווען צו זעהן די דאווענען "אמאליגע קדושה", אבער איר, עדי ראה, איהר האט דאך יא מיטגעלעבט דעם פראכט פון איראפיישען אידענטום, איר פארשטייט דאך בעסער דעם באדייט פון דעם פינסטערן חורבן. האט איר דאך א באזונדערע פליכט צו אונז אלעמען פון נייעם דור. אין א 30-40 יאהר ארום וועט דאך שוין נישט זיין כמעט ווער סיואל דערציילען ווי ס'האט אויסגעזעהן דאס אידישע לובלין. די בתי מדרשים פון קראקע די ישיבות פון ליטע די קהלות פון אשכנז. ליגט דאך אויף אייך א הייליגער חוב אונז אנצו ווארימען מיט די זכרונות אונז מעורר צו זיין מיט דעם רושם פון די וועלט פון אמאל, איהר מוזט די דאווענען פרשה לערנען כסדר, מיט אייערע קינדער און מיט אונזערע קינדער בשבתך בביתך ובלכתך בדרך ובשכרך ובקומך. . . .

shot, as remembered by living witnesses:

He said, "In heaven they seem to consider us tzaddikim, for it seems that we have been chosen to atone with our bodies for Klal Yisroel. If so, we must repent, sincerely and fully, now, on the spot. Time is short. We must realize that our sacrifice will be a more perfect one if we hallow ourselves. In that way, we will save the lives of our brothers and sisters in America. Let none of us think an impure thought which would render us unfit as a korban. We are now able to fulfill the greatest of mitzvos . . . 'You scorched her with fire and with fire You are destined to rebuild her.' The very fires that consume our bodies are the fires that will rebuild the Jewish nation."<sup>3</sup>

Ribbono Shel Olom! How many Mussar lectures, how many essays on piety are contained in these last words of this saint! He urged his fellow *korbanos* to *teshuva*, to concentrate on the *mitzva* motive of their acts rather than on personal thoughts . . . to atone for their brothers and sisters in America . . . to save Klal Yisroel. Such a vast Torah of Jewish sanctity, of *Ahavas Yisroel*, of sacrifice — ought not this episode and others like it be a part of our present-day Torah curriculum?

And what about the epic tale of the Lubavitcher Chassidim who persevered not five years under Hitler, but thirty years under Stalin, who raised their children with purity and sanctity under the noses of the NKVD, who built *chadorim* and *mikva'os* literally with *mesiras nefesh* — with risk to their lives and the fullest measure of devotion? Their story has hardly even begun to be told.

When some of them managed to leave Russia in 1948, one of the elders remarked:

"You realize that we are leaving the world of truth and we are entering a world of falsehood."

"Leaving the world of truth"? Was there any greater world of falsehood than Communist Russia?

So he explained:

"Here if one was an erlicher Yid it was with emes — truth. One earned no money through it, no recognition — only tzorres and weariness. Here one served G-d with emes. But in the new world of freedom that awaits us, who knows? There one can earn some money through his Yiddishkeit and one can gain a bit of recognition. There, all sorts of personal motives and interests creep in. There, I fear, it can become a world of falsehood for us."<sup>4</sup>

Such was the thinking of these great Jews of simple purity. When comparing the quality of our lives today with theirs under Stalin, we may well shrink with shame. Their ordeals and the entire recent era of Jewish life and death should thus be for us one great *mussar sefer* — a vast volume of ethical imperatives.

## Between Darkness and Light

CHURBAN EUROPE CAN BE A NATURAL, effective medium for *chinuch* (education) in our homes and schools. The more we study it, the deeper it will touch us, the better Jews we will be. It will imbue us with a sense of humility and unworthiness. It will refine our character, deepen our *Ahavas Yisroel*. It will uplift the quality of our *Yiddishkeit*. It will implore us to conduct ourselves with greater modesty, to curb the excesses of luxury and extravagance all too rampant today: When thousands are spent for flowers and other frills at *heimishe* Jewish weddings — sometimes by the very survivors of Auschwitz themselves — such conduct, aside from its moral arrogance, profanes the memory of the *Churban*, and is a betrayal of the ideals for which our parents and teachers lived and died.

Above all, the *Churban* must finally awaken within us — individually and as a community — a deep sense of history, an ever conscious feeling that we are part of the greatest enigma of Jewish existence. We are the generation that must grope between darkness and light, between tragedy and hope! On our shoulders was placed the historic duty to mend the torn *Sefer Torah* and put on it a new beautiful mantle. We are the ones who have been chosen to carry the wounded, suffering "lost sheep, Israel" back to its eternal shepherd. If we are worthy of the calling, if we succeed in our task we shall then look back to the *Churban* and proclaim to the entire world:

אל תשמחי אויבתי לי כי נפלתי קמתי כי אשב בחשך ד' אור לי

"Do not rejoice enemies of Yisroel!

Indeed I have fallen but I have arisen again"

True, "I did dwell in the darkness" but "G-d is my ultimate light." He will bring us back to life and lead us on to *Ge'ulah*.

כי עמך מקור חיים באורך נראה אור

"For with You is the source of life,

In Your illumination will light appear."

3. אין הימעל (He said) האלט מען אונז מסתמא פאר צדיקים ווייל מען וויל דאך אז מיר זאלען מכפר ויין מיט אונזערע גופים פאר דעם כלל ישראל. דארפען מיר טאקע תשובה טאהן. יעצט, גלייך אויפן ארט. די צייט איז קורץ דארפען מיר אין זינען האבען אז מיר וועלען ויין בעסערע קרבנות. אויב מיר וועלען תשובה טאהן וועלען מיר אָפּראַטעווען אונזערע אמעריקאנער ברידער און שוועסטער. זאל הלילה ניש אריינפאלען ביי קיינעם אין מוח א פסוליע מחשבה וואס איז פיגול און מאכט דעם קרבן פסול. מיר זענען יעצט מקיים די גרעסטע מצווה, באש הצתה ובאש אתה עתיד לבנותה דאס פייער וואס ברענט אונזערע גופים איז דאס פייער וואס וועט צוריק אויפּרעכטען דאס אידישע פאלק.

4. איהר ווייסט מיר פארען יעצט ארויס פון אן עולם האמת און אריין אין אן עולם השקר. ארויס פון אן עולם האמת? דא אז מיאז געווען אן ערליכער איד איז דאס געווען מיטן אמת. קיין געלט האט מען נישט געמאכט דערביי, קיין כבוד נישט געקראגען, נאר צרות אין מאטערניש, דא האט מען געדינט דעם אייבערשטן מיטן אמת, אבער אין די נייע פרייע וועלט, ווער ווייסט? דארטן מאכט מען פון אידישקייט אביסעל געלט מען פארדינט דערביי אביסל כבוד. דארטן כאפען זיך ארויס נגיעות און פניות. דארט, האב איך מורא וועט פאר אונז ויין אן עולם השקר.

## The Last Mashgiach of Slobodka

Hillel Goldberg

*In Eastern European yeshivos, a teacher rich in the Torah's wisdom and endowed with psychological insight served as mentor to students in the capacity of Mashgiach. This position represented an innovation of the Lithuanian Mussar Movement, which stressed the development of ethical and introspective capacities as well as intellectual abilities and Torah knowledge. The Movement began in the mid-nineteenth century and flourished until World War II when, together with most other expressions of Eastern European Orthodoxy, it was cruelly cut down by Nazism. The Movement spawned a number of educational centers, one of which was Slobodka. The author, an American in Jerusalem, writes of the prelude to discovering the riches of the Mussar Movement and the teachings of one of its masters.*

A profound but somewhat obscure Torah volume written in this century is *Toras Avraham*. I had not yet given it serious attention when its contents were first reviewed for me by a disciple of the volume's late author, Rabbi Abraham Grodzinski.

"Rabbi Grodzinski was the last Mashgiach in Slobodka," said the disciple.

A routine statement, a minor part of our conversation, I can't explain why it had such an impact on me. For one thing, I had little knowledge of Slobodka in any of its connotations — as a Lithuanian city, as a yeshiva, as an historical concept. I had until then never heard of the *Mashgiach* before. And all that I know about him now is that he was the last Mashgiach there.

PERHAPS THAT'S IT — he was the last. Of course, I knew what that meant. Just as there had been a last Jew in Vilna, a last one in Kovno, in Bialystock, in Warsaw, so had there been a last one in Slobodka. And if there had been a last Jew there, then it only made sense that there had been a last *Mashgiach*, too.

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A discordant term: "last one." An unprecedented term. A term that leaves the taste of ashes in your mouth and the throb of questions in your heart if you think about them at all, which, of course, you do.

You cannot express all of the questions. You cannot even conceive all of them. But one question, to a religious Jew, takes form immediately, for it has been asked so many times that it has become a spiritual instinct: "*Why did tzaddikim (the righteous) die?*"

It's a strange question in today's context. People generally ask, "Why did *any* Jew die in a gas chamber?"

The religious Jew can't always view it that way. His approach is not acceptable? Too bad — there is nothing he can do or intends to do about it. He's been trained that way. He's been asking the same questions, pursuing the identical quests, renewing the same values for longer than he can remember. All this may appear conceptually unchallenging, but it's far from easy in practice. Renewal means struggle, sorrow, exaltation, nitty-gritty: life. That's the way the religious Jew is.

HENCE, THE QUESTION ENDURES, "*Why did tzaddikim die? Haven't we been taught that there is absolute justice? Isn't the lot of tzaddikim supposed to embody that justice?*"

As much as the question persists, the answer evades concretization. It's true, there are answers, but in their formulation, somehow, they cheapen the question rather than answer it. If our intellects can be satisfied, our emotions cannot.

Whereupon the instinct shifts. The question persists, but the action, the struggle — the response — changes. Memorialization, replacing philosophizing, comes to the fore. Not: *Why did tzaddikim die?* But: *they did not die!* The response: to preserve their memory, to chart their last steps, to ponder the secret of their beginnings. This means research, writing, publishing. It means books, articles. It means memorial foundations. It means: fantasy. The dead will not rejoin us. The disfigured visages depicting their ugly demise — etched in-

delibly on our minds — cannot depart. The imponderability remains.

YET, A NEW COURSE of conduct has been fixed — to preserve. For to preserve means to carry on. It means, not that the dead are revived, not that their last steps are any less painful for us, not that the question is answered. It means that *we* are revived. *We* live again; *our* dignity is restored. The past — we have no choice but to pursue it. Yet as we do, we become ever more detached from it. As we reveal its treasures, they become ever more distant.

Distant: in their own reality. But in our sphere of

reality, we become sure-footed again. We become Jews with a straight back, and even a straight mind. More: the yearning for our Creator can emerge within us once again; the final *tikkun* (restoration) is achievable. We renew, revitalize the jubilation requisite to the proper celebration of His commands. The question subsides; indeed, we persist in asking different questions, such as, "*Who was the last Mashgiach in Slobodka? What was his greatness? His legacy, his discoveries — how may we nurture them?*"

For our own sake, we pursue such questions passionately.

Don't we?



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## The Destruction of European Jewry

### " — Like Sheep"?

Yisroel Saperstein

ROOTS ARE ALWAYS important, especially in times of shifting values. So people ask, *What was it like before I was born? How did my predecessors live? How did they die?*

Some young Jews find their past a stumbling block to defining their personal identity, for how can they be proud to be descendants of a people who, like sheep, submitted *en masse* to slaughter at the hands of the Nazis?

This stigma has been placed on our nation because it is believed that Jews behaved in a cowardly fashion during World War II — a reaction that was uniquely Jewish.

Nothing dispells myths as well as facts. Let us listen to the sounds of history and the facts will emerge:

*"We have yielded to force. Since we are not prepared even in this terrible hour to shed blood, we have decided to offer no resistance."*

This sounds like the voice of a miserable Ghetto Jew, without backbone, or dignity — for who but an Eastern

European, Golus-complexed Jew could be so cowardly?

But listen again. It is the voice of the Chancellor of Austria, Dr. Schuschnig, broadcasting his country's surrender to Germany on Friday evening, March 11, 1938.

Another voice rings out from the past:

*"We were abandoned, we stand alone," he declared, explaining his lack of resistance to German seizure.*

Is it a typical apologist attempting to rationalize the behavior of his shameful Jewish ancestors?

Listen closer. It is the broadcast of General Sirovy, Premier of Czechoslovakia, explaining Czech surrender of the Sudetanland to Germany at 5 PM, September 30, 1938. This surrender doomed close to one million Czech citizens to being uprooted from their homes and deprived of all personal possessions. Yet this country, with its fully prepared armed forces, declared that she was abandoned and therefore could offer no resistance . . . She was surrendering.

*Czechoslovakia surrendering?* How could an independent country that had the most formidable defense fortifications in Europe next to the Maginot

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Line in France, a nation that had a well-equipped, well-trained, modern army of 35 divisions — how could it surrender the Sudetanland, the key to its entire defense structure without any resistance?

After the Czechs yielded, the Nazis inspected their fortifications. They had this to say: "The Czech border fortifications caused general astonishment . . . . A test bombardment showed that our weapons would not have prevailed against them." Even the usually arrogant Hitler was impressed and admitted that taking them through battle would have been very difficult. (From the memoirs of the Nazi Minister of Armaments, Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, p. 111.)

"The position is quite clear, resistance would be folly." A quote from another of those cringing, shuffling, old-time Ghetto Jews — right?

Wrong. Those words were spoken by Dr. Hachu, President of Czechoslovakia on 2:00 AM on Monday, March 15, 1939, as he surrendered what remained of Czechoslovakia to Hitler.

HISTORY IS MORE THAN SOUNDS. It is also scenes to be viewed and analyzed.

So watch as one-and-a-half million humans are driven eastward across the Vistula River, after having been dragged out of their homes. The temperature is -40 degrees F, and freezing to death is a common phenomenon. *How does this great mass of humanity*

*permit itself to be driven? Why are Jews so cowardly?*

A closer look reveals that 1,200,000 of these people are Poles. Only the remaining one-fifth are Jews. Did anybody ever wonder why Poles permitted themselves to be driven, to freeze to death? Somehow I've never heard the question asked.

BUT THERE'S MORE TO BE SEEN: It's hard to believe one's eyes, watching 5,750,000 military men — men trained in the art of warfare — being marched by the Nazis to certain death by starvation and exposure to freezing conditions. These men were brave Russian soldiers, now Nazi prisoners. *Were these, too, "cowardly men" who could not think for themselves, unable to form a plot, too defeated in spirit to unite to rebel?*

THERE IS YET ONE MORE SCENE:

"They were led barefoot to the quarry . . . . At the bottom of the landing the guards loaded stones onto their backs to carry to the top of the steps. On the first trip up, the stones they handled weighed some 60 lbs., and they were encouraged with generous blows . . . . The second trip up the stones were heavier, and whenever these men sank under their burden they were kicked and bludgeoned. By evening half were dead, the rest holding out till morning, when they too died."



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*Are you searching for heroes? — giants of the spirit? It was our Jews — and only our Jews — who, having been forced to surrender their bodies as other nations surrendered theirs, still remained in command of their own spirits.*

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*Why didn't these men throw their stones at their tormentors? Didn't they clearly see that they were being worked rapidly to death? Why was none of them courageous enough to take some Nazis with them? But what can one expect from cowardly Jews? Oh? — These are not Jews? They are US Air Force officers? Oh.*

IT WOULD SEEM OBVIOUS that when men — or nations — are faced with the threat of a more powerful force, they endeavor to preserve their lives for as long as possible. As a noted authority points out:

*"How could a group, even a large group, rise in revolt against the marching guns, flame throwers, and tanks of the SS?"*

When one sees *in print* such an obvious explanation for the total absence of any wide-spread revolt against the Nazis, it seems almost *too* self-evident; but at least it clears the air of the malicious canard hurled at the previous generation.

Except that the writer quoted is *not* explaining Jewish behaviour. He is discussing the conduct of *another* nation.

APPARENTLY, THEN, IT IS TIME for us to speak for ourselves — to ourselves . . .

When Alexander Solzhenitzen can declare in an interview published in thirteen languages that the men with whom he was imprisoned in Communist Russia are giants, it is time to examine the true greatness of *our* imprisoned. Reading *One Day in the Life of Ivan Desinovitich*, which describes one of the camps where these 'giants' dwell, one finds very little to justify the title 'giant' (except, perhaps, for one fellow who eats with his back straight instead of hunched). Not only is there a complete absence of any bravery in the popular cowboy-and-Indian style, but there is not even mention of one act of moral courage! *Did anyone give up a portion of food for someone else? Did any groups convene to read books of democratic ideals, to declare that they are ready to die for their ideal?*

It is time, then, to appreciate the idealism of the Jewish people. From the time the first Jew was thrown into the ovens, — that is the first Jew, *Avrohom Avinu*

— the Jewish nation time and again has placed its ideals above life itself.

During this past thousand years of *Golus* in Christian lands — where restrictions on every facet of life abounded, where pogroms, imprisonment, and decrees of expulsion were never rare — every individual Jew knew that if he wanted to live safely, securely, and comfortably, all he had to do was enter the nearest church and say one word — *Yes*. Not only would the restrictions suffered for being a Jew be removed, not only would he receive vast honors and recognition from the Church for his act; but, often, as a seasoned merchant he would find countless new opportunities open to him and he would grow in both riches and power. Yet the persecuted Jews remained Jews, true to their ideals and faithful to their traditions.

The fires of *mesiras nefesh* continued to burn in the breasts of our people, even in the most terrifying of circumstances. Jews who smuggled into the concentration camps *tefillin*, *Chumashim*, *shofros*, and even *Sifrei Torah*, instead of an extra morsel of food, or their jewels, or money . . . Jews who lit Chanukah *neiros* in the depths of Auschwitz and Buchenwald — where they had a *minyan* . . . Jews who, after a whole night of body-breaking labor, went with their last ounce of strength to the back of their barracks to put on a pair of *tefillin* . . . The queues for putting on *tefillin* were so long in Buna-Auschwitz that a *gabbai* was appointed to make certain that nobody kept on the *tefillin* for longer than a brief moment. In Tirnau, Jews lined up in the dead of night, from 3:00 am to 5:30, for a turn to put on the *tefillin* . . . Jews who baked matzos in the Kluga Death Camp in Estonia, where there was a regular *minyan* complete with *tallis* and *tefillin* . . . Jews whose *V'ahavta l're'acha komocha* (love for his fellow) was so strong that slave laborers who were allocated less than survival rations left over some of their own precious portions of food for others in a nearby concentration camp, who would sneak over at night for a little sustenance. It was our Jews who, even after having been forced to surrender their bodies as other nations had surrendered theirs, still remained in command of their own spirits.

It is time for us to proclaim our heroes, if not to those who read thirteen languages, then at least among ourselves and our children. 

## Waiting For . . . Ge'ulah

*based on an address by RABBI ELYA SVEI, Rosh Yeshiva of Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia; translated and prepared for publication by RABBI MENDEL KAUFMAN*

Rabbi Yitzchok says, "The Torah teaches us, when a person performs a mitzva he should do it wholeheartedly, for if Reuvein had known that the Torah would write (Bereishis 37:21) 'And Reuvein heard (the plan of his brothers to kill Yoseif) and he saved him from them,' then he would have carried Yoseif back to his father on his shoulders; And if Aharon had known that the Torah would write (Shemos 4:14) (in telling about Moshe at their first meeting before going to Pharaoh) 'And he will see you and he will rejoice in his heart,' then Aharon would have greeted Moshe with dancing and beating drums."...Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says, "In days of yore when a person performed a mitzva, the Prophet would record it (as part of Biblical history), but now if one performs a mitzva, who records it? Eliyahu and Moshiach record it and G-d certifies it."

— The Midrash

THIS MIDRASH REVEALS to us a new dimension in the performance of a mitzva.

Let us take the Midrashic interpretation of Reuvein's mitzva first. Reuvein performs a great mitzva in saving his brother's life. Not only is this an act of *hatzalah*, (saving a life), but it is also an act of great selflessness. Of all the sons of Yaakov, it was Reuvein who had the most to gain from the elimination of Yoseif. It was Yoseif who posed the greatest threat to Reuvein. Indeed, he eventually superseded Reuvein as *b'chor*, in

RABBI SVEI's address was presented in Yiddish to a gathering sponsored by *D'eylim*, RABBI KAUFMAN is Rabbi of the Young Israel of Briarwood (Queens, N.Y.) and is assistant principal of the Beth Jacob High School of Yeshiva Rabbi S.R. Hirsch (NYC).

the right of primogenitor and received an extra portion among his brothers, becoming two tribes (Ephraim and Menashe) among the twelve, Reuvein remaining but one.

Yet as great as these aspects of the mitzva were, there was one aspect that Reuvein himself did not foresee: the aspect of immortality. Of this the Midrash tells us, had Reuvein foreseen that his act of selflessness would also be touched with immortality by being recorded in the eternal record of the Torah, then he would have performed the mitzva on an even greater scale and he would have carried Yoseif back to his father on his shoulders.

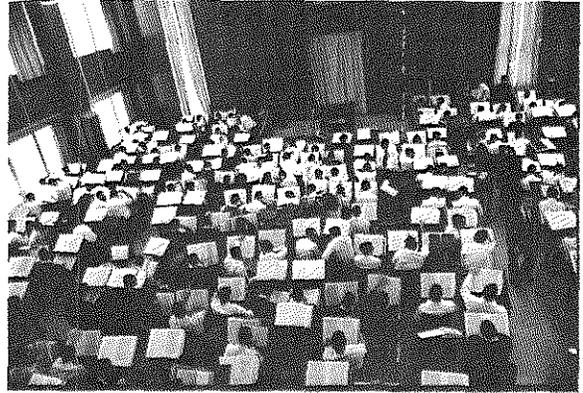
The Midrash continues with the same analysis of Aharon's mitzva. This mitzva also has a number of aspects. First, Aharon was to play a vital role in the redemption of the Jewish People. Second, selflessly he rejoiced upon the appointment of his younger brother as the one who will lead this great exodus from bondage. However, just as with Reuvein, Aharon did not foresee the aspect of immortality in his mitzva. Had he known that his great act of selflessness would be immortalized by being recorded in the eternal record of Torah, then he would have performed it on an even greater scale and he would have greeted Moshe with dancing and beating drums.

The Midrash then quotes Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's question: In the days of the Prophets a mitzva would attain this added dimension of immortality by being recorded by the prophets in the eternal Biblical record, but today, how do mitzvos attain this added dimension? Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi answers: By being recorded by Eliyahu and Moshiach. This means that each mitzva is important not only for itself but also because it brings

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*The Midrash's question: "Who waited to see the Diapora develop into glory and splendour?" is really a challenge to us to emulate the strivings of the great men of earlier generations. The challenge was met by Rabbi Aharon Kotler זצ"ל in establishing Torah on a higher plane in America . . .*

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closer the *Ge'ulah* (redemption) as symbolized by Eliyahu and *Moshiach*.

This is the message of the Midrash. We must live with the knowledge that every *mitzva* we do transcends its immediate time and place. It becomes part of the eternal process of ushering in the *Ge'ulah*. This would serve to inspire us to greater heights of achievement, because as with Reuvein and Aharon, he who realizes that what he is doing will live on unto eternity, he will more likely expend maximum effort in this endeavor.

#### **"Who Would Have Expected . . .?"**

WE CAN GAIN A FURTHER INSIGHT into the importance of the fulfillment of a *mitzva* from another Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba*, end of *Sidra Vayeishev*). This Midrash gives a list of incidents in Jewish history when the unexpected became reality. The Midrash says:

*Who would have expected that Avraham and Sarah, who were old, would have a son? Who would have expected that Yaakov, who crossed the Jordan on the way to his uncle Laban's house with just his walking stick in his hand, would return wealthy? Who would have expected that Yoseif would go from prison, to become Pharaoh's Viceroy? Who would have expected that Moshe, who had been thrown into the river, would become what he became? . . . (and the Midrash concludes) Who would have expected that the Diaspora would someday see glory and splendour? And who would have expected that the Sanctuary of David (the Temple) that had been destroyed would be rebuilt by G-d?*

The obvious purpose of the Midrash was to console the Jewish People, who had seen their Temple destroyed and their remnants scattered throughout the world. The Midrash is telling the sorely pressed Jewish nation, no matter how heavy the burden of oppression may be and no matter how bleak the future may seem,

Jews must never despair. Here are occasions in Jewish history when the unexpected became reality. No one expected to see the aged (Avraham and Sarah) give birth, nor the condemned to prison (Yoseif) or to death (Moshe) to ultimately reach power. Yet miraculously their fortunes were reversed overnight from bad to good. So it is with the Diaspora and the rebuilding of the Temple: as impossible as it may seem, Jewish fortunes can and will be reversed from oppression to redemption.

#### **"Who Waited . . .?"**

THERE IS HOWEVER ANOTHER INTERPRETATION that can be given to this Midrash. In the Hebrew original the Midrash begins each example with the words, *mi mechake* — which was translated as, "who would have expected?" *Mi mechake*, could also be translated as "who waited?" so that now the Midrash may read: "Who waited (to see) Avraham and Sarah, who were old, have a son? . . . Who waited (to see) Yoseif, who was in prison, become Pharaoh's Viceroy? Who waited (to see) Moshe, who had been thrown into the river, become what he became? . . ."

And in each of these cases the Torah or the Midrash tells us who it was who waited. For example, in the case of Moshe the Torah tells us (*Shemos 2, 4*) that it was his sister Miriam who waited: "And his sister stood from afar to see what would become of him." According to the Midrash, it was Miriam who prophesied that her mother Yocheved would bear a son who would be the redeemer of Israel. When Moshe was born and the whole house was filled with light, her father Amram kissed her on the head, for he saw that her prophecy was being fulfilled. When Moshe was placed into the river, her father then slapped her and said, "See what has become now of your prophecy!" But Miriam did not lose heart. She knew that her prophecy would be fulfilled. So she stood from afar to see what she could



... And the challenge was met by the leadership of the Satmar Rebbe, שליט"א, in rebuilding his community, its Kehilla structure, and its vibrant educational institutions in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn.

do to help the prophecy become reality. And in fact she was instrumental in bringing Moshe back to his mother that she should raise him.

This is what the Midrash is asking of each of these periods of history: *mi mechake*, who was waiting — who was striving and looking forward to the fulfillment of Divine prophecy. The list includes Avraham and Sarah waiting for the son they knew would come, Yoseif waiting in prison knowing that one way or another his dreams of leadership would someday be fulfilled, Moshe waiting in Pharaoh's palace for the redemption he knew would come.

### Some Who Waited

IN THIS VEIN WE CAN NOW UNDERSTAND the end of the Midrash, which asks: "Who waited to see the Diaspora someday develop into glory and splendour?" for the Midrash is challenging us to emulate the great men of early generations. Similarly, the answer to this final "who waited" can be found in the stories of the great Torah personalities who dedicated their lives to implanting the glory and splendour of Torah wherever Jews were found. One such story would be that of the Rosh Yeshiva [Reb Aharon Kotler זצ"ל].

When the Rosh Yeshiva came to the United States during World War II, he found the level of Torah study in America very limited. Conventional wisdom had it that with the destruction of European Jewry and its Torah institutions, the future of Torah in America was bleak. But he seemed to know that he had been saved from the fiery furnace for a Divine reason. He "waited" to see the golden Diaspora of America also attain the glory and splendour of Torah, as he had seen it in the Torah fortresses of Europe. With superhuman energy and courage, he first threw himself into rescue work, to save as many of the remnants of the *Churban* as he could. Then he threw himself into the work of building Torah in America. He selected Lakewood, N.J. and founded his yeshiva, Beth Medrosh Govoha, which

produced Torah leaders and scholars who then went forth to bring Torah to the length and breadth of America. He was not deterred by obstacles, financial crises, or skepticism, because he "waited" to see the Diaspora once more attain glory and splendor in Torah. He knew that everything he did would lead to the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy, that through all times and in all lands, Torah must and will be the driving force of the Jewish nation.

In the same vein, we must appreciate how the Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, arrived to these shores broken in body after being interred in Nazi concentration camps, but not broken in spirit. *Mi mechake* — he succeeded in rebuilding his community, its *Kehilla* structure, its vibrant educational institutions, in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn.

### The Power of a Mitzva

IT IS NOW THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND the end of the Midrash which asks, "Who waited to see the rebuilding of the Sanctuary of David?" The Midrash is not merely consoling us. The Midrash is actually asking, as with the great men of the past, who waited and worked for the eventual fulfillment of Divine prophecy of redemption, who is *today* waiting and striving to bring about the eventual rebuilding of the Temple.

The responsibility of "waiting" devolves upon each of us, on his or her level. How does one go about "waiting"? As indicated by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi; the *mitzvos* a Jew fulfills are recorded by Eliyahu and Moshiach because they bring nearer the final redemption. As we raise our level of Torah study and fulfillment of *mitzvos* so do we bring ever closer the ultimate and complete fulfillment of the Divine promise.

Were we to bear in mind that every *mitzva* we perform has the power to bring the *Ge'ulah* that much closer, how much more thought and care would we invest in every *mitzva* we do! 

# Who Needs Yiddish?

— an urgent question posed by RABBI SHIMON SUSHOLTZ,  
a question that may be too late for proper discussion.

Two debaters were standing before Hadrian. One was extolling the virtues of speech; the other, those of silence. Said the first, "My lord, there is nothing better than speech. For without it how could the praises of the bride be sung, how could ship go asea, how could there be commerce in the world?"

Then Hadrian turned to the second: "What have you got to say in favor of silence?"

As he was about to reply, the first reached over and slapped him on the mouth.

"Why did you slap him?"

Because, my lord, I use speech in favor of speech. But he wants to put my cause to work for his!" (Yalkut Bamidbar 12)

The writer is in a somewhat similar position, using the English language to extoll the virtues of . . . Yiddish. But there is no need for anyone to reach over and chastise him. I have been in *chinuch* (Torah education) for over a decade, all this while teaching Torah in English. And I would not trade the *zechus* of those years' labors for anything under the sun. But the inescapable necessity of using English for transmitting Torah has not made it any less unnatural — and my mouth does hurt. . . .

## Why the Question?

WE IN TODAY'S TORAH WORLD are living a pronounced paradox. It is true that our generation has seen a tremendous growth of Torah and Torah living; growth

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in depth — of strong commitment and tenacious dedication; and growth in breadth — of widening horizons and reaching out. But it is also true that, at the very same time, we have been robbed of a whole set of values, attitudes and standards of conduct and replaced them with inferior-quality imitations — and we have not even noticed the difference. Admittedly, this is a broad theme, way beyond the scope of this article; but it does apply here, too.

Time was, not so long ago, when a yeshiva *bachur* just *had* to learn Yiddish in order both to hear *shi'urim* and to really belong to his chosen milieu. Time was when every yeshiva couple started out with the firm resolve that, no matter how difficult it may be, the children will be spoken to only in Yiddish. Nowadays, by contrast, in the home and in the street, in *shul*, in yeshiva and in the *shtiebel*, English is the reigning language. And by all appearances, it has been a "smooth and orderly transition." We feel no pangs of conscience about it. What's more, it has become natural to the point where the stickler for Yiddish is on the defensive and must find justification. So be it!

## A Caveat

LET IT BE MADE CLEAR this discussion does not touch upon the comparative merits of *Lashon Hakodesh* and Yiddish as an everyday language (although there is ample room for such a discussion; see, for example, Mogen Avrohom and Chasam Sofer to Orach Chaim 85). Indeed, some of our arguments may apply equally or *a fortiori* to *Lashon Hakodesh*. But we must focus on the reality of time and place; as things stand here and now, for most of us (excepting only our Sephardic

brothers), the choice is clearly one between English and Yiddish. — So, why Yiddish?

### Three Links

FIRST, YIDDISH IS A LINK IN SPACE, connecting lands and continents. There are Jews living all over the face of the globe and, for the most part, they are of one tongue: Yiddish. The idea of *achdus*, of *kol Yisroel chaverim* — unity and true brotherhood — is a most exalted one; but without the ability of two Jews to *talk* to each other, it remains an idea, whereas it could and should be a living, breathing fact.

It is also a link in time, between generations. Thank G-d, we still have in our midst the remnants of pre-Churban Yiddishkeit: Both the giant of Torah and piety, and the simple Jew whose very life-story is a flaming but never-consumed *Sefer Torah*. Again, for the most part their tongue is Yiddish. By making it impossible for our children to drink in from their fountains of wisdom and *yiras shomayim*, are we not robbing them of their patrimony? (See *Sanhedrin* 91b)

On a deeper level, Yiddish is a powerful chain linking the *neshama* of the individual to the *neshama* of *Klal Yisroel*, i.e. the Torah. The collective soul of a people shows its face in figures of speech. For example, colloquial English is replete with Shakespearean quotations — “down in the dumps,” “laughing oneself to death,” “a rose by any other name...” In modern-day America, references to sports abound — “getting to first base,” “going to bat for a cause,” “the line-up.” As for Yiddish, it is the language of Torah: Besides the many colloquialisms based on *Tanach* well-known and beloved by us, it sparkles with seemingly senseless expressions which, in truth, derive directly from Talmud and Midrash — “*a yohr mit a Mitvoch*,” “*bezohlen vie a tatte*.”\*\* This is what raises it from a mere means of communications to the level of *sichas chulin shel talmidei chachomim* — the ordinary talk of wise men, which according to the Talmud, is also worthy of study.

Granted, the reader, at this point, may refuse to feel a sense of urgency. After all, not everyone travels abroad, not everyone considers himself a *talmid chacham*; and our second argument, though most powerful, has only temporary validity . . . . But the question is urgent, in a very basic sense.

\* An expression for a very long wait, which literally means “a year and a Wednesday.” It refers to the Talmud’s discussion of the significance of “The maiden marries on the fourth night” (*Kesubos* 2a) — that the usual interval between betrothal and marriage was one year plus a Wednesday, which to the parties involved may have seemed like an interminable wait.

\*\* *Baba Kama* 5a: “Said R. Abahu: All (torts) are like *avos* (principals, lit. fathers) in that payment must be made from the best field.” Hence the expression, “To pay as a father.”

### Identity and Redemption

MAN POSSESSES THREE MODES of self-expression: *machshava* (thought), *dibbur* (speech) and *ma’aseh* (deed). The first is wholly internal, the last external. The function of speech is to bring thought into the open, to externalize the internal; it thus belongs between the other two, not sequentially, but qualitatively. Together they comprise the entire field of action in which man’s free will manifests itself — which is why every *mitzva*, whether positive or negative, must address itself to one of those categories. But we also know that they are not mere messengers and heralds of the inner being. On the contrary, they in turn exert great power in influencing and molding that inner self. “Man is shaped by his actions.” (*Sefer Hachinuch* 16)

With that, let us now turn to a very well-known, oft-quoted, and just as often disregarded, saying of Chazal: “By virtue of three things were our forefathers redeemed from Egypt: they did not change (i.e. de-Judaize) their names, their language or their mode of dress” (Midrash, quoted in the introduction to *Sefer Hameturgemon*). What is a name? A word used to describe an object or phenomenon in terms of its function, or make-up, or shape . . . . What these factors all



“The ordinary talk of wise men is worthy of study.”

have in common is that they are something perceived by the namer; what lies beyond his perception cannot possibly be described, i.e. named. One who would describe a human being in terms of his essence and inner core can only go as far as the innermost of his *perceived* parts, which is *machshava*. Thus, "name" symbolizes thought. The equations of the other two language/speech and dress/deed (external) — are too obvious to bear elaboration.

"...To take to Himself a nation from amidst another nation . . ." (*Devarim* IV:34). The *sine qua non* of redemption from Egypt was the prior existence of *Bnei Yisroel*, of a Jewish nation. Had our forefathers *not expressed* their Jewish identity in thought, word, and deed, this in turn would have permitted that identity to disappear. Then, there would have been no point in saving some Egyptians from amongst the others.

### A Loss of Identity

THE PENETRATING EFFECT of external identifying features was brought out by a well-known explanation of the Rebbe of Varka ב"ר: Rashi on *Chumash* relates that when the Amalakites attacked the Jews after Aharon's death (*Bamidbar* 21, 1), they pretended to be Canaanites by speaking their language, so as to confuse the Jews into praying ineffectively — for victory over "Canaan." The Jews, however, took note of their Amalekite costumes, and prayed for victory, without

specifying over whom.

An obvious question arises here: Why couldn't the Amalekites render their stratagem foolproof by changing their dress, too? The answer: Had they done so, they would have, in truth, been Canaanites . . .

"Jewish identity" is very much "in" these days; so much the better! But proclaiming one's Jewishness is a *goyish* tongue, through *goyish* methods, while looking like a *goy*, is self-contradictory and therefore self-defeating. The medium, yes, is the message.

It is a well-known axiom that *Klal Yisroel* is comparable to a long cord, wherein the slightest tug at one end affects the situation at the opposite end. Who knows but that the story of assimilation and inter-marriage would be a different one, had *we* heeded the words of *Chazal*!

### What to Do

CERTAINLY, WE MUST CONTINUE to reach out to our brothers and sister, and in the only language they understand. This is the sacred duty of our generation. But there is nothing to keep us from throwing in *Lashon Kodesh* and Yiddish words whenever feasible — and let pedantic purism go to the winds. Lest this be seen as trivial and unimportant, consider, as just one instance, what happens to our intellectual and emotional perception of the *mitzva* when *nichum aveilim* is turned into a "shiva call . . ." (It may also be *halachically* advisable to do so; see *Teshuvos Chasam Sofer Even Hoezer* II:11.)

True, an entire generation of *bnei u'bnos Torah* has grown up having no working knowledge of Yiddish. — And yes, which has attained heights of Torah and *yiras shomayim* to rival anyone's. Moreover, their English is distinctly colored by their Torah *chinuch* so that, in the long run, it may even evolve into a new Jewish language — thus following the pattern of other eras and places. In the meantime, however, those of us who do have a command of Yiddish must impart it to our children for all the above-cited reasons — reasons that cannot wait. So, *lema'an Hashem*, let us use spoken Yiddish in communicating with our children! (And while we are on the subject of language, let us also take care that our English accords with Torah. Obviously, I am not just referring to *nivul peh*, obscenities and slander, but to something more subtle and yet of great concern to us. For example, such expressions as "this test was murder," "the pain is killing me," and the like, have no place on a Jewish tongue (*Shevuos* 36a). This is but one of several ways in which we must be on guard that our English not be de-Judaized.)

Above all, let us not be embarrassed to *want* to be ourselves and speak in our own tongue.

So, who indeed needs Yiddish?

A Yid.



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## Thirty-five Years Since His Passing

*In his hesped (eulogy) for the Chofetz Chaim, Reb Elchonon Wasserman quoted the Dubner Maggid's hesped for the Vilna Gaon: Our long history is a chain of tekufos – distinct eras: That of Tanaim, Amoraim, Savroim, ... Gaonim. What signals the end of one tekufa and the beginning of another one? The Dubner answered, Heaven dispatches a man who is so great in Torah, that he lights up the world with his knowledge and wisdom. We can sense that he is not of our times, but rightfully belongs to earlier generations. When he passes away, a darkness, a void fills the world. We can actually feel the precipitous fall in the world's spiritual status: a heavenly signal that the end of a tekufa has arrived. Just as Rav Hai Gaon, the greatest and the last of the Gaonim, closed his tekufa, so, too, did the Vilna Gaon, who was of a greatness of earlier generations, end his era ... and so, Reb Elchonon concluded, did the Chofetz Chaim belong to earlier times – can't we already feel the darkness of his absence?*

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CHAIM SHAPIRO, of Baltimore, is a regular contributor to these pages. His evocations of life in pre-war Europe are a popular feature of JO.

### The Sense of Loss

SUCH WERE OUR FEELINGS at the funeral of Reb Chaim Ozer. *The end of an era? We were witnessing the collapse of the entire world!* It was the third blow Klal Yisroel had suffered in the past ten months. (For nothing rivals the death of a tzaddik as a blow to the Jewish People – see *Devarim* 28:61.) On 9 Cheshvan, we lost Reb Shimon Shkop – who had been Rosh Yeshiva in Telshe for 25 years, then in Brainsk and in Grodno. Our beloved Rosh Yeshiva, Reb Boruch Ber Lebowitz of Kamenitz, died on 5 Kislev. And now the Rav of all *Rabbonim*, the leader of all Yeshivas, supreme authority over the *poskim* – Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzenski had left us.

Each individual was personally wounded, as was evident as old men cried like children. One hundred thousand weeping people!<sup>1</sup>

The political situation was dreadful: Nazi Germany to the West and the South ready to annihilate us physically; the Soviet troops to the East and the North,

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(1) Vilna had close to 80,000 Jewish residents, plus 20,000 refugees. To this add the delegations from all over Lithuania.

poised to obliterate us spiritually. Who would protect the Jews? — the “mighty” Lithuanian bicycle Army?<sup>2</sup> On October 10, 1939 the Soviets had forced the Lithuanians to grant them bases in exchange for returning Vilna to them as their capital: thus the Jews of Vilna were added to the existing Lithuanian Jewish community. Then with the German attack on Poland in September 1939, Lithuania became swollen with the yeshiva students plus thousands of other refugees fleeing Poland. Then, exactly nine months later, on June 14, 1940, the Soviets delivered an ultimatum to the Lithuanian government, and on July 21 they annexed Lithuania as a Soviet Republic. And now the leader of our generation was snatched from among us. Is there any wonder that we felt the very earth crumble beneath our feet?

### The Final Hours

FOR FOUR YEARS, only he and his immediate family knew that he had cancer. He showed no visible signs of his terrible suffering; a smile was always on his face. He refused to enter a hospital, for he was ever aware of how world Jewry and the yeshivos in particular had rested on his shoulders for fifty-five years ... how could he possibly spare time for a hospital stay? When he finally did enter the hospital, his *Klal* work went with him — including the burden of answering the steady stream of *sha'alos* (halachic queries) from all over the world.

On the last Thursday night of his life,<sup>3</sup> he issued orders regarding the dispersal of all the charity funds in his care. To the many visitors in his room he said, “Good night,” then whispered, “Who can be *zocheh* to having a good night? Even so, I have no *taynes*, *chas vesholom* to the *Ribono Shel Olom* (no grievance to G-d).”

Friday, before noon, two men were at his bedside,<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Yechezkiel Mishkovsky and Rabbi Moshe Shatzkes (Lomza Rav) — whispering, not to disturb the sleeping *tzaddik*, not realizing that he had already passed on.

The hospital was three kilometers from the city, but as soon as the news of his passing reached Vilna the entire length of the road was filled with people. *Bnei Torah* were assigned to transport his remains on their shoulders until the city limits, then placing them on a wagon, fearing the reaction of Soviet authorities to any

(2) Liberating their capital city Vilnius, the Lithuanian Army marched in, in full force: A dozen small tanks, followed by an army on bicycles, wearing white gloves, with rifles hanging from their shoulders. That was the extent of their “crack troops” — the motorized division.

(3) Most details are adapted from an article in *Hapardes*, 1940.

(4) Reb Moshe Shatzkes was the stepson of Reb Itzele Blazer (Peterburger). Reb Yechezkiel Mishkovski was Reb Itzele's son-in-law.

unusual demonstration. He was placed in the room where he had studied Torah, rendered decisions on *sha'alos*, dispensed *chessed* and *tzedaka*, for fifty-five years. There, until Sunday, *bnei Torah* said *Tehillim* (Psalms) and pored over his *seforim* day and night.

### The Funeral

THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR ARRANGING the funeral Sunday were haunted by an ugly experience with the Soviets at the funeral of Reb Lazer, Minsker *Gadol*: the Soviets arrested all the *maspidim* (eulogizers) as well as a number of mourners. Some suggested a quiet funeral for Reb Chaim Ozer, but that was rejected as impossible, for surely all of Vilna would come regardless of plans .... The authorities *should* be notified: but suppose they forbid a mass funeral? . . . The decision: a public funeral would be held, without securing permission from the Soviets. Rabbi Yoseif Shuv, secretary to Reb Chaim Ozer, would take full responsibility if the Soviets challenge the proceedings.

Sunday morning, Vilna's entire Jewish populace gathered, joined by the yeshiva students and the refugees to whom he had been father and sole contact with the outside world.

The first *hesped* was delivered at his house by the *Rosh Beis Din* (head of the rabbinical court), the aged Reb Hensch Eiges. The procession then moved to the big *Shul*, where Rabbi Shatzkes and Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin (Lutzker Rav) spoke. The procession continued, stopping every few blocks. A makeshift platform would be raised and a *Rav* would speak, adding up to a total of forty *hespeidim*! Instead of interfering, as feared, the Soviets dispatched a battalion of militiamen to preserve order.<sup>5</sup> No speakers had dared mention the political situation, until the *Vilna Maggid* at the graveside made references to “changes taking place” — and was forcefully removed from the platform and arrested. Literally thousands of *tzetlach* (pieces of paper) with all sorts of requests were thrown into the grave before it was closed — the soldiers made certain that they all reached their destination, not outside, for fear some might contain anti-Soviet propaganda.

### Early Years

REB CHAIM OZER GRODZENSKY was born in Ivye, a small town near Vilna where his father was *Rav* for forty years, preceded by his grandfather who had also served as *Rav* there for forty years.

Reb Chaim Ozer was gifted with an infallible memory — never experiencing “forgetting,” as he himself remarked, until his old age. Hence, when asked to deliver the customary *drasha* at his Bar Mitzva, he

(5) Apparently they appreciated how the Jews had valued their *Rabbin*. Or, perhaps, because their occupation was only three days old, they did not want to risk stirring up the population.



"It no longer seemed odd to see an assembly of older men, great in Torah, led by the young man with the jet black beard."

refused, instead inviting guests to "open any page in the *Ktzos Hachoshen* or in the *Nesivos Hamishpot* (classical commentaries on one section of the *Shulchan Aruch*), and I'll recite it from memory." They took up the challenge and he responded — page after page — without missing a word.

At fifteen, he went to the world-renowned yeshiva of Volozhin. In spite of his tender age, he immediately was accepted in Reb Chaim Brisker's select group. When twenty, he passed through Vilna, his fame preceding him. He accepted an invitation to address a learned group there, and overwhelmed them with his *shiur* (Torah lecture). Soon, every father of an eligible girl

and every *shadchen* (matchmaker) in Vilna was after him.<sup>6</sup> He followed the suggestion of his father, a *talmid* of Reb Yisroel Salanter, who advised him to marry the daughter of the Vilna *dayan*, Reb Lazer, son-in-law of Reb Yisroel Salanter.

He had expected to engage full-time in Torah study in his father-in-law's house, but after two years Reb Lazer died, and the *kehilla* of Vilna requested him to take his father-in-law's place. Since the time of the Vilna Gaon, Vilna never had an official rabbi. Instead, a group of *dayanim* formed the Rabbinate — all of them elderly and great *lomdim* (scholars) and *poskim* (authorities in Torah Law). Now the twenty-two year old *dayan* joined their ranks and over the following fifty-five years emerged as the unofficial *Rav* of Vilna — for it was apparent from the start that his vast Torah knowledge was complemented by great wisdom. Eventually, no convention of *Gedolim* took place without his participation — usually as presiding officer. Soon it no longer seemed odd to see men great in Torah, old in wisdom, gray in years, bending forward to catch every word uttered by the young man with the jet black beard.

### The Flawless Memory Bank

HIS MIND WAS A STORAGE PLACE for all sorts of information — names of places and people from all over the world were deposited there, never to be erased. Hence countless communities, from far-off Jerusalem to my home town, Lomza, when in need of a *Rav* or *Rosh Yeshiva* would consult him<sup>7</sup>; and his choice was always superbly suitable.<sup>8</sup>

While Reb Chaim Ozer did have a yeshiva, it was not a yeshiva in the usual sense, for he could not give the *talmidim* (students) much of his time. The group studied independently, and only on *Shabbos* would the boys gather in his home for discussions. Thus the name — "*Reb Chaim Ozer's Kibbutz*." In spite of the limited hours he spent with his *talmidim*, he had vast influence

(6) A *din Torah* actually arose regarding Reb Chaim Ozer, and was brought before Reb Yitzchak Elchonon, revered Kovno *Rav*. One claimant argued that since he gave him his "*derech in lernen*," he holds a spiritual claim over him. Reb Lazer argued that he had a physical claim, for Reb Chaim Ozer would have been a soldier in the Czar's army — since he had arranged Reb Chaim Ozer's "green billet" (exemption slip). After Reb Yitzchak Elchonon had a Torah discussion with the young man, he said, "If I had a daughter I would want him for my own son-in-law." Neither of them knew that under his father's guidance, Reb Chaim Ozer already made his own selection.

(7) This follows the practice recorded in the *Gemora*: the city of Semunya asked Rabbi to recommend a *dayan* and *darshon* (preacher) for them — (*Yerushalmi* — *Yevamos*:60, 2).

(8) For Dvinsk he recommended an unknown young man who was learning in his father-in-law's house in Bialistok, Reb Meir Simcha, later known by the name of his *sefer* — the *Or Some'ach*. For Lomza he recommended his *talmid*, the *Rav* of his hometown Ivey, Reb

Moshe Shatzkes. When Rabbi Shatzkes arrived in Lomza, my father greeted him with a "*vort*" relating to the *Gemora* in *Baba Basra* 12a. "Ameimar said, 'A *chacham* (wise man) is superior to a *navi* (prophet), as it says '*Venavie l'vav chachma*' (may we bring to ourselves a heart of wisdom)" *Tehillim* 90, 12. My father asked, "How does this prove wisdom's superiority? — Simply because we pray for it? We pray for many things!" My father answered, "*Tefilla l'Moshe ish Ho'elokim* — If Moshe who reached the highest level of prophecy prays for the attainment of '*l'vav chachma*,' then wisdom is certainly higher than prophecy."

On Rabbi Shatzkes's next trip of Vilna, he repeated the *vort* to Reb Chaim Ozer. Reb Chaim Ozer excitedly exclaimed: "This is *l'amita shel Torah* — the true intent of the passage! Is that typical of your *ba'alei batim* in Lomza?" He then listed dozens of cities and their *Rabbonim*, the quality of their *ba'alei batim*, and how such *ba'alei batim* make it obligatory for a *Rav* to ever advance in his Torah scholarship, to qualify as their *Rav*.

over them and a number of great men emerged from this *Kibbutz* — among others, Rabbi Moshe Shatzkes, Rabbi Eliezer Silver (Cincinnati), Rabbi Avigdor Amliel (Tel Aviv), *zichronom l'vrocho*, and *yibodel l'chaim* Rabbi Yechezkiel Abramski (formerly of London, now in Jerusalem).

Indeed, his concern — and his memory — encompassed all, great and small: The *Minsker Gadol* had a very promising student of Bar Mitzva age, whom he recommended in a letter to Reb Chaim Ozer for acceptance in his *Kibbutz*. Reb Chaim Ozer told the boy's father that he was impressed with the recommendation but since his *Kibbutz* had no *Mashgiach*<sup>9</sup> (a faculty member who served as guide and mentor to the students), and he personally could not give the boy his full attention, he advised Slobodke, which had a *Mashgiach* and a *Mussar* program (which concentrated on character development).

Six years later, the boy visited Reb Chaim Ozer at his *datche* (summer house) near Vilna. Upon hearing his name, Reb Chaim Ozer, of course, recalled the letter, and was pleased that he had followed his advice and entered Slobodke. Then, as was his custom, he told the boy, "*Zogt epes* (Say a *dvar* Torah)." The young fellow explained that he was now deeply involved in the complicated subject in *Hilchos Shegagos*, and a famous *Rambam* on it. "If the Rebbi is not currently studying the subject it might prove difficult for him to discuss."<sup>10</sup> The young fellow immediately realized the

(9) As Reb Chaim Ozer remarked to Reb Yeruchem Levovitz, *Mashgiach* of Mir, "A Yeshiva without a *Mashgiach* and *Mussar* is a *bor bir'shus horabbim* — an open hazard in a public place."

(10) "Reb Chiya said to Rav, "When Rebbi (Rabbi Judah the Prince, who compiled the *Mishna*) is studying one *Mesechta* do not ask him about another *Mesechta*. Perhaps it's not [clear] in his mind at that moment" (*Shabbos* 7b).

After his passing, a slip of paper was found in Reb Chaim Ozer's desk, listing the following ten personal resolutions\* written in advance of the year 5694:

1. To check all charity accounts . . . old accounts as well as current — against errors. Matters between man and his fellow are the most stringent.
2. To read from a *Mussar Sefer* (book on ethics) daily . . . and to make a personal reckoning.
3. To avoid forbidden speech, and to select only those words that are necessary and have purpose.
4. To set aside time for Torah study every day, even in time of exceptional pre-occupation so that no day passes without in-depth study; to the extent that health permits, and generally to organize time effectively.
5. To concentrate . . . on *tefilla* and *brachos*, and to endeavor to read (them) from the printed page.
6. To cease all writing activity at least one hour before sunset on Friday, unless for a *mitzva* of imperative nature.
7. To devote more effort to fulfilling rabbinical obligations in regard to *Kashrus*, *Shabbos*, and family purity, and to spur *maggidim* (preachers) . . . to speak on these subjects.
8. To encourage Torah classes for laymen and youth in *batei midrashim* (study halls).
9. To keep away from anger to the very extreme.
10. To better organize personal charities.

\*free translation from the Hebrew.

### קבלות בלי"ג לשנת תרצ"ד

- א) לעיין תמיד בפנקסי החשבונות שלא יהא טעותים בחשבונות של אחרים ועניני צדקה, ולעיין גם בחשבונות הקודמים מה שאפשר לתקן. כי ענין בין אדם לחבירו הוא היותר חמור.
- ב) לעיין בכל יום לכה"פ שעה קלה בספר מוסר כמו שעי"ת לרבינו יונה ומס"י וספרים הדומים להם. ולהתחשב בכל יום חשבון הנפש.
- ג) לגרור בעניני הרבור האסור, ולבחור רק בדברים שיש בהם צורך ותועלת.
- ד) לקבוע עתים לתורה בכל יום אף בשעה שהטרדות יותר גדולות שבל יעבור יום בלי עיון. כפי מה שירשה הבריאות, ובכלל לסדר הזמן בסדר נכון.
- ה) להשים לב בעיון לתפלה וברכות וכיחוד לקרא בפנים.
- ו) להפסיק עניני הכתיבה ביום ו' לא פחות משעה לפני השקיעה, אם לא לצורך מצוה הכרחי.
- ז) להתחזק למלאות חובת הרבנות בעניני הכשרות, ושבת וטהרת בנות ישראל, ולעורר את המגידים והמוכיחים על זה.
- ח) בעניני התורה ראוי לחזק את השעורים לבע"ב ולצעירים בבהמ"ד.
- ט) להתרחק מן הכעס עד קצה האחרון.
- י) לסדר איזו סדר בעניני צדקה שלי.

*chutzpa* of his remark, but it was too late. The words had been spoken.

Reb Chaim Ozer good-naturedly said, "Test me!" Once they entered the subject, it proved as fresh in his mind as if he had studied it that very morning. When they concluded their discussion, the young man still seemed terribly ill at ease for his hasty remark. To ease the pain, Reb Chaim Ozer set out to walk him back toward Vilna. After a half mile, when they were ready to part, the boy wanted to accompany Reb Chaim Ozer back to his house. Reb Chaim Ozer refused, saying: "Then I'll have to *beglait* you again, and we could continue in this manner all day."

When on another visit the same young fellow asked him a *kushya* (question), Reb Chaim Ozer pulled out ten *seforim* from his vast collection, and showed him the same *kushya* in all ten.

Years later, the young man became a Rosh Yeshiva in a distant land, maintaining a Torah correspondence with Rabbi Chaim Ozer all the while. In one letter, Reb Chaim Ozer wrote him that the Rosh Yeshiva of Brisk, Reb Moshe Sokolowski (author of *Divrei Moshe*) had passed away, and he recommended the young Rosh Yeshiva for this position. Parenthetically, he added that he personally advises against the move, for the situation in Europe would eventually force him to leave. The young Rosh Yeshiva took his advice, and instead of joining Brisk founded a yeshiva of his own, eventually becoming a leading figure in Torah circles.

\* \* \* \*

Rabbi Nissan Waxman, currently in Petach Tikva recalls passing through Vilna with the Mirrer Yeshiva shortly after World War I. Reb Chaim Ozer helped him get to Slobodke where he studied for two years, followed by five years in Yeshivas Rabbi Yitzchak Elchonon in New York. On his return to Mir he stopped in to see Reb Chaim Ozer, and he was introduced as an "*Amerikaner Ben Torah*." Reb Chaim Ozer interjected: "What are you talking about? I only recently sent him to Slobodke!" — remembering a passing encounter of seven years before.

### Druskenik — Yeshiva Town in the Forest

DOCTORS IN POLAND often advised their patients to recuperate in Druskenik, a town surrounded by forests and blessed with "dry air." As it was close to both Grodno and Vilna, Reb Shimon Shkop and Reb Chaim Ozer used to vacation there. And so did Reb Boruch Ber of Kamenitz and Reb Ahron Kotler also spend summers there. (Thus all the photographs in circulation of *Gedolim* in Druskenik.) The local Jewish citizenry waited all year for the summer months when every house became a "hotel" and every bit of space was rented out. Nonetheless, a *ben Torah* in need of a *datche* was never at a loss, for the local *Rav* and his son



IN A QUIET CORNER OF DRUSKENIK: Reb Shimon Shkop, Reb Chaim Ozer, and the Slonimer Rebbe.

headed a committee to arrange free room and board for *bnei Torah*. As a result, a "yeshiva corner" developed in the forest, away from the more vulgar goings on.

When I was a student in Baranovitz, I asked the *Mashgiach* for permission to vacation in Druskenik, adding that I had a relative there, so I would not be a burden on the committee. He granted me permission for a two week *datche*. One morning while I was there, news spread that Reb Chaim Ozer was coming. The local *Rav* always had difficulty finding a suitable house for him, for although Reb Chaim Ozer claimed to need only a bed for himself and a bookcase for his *seforim*, the *Rav* knew better. Reb Chaim Ozer not only headed Polish Jewry, he was the leader of world Jewry. The hundreds of daily letters with all sorts of questions and problems had to be answered — even in Druskenik. Nor did the lines of visitors, dignitaries and government officials stop because it was summer. The *Rav* finally selected a house of suitable stature, close to the "yeshiva corner."

A group of *bnei Torah* kept a vigil on the house, waiting for the *tzaddik's* arrival. Finally the local *Rav* and his son brought him from the station, and we found his bearing striking — a rather short man with an unusually large head . . . I was reminded of a description of the *Sha'agas Arye*, as possessing a large head out of proportion to his body. His face seemed to glow with wisdom, his eyes full of goodness. Reb Chaim Ozer and the *Rav* entered the house while we remained outside. When they came out, we could hear him saying to the *Rav*, "I cannot accept the house. First I must check with her."

Someone whispered that the local *Rav* was out of step, and should have shown the house to the Reb-

bitzin. — *But isn't Reb Chaim Ozer a widower?*<sup>11</sup> whispered another bystander. — *Then, who is this "her"?*

It turned out that Reb Chaim Ozer had been referring to his cook. The kitchen was a distance from the dining room, and he feared it would prove too tiring for her for serving. In Eastern Europe, no decent man would eat in the kitchen . . . Eventually the cook arrived, loaded down with her pots and pans, and she gave her approval to the quarters.

### Source of Chessed

HIS HOUSE WAS WIDE OPEN day and night. No appointment was required. His house was thus always full of people — the sick, widows, orphans, *Rabbonim*, *Roshei Yeshiva*, visitors from all over the world. One wondered when he had time for study, yet he published three volumes of his *Responsa* in his monumental *Achiezer*.

More amazing was his spiritual stamina. His only child, a girl of seventeen, became ill, was bedridden for three years, and died at twenty. Throughout this trying period, his *Klal* activities and his writing of his *Achiezer* did not diminish.

He personally handled funds for any number of charities. Thus to people the world over, the Joint Distribution Committee, *Vaad Hatzala*, the Haffkine Fund<sup>12</sup> all had but one address, for both givers and receivers: Reb Chaim Ozer's.

*A young orphan girl came to him for financial help just before her wedding. He asked her, "Tell me, my daughter, did you learn the halachos regarding family purity?"*

*No, she did not.*

*He asked her to come into his office and be seated. He sat in his own chair and stared out the window while telling her in detail all the pertinent laws, never once averting his gaze.*

He was, indeed, a father to all *Klal Yisroel* as well as to every individual member.

### Agudath Israel

REB CHAIM OZER was one of the founders of Agudath Israel and the pillar of the movement throughout his

(11) He was a brother-in-law to Reb Elchonon Wasserman through his second marriage.

(12) In the beginning of the century, millions of people in Europe and Asia, particularly India, died in a cholera epidemic. Dr. Haffkine invented a serum that arrested the epidemic. The Indian Government honored him by naming a University after him. When he returned to Paris he became a *ba'al teshuva* and left his entire fortune for yeshivos. The building of the Yeshiva in Kaminetz was in a great measure built from the Haffkine Fund. Hence Reb Chaim Ozer's remark: "Dr. Haffkine devised not only a serum against cholera, but also a serum for *Klal Yisroel* — that is, for the yeshivos."

life, participating in every Knessia Gedola as long as health permitted. When the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages) was established, he was the first chairman and remained so throughout his life. When his *talmid* Rabbi Eliezer Silver became the founding president of Agudath Israel of America, he sent personal greetings. More, he instructed Rabbi Shlomo Heiman, revered Rosh Yeshiva of Mesiftha Torah Vodaath, to participate in the first American Aguda Convention in Far Rockaway in 1937, and to accept the Vice-presidency of the budding organization. Reb Shlomo customarily shied away from public affairs, but Reb Chaim Ozer urged him to make an exception for "to associate with Agudath Israel in any way possible is a *Kiddush Hashem*."

The Chofetz Chaim would not initiate any public action, or sign any public document until he consulted with Reb Chaim Ozer. The Chofetz Chaim considered him as a living embodiment of Torah and showed him the utmost respect.

*Once when they were both to sign a public proclamation, the Chofetz Chaim refused to sign first, claiming that Reb Chaim Ozer personified Kavod HaTorah (the honor of Torah).*

*Reb Chaim Ozer in turn deferred to the Chofetz Chaim, claiming that he encompassed both "Kavod HaTorah and venerable old age."*

*The Chofetz Chaim then counter-argued that Reb Chaim Ozer was more than Moreh De'asra of Vilna, he was the Moreh of Klal Yisroel, as well. He should sign first.*

*Finally Reb Chaim Ozer won the "argument," backing his claim with "Vekidashto — you shall sanctify the kohein" — even over his protest — and the Chofetz Chaim was a kohein. The Chofetz Chaim yielded, providing that Reb Chaim Ozer sign alongside his signature, not on the following line.*

### The Sha'alos Uteshuvos — His Responsa

REB CHAIM OZER'S BRILLIANCE as well as the scope of his leadership are reflected both in the *sha'alos* (halachic queries) that were sent to him from all parts of the world and in the *teshuvos* (responsa) he sent in return. He would write each responsum personally, not entrusting this to a secretary. His mind was so disciplined, that he would simultaneously write a responsum in *halacha*, give orders to two secretaries, and speak on the telephone.

His *psak* (decision) often reflected a concern far beyond the immediate question posed . . . He was known to use an electric bulb in place of a *havdala* candle: "People think that electricity is not a fire, and thus they permit themselves to put on electric lights on *Shabbos*," he explained. "So I make a point of saying



THE CHOFETZ CHAIM would not take any public action without consulting Reb Chaim Ozer.

'Borei me'orei ho'seish — He created the lights of the fire' on an electric bulb to demonstrate that electricity is, indeed, a fire."

His last three p'sokim were typical:

A number of talmidim of the Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin who had escaped to Vilna wanted to join Yeshivas Mir.

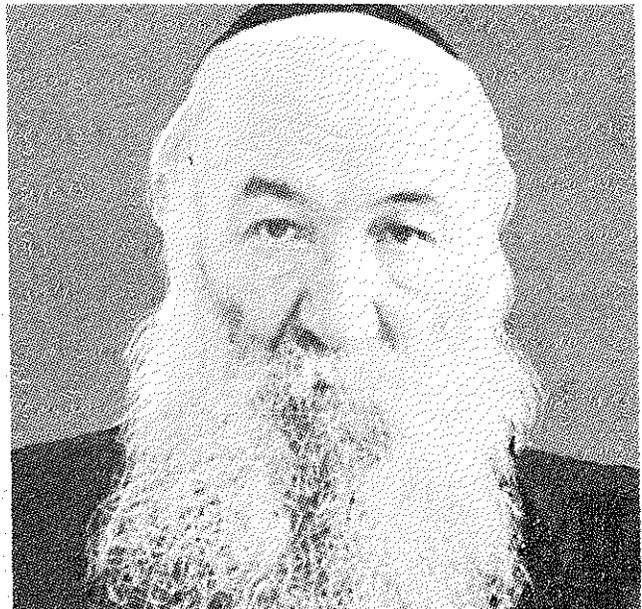
His psak: No! Every Yeshiva has a rightful place in Klal Yisroel, he explained. No one has the right to dissolve a Yeshiva; especially one like Chachmei Lublin.<sup>13</sup>

A number of visas to leave Vilna had been granted and the question arose: who is more entitled to them, the old Rabbonim and Roshei Yeshiva, or the young ones? (He personally could have gone to the country of his choice, but he refused to abandon Vilna.) This was a sha'alo in dinei nefoshos — a matter of life and death — for it was expected that sooner or later everybody would fall victim to either the Russians or the Germans.

His psak: The older rabbis should get the visas. For the older men would work tirelessly to see to it that those left behind would also get visas.

His final recorded teshuva (he submitted it to the Lutsker Rav, Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, for review before mailing it) was to the Swiss Rab-

(13) While Reb Chaim Ozer did appoint Reb Moshe Shatzkes Rosh Yeshiva for the Grodno Yeshiva when its talmidim arrived in Vilna, he did not appoint anyone for Chachmei Lublin. Apparently he did not know a qualified Chassidic Gadol in Vilna and this was essential to preserve the character of the Yeshiva.



REB ZALMAN SOROTZKIN: Reb Chaim Ozer referred his final teshuva to him for review.

binate. Shechita (ritual slaughter) had been forbidden in Switzerland for many years. This proved no hardship for Swiss Jews, for they relied upon imported meats. When the Nazis occupied all countries surrounding Switzerland, however, the rabbis asked Reb Chaim Ozer if it were permissible to stun the animal with an electric shock prior to shechita, to conform with Swiss law.

His reply: No. After citing numerous sources, he ended his psak with the following words: "The Jews are an ancient people — old and gray from tzoros and enemies. Yet all its enemies of the past have vanished and the Jews are still in existence. In times such as these, every one is called upon to demonstrate mesiras nefesh (to put his life on the line) even for a rabbinical ordinance — most assuredly in our case, when a Torah prohibition is involved. My decision, thus, is that the proposal is prohibited."

HE WAS CALLED "Ish Ho'eshkolos — The Man of Clusters." The Talmud explains the term: "Reb Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel: (it refers to) a man who has everything in him." Rashi enumerates: "True understanding of Torah, without falsehood, without forgetfulness, nor is he argumentative" (Sota 47b). What a perfect description of that Giant called Reb Chaim Ozer! With his passing, a tekufa came to an end, as the Dubner Maggid had explained.

What, then, can we call our present tekufa, which followed? Reb Elchonon Wasserman, among so many others, described it aptly: "Ikvse Dim'shicho" — the chaotic era immediately preceding Moshiach's arrival.

# Orthodox Vocational Guidance



## Is There a Need?

*Michel's face clearly showed the battle scars from his search to provide his family with an honest livelihood. Father of four children, he does not care to speculate about the consequences if his predicament continues much longer.*

*For the past few years, he had been performing odd jobs for a series of six different employers. Throughout, he was living on an income well below the federal poverty line — that, too, an unrealistic demarcation for him, what with extra costs for Glatt Kosher meats, Cholov Yisroel, and purchase of religious arti-*

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RABBI LUBINSKY is director of Project COPE, Agudath Israel's manpower project.

*cles. No new clothes for the holidays for his children, and many of the conveniences of modern society were a dream too distant for his wife.*

*Counseling? Employment offices? Application forms? Unemployment lines? He'd been through it all, and all he had to show for it was fatigue. And now, here he was again, in yet another waiting room. More forms to fill out in the offices of Project COPE (an acronym for Agudath Israel's federally funded program: "Career Opportunités and Preparation for Employment") — with one exception. This time he would be guided to training as a para-professional in health, well on his way toward a promising future in which he could at last financially support his family.*

AS AMERICAN JEWRY continues to come of age, the Orthodox individual becomes ever less dependent on secular agencies for needed services, guidance, and representation. This is apparent in the emergence of formal organizations of Orthodox scientists (AOJS), lawyers (COLPA), public school teachers (AOJT), university faculty members (AOJF) . . . . The formation of these groups means more than the entry of significant numbers of Orthodox Jews into these professions, still retaining their commitment to Torah. It also means that these people are actively seeking means of using their talents and the vantage of their positions for the general betterment of their community. In addition — and in some ways, most significant — it means that the Orthodox Jew who requires their services, either as a member of the group or as a client, has where to turn. Of course, the Sabbath observer who suffers discrimination can turn to the Bnai Brith's Anti Defamation League to represent his cause — but only as of late. For until recently, it would have been ridiculous — and fruitless — to turn to an assimilationist group for protection of *Shemiras Shabbos*. The major strides toward protecting his rights were made by COLPA and the Agudath Israel Commission on Legislation and Civic Action.

Moreover, wouldn't a Sabbath observing lawyer have more compassion for the plight of the client, than would a non-observant Jew?

By the same token, the Jewish schoolteacher who wants to use *Shavous* as a day of sick-leave would much prefer to see his case handled by AOJT than the UFT, as long as he has a choice.

This coming of age has also reached the field of training and guidance for employment and people like "Michel" can turn to Agudath Israel's COPE — an Orthodox Jewish agency, staffed by professionals of Orthodox background and commitment, equipped to deal with the unique situation of the Orthodox unemployed and underemployed. This may seem to be cause for self-congratulations, but first an underlying question must be answered: Is there a genuine need for an Orthodox vocational agency? Should the Orthodox community, which has so many pressing items on its agenda, assume to provide a service that is already being handled by competent professionals?

To assess this properly, a quick glance at the general field is required.

### The General Picture

MICHEL'S PLIGHT is a sadly common one nowadays, as the ravages of the economic recession continue to swell the ranks of the unemployed. In addition, for the first time many well educated people are amongst the unemployed, what with the plague of mass layoffs, cut-backs in production, and the general restraints of the current economy. And in New York City, the un-

employment situation is even more acute. In city government, for example, 50 per cent of those laid-off are Jewish!

In Michel's case, this has been compounded by complications directly related to his Jewishness. In fact, not too long ago, it was extremely unpleasant for some Orthodox Jews to be job seekers. At first, merely being a *Shomer Shabbos* was enough to limit one's chances for employment. Even when legislation was eventually passed to provide legal protection for the rights of the Sabbath observer in both private and public employ, there were few businesses that could not circumvent the legalities in subtle ways. The large employment agencies sponsored by established Jewish organization were of limited help, as they could not be depended upon to be sympathetic to the needs of the *Shomer Shabbos* Jew. The professional counselors of secular orientation that staffed those agencies could not always offer career guidance to a yeshiva graduate, nor to most Orthodox Jews, for that matter:

How does one explain to a counselor without a yeshiva background the dedication of years of full-time study without any professional goal in sight? How does one present a predilection for Chassidic garb, chaste surroundings, or the need for a *Mincha* break to a counselor of secular orientation? What is to influence the counselor that a jobseeker of this type is really a better risk than his competition who is *not* beset by all these quirks? And how is the counselor to succeed in dealing with his client with warmth and understanding, undampened by condescension?

After all, counseling at its ideal (an ideal often described but rarely encountered) is not merely a cold professional relationship, but person-to-person human communication which should not even take place if hindered by barriers based on background and general outlook.

Thus, there has long been a dire need for a vocational guidance agency run by Torah Jews for Torah Jews, where the *chessed* enterprise goes beyond job-and-worker match-making to encompassing the person's entire situation, fulfilling the Torah's command: "So your brother may live with you." This is all the more true in view of the competitive job market and the shifting employment conditions. And this is more likely to pervade the situation when a Torah-guided counselor perceives of compassion as the mainstuff of his assignment rather than as an idealistic trimming.

### Gainful Employment and "the College Debate"

TO OPERATE AT OPTIMUM, COPE counselors must be alert to short-term changes in the economy as well as to long-range shifts as they affect the employment scene. When these trends touch upon areas of ideological sensitivity, then the Torah orientation of the counselor becomes a matter of prime importance. Typical of these

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### Mr. Karf — A Russian Jew

Mendel Karf was granted an exit visa to leave the Soviet Union and finally his lifelong dream was within reach; he would be able to live freely as a Jew. Now that he is in the United States, he finds one pleasant memory of life in the US-SR; an excellent well-paying job as a librarian.

Employment counselors were convinced that with some knowledge of English, he could land a job today in New York. But in the meantime his language deficiency is very real. Tests showed that he has a strong mechanical aptitude and he was subsequently placed at a service station where he will learn to be a mechanic.

For Mendel, even more important than his job was the welcome news that with his new Shomer Shabbos firm he will never again have to face problems with Shabbos and Yom Tov. What's in a job? For Mendel, the right to practice Yiddishkeit without hardship.

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considerations is the newly revived "college debate," where for the first time, academicians are adding their voices of doubt, questioning whether a college education is a necessary prerequisite for financial success. At the same time, educational leaders are speaking of new alternatives to college as the ideal vocational training ground.

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### Ralph Unger — A College Education

Ralph Unger is a recently married Yeshiva graduate who is slowly learning some of life's complexities. He was always under the impression that with some courses in accounting at Brooklyn College in his pocket, it would be a cinch for him to find a position, but after several months of searching, he found that his degree was not an automatic ticket to a job. He was finally placed with a large manufacturing firm, to be trained as a bookkeeper-manager. Although Mr. Unger seemed to appreciate his new job, he was even more grateful that he was now with a Shomer Shabbos firm. To Mr. Unger, this was an even greater asset than the monetary compensation of the job. As it happened, the addition of Mr. Unger turned out to be a good omen for his employers. These past few months, the company greatly expanded and for Mr. Unger it seems to be all uphill from there on.

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For many years, there was heated controversy within yeshiva circles: Is college a logical sequel to high school, an evil to be avoided at all costs, or a necessary evil? It seems as if the echoes were picked up in academic circles with even more zeal. Sensitive to both yeshiva-bred convictions and shifting employment patterns, meaningful vocational counseling must tune in to this debate.

Caroline Bird recently published a controversial new book called *The Case Against College*, the subject of numerous newspaper and magazine essays, most recently in *Newsweek* ("Who Needs College?" — April 26, 1976).

*Newsweek* sums up Bird's arguments this way: "Many young people can make more money during a lifetime by salting away college money in a bank account and letting it accumulate interest while they take jobs that will give them an income right away. It has probably always been true that only a tiny minority of people enjoys study for its own sake. 'College is good for some people, but it is not good for everybody.'"

The *New York Times* (Aug. 14, '75) also reported results of a research project by Harvard University and the Center for Policy Alternatives, with partial federal sponsorship. Says the *Times*: "As a result of the decline in relative income and starting salaries and in the face of continued increases in tuition and fees, the rate of return on the college investment has fallen significantly."

The authors of the *Times*-quoted study are academicians of great repute: Dr. Richard Freeman, an associate professor of engineering at M.I.T. and the former president of the University of Oklahoma. The failure of the economy to expand and provide high paying jobs for the increasingly large number of university graduates is cited by the researchers as the root cause of the problems they discuss. "What has happened," the authors assert, "is that the disparity between the incomes of college graduates and high school graduates has narrowed." There are simply not enough of the kinds of jobs that in the past have enabled college graduates to reach higher income brackets. The researchers cite statistics showing that one-third of the male and two-thirds of the female college graduates in the 1970's had to accept positions unrelated to their college majors compared with 10% of the men and 13% of the women in the early 1960's.

This background leads one to conclude that there is serious question as to whether going to college for *parnosa's* sake is absolutely realistic for everyone. The fact is that non-college job market entrants have been closing the salary gap with college attenders. Since 1969, the last boom year in the college job market, the advantage in starting salary a college graduate could expect over other members of the labor force has fallen from 24 percent to approximately 6 per cent.

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## Feivel Ganz — A Chassidic Young Man

Feivel Ganz is a Chassidic young man with a wife and two children. Because he was fired with an idealistic desire to learn Torah, he did not shrink from the financial struggle involved in being a member of a kolel; but then the pressing problems of parnosa could no longer be avoided.

Entering the employment market, he found that his basic educational background — only up to eighth grade — was a severe handicap. Mr. Ganz also found that his Chassidic garb proved a handicap in the employment market, as many potential employers he visited explicitly specified that they wanted "a clean shaven man." . . . There are still some who judge ability by conventional appearances.

At Project COPE, Feivel was at home and his problem was not his alone, but that of the staff. Skill testing indicated that he had strong inclination for mechanics, and he was subsequently placed in a manufacturing firm with great success.

Shortly before he had learned of the Orthodox agency, he had approached a secular Jewish employment office, where he was informed that he was "unemployable." The label is enough to shatter the confidence of any man — but only temporarily.

---

### The Alternatives

THERE ARE THREE MAJOR components in Project COPE's comprehensive program. *On-Job-Training* — wherein the employee earns while he learns a trade; the employer is reimbursed by grace of a federal grant; *Classroom Training* — short-term classes in much needed supplementary skills, such as English as a second language; and *Vocational Education* — formal schooling in a vocational school. The hope is that this choice offers alternatives toward successful occupational training. The personal vignettes (all of them authentic, only the names are fictitious) that accompany this article portray how these work.

These options are far less time-consuming than the conventional college program; for the *Ben Yeshiva*, they enhance the feasibility of devoting more years exclusively to Torah study after high school. Who would disagree with the assumption that those precious years gained can add immeasurably to the Torah knowledge and depth of commitment of students?

In addition to yeshiva students, many Bais Yaakov girls who previously were prime candidates for Liberal Arts degrees are also having serious second thoughts

regarding college as career preparation, as a result of the job scarcity in related fields. A growing number of these girls have been subsidized to attend top rated vocational schools through the Vocational Education department of Project COPE. A good percentage found jobs after graduation in such diversified fields as dental and medical assistants, legal secretaries, bookkeepers, and computer programmers.

With all these training opportunities on the horizon, proper counseling is still a necessary requisite. Counseling in this case means close consultation with *Roshei Yeshiva*, Torah educators, and professional guidance counselors imbued with a love for Torah. Thus, the counselor's appreciation for the supremacy of Torah becomes a crucial factor in his guidance of his client.

### Introduction to Realities

ANOTHER IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY of the counselor is to escort the novice job seeker from an ivory-tower world to one of economic realities.

Most yeshiva students judge the job market and their share of it by a very narrow sampling — the experiences of their immediate friends and relatives, and by the expectations of their mothers-in-law. The realities are often far different:

. Many yeshiva graduates realize that they represent a tradition of integrity, reliability and intelligence, and thus expect to be scooped up for managerial positions. Unfortunately, most business establishments seek two more qualifications in their managers: training in specific skills, and some experience. Thus, even potential office managers must start at lower rung positions.

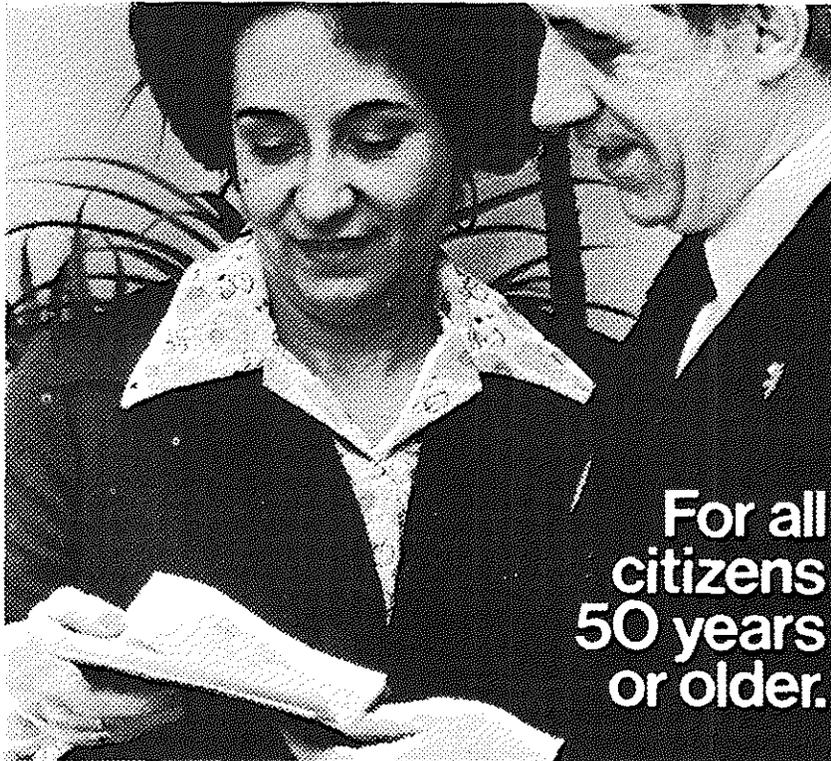
. "Glamour" jobs are not always available. Nor are all clients suited for them. The *kolel* man of fifteen years standing who is looking for a place in the business world may, much to his surprise, have the spatial perception and finger dexterity to be a highly effective electrician instead of a pencil pusher.

. New burgeoning fields of technology bring new unexplored fields into play — salesman and field representatives for electronic equipment suppliers, servicemen, and so on.

The task of the effective vocational counselor is to test the client for his strongest (often unknown) skills, and then — ever so gently, over a period of three to five sessions, prepare him to reassess his role in the economic market. The *Mishna's* vocational goal of "*Umnos kalla unekeyo*" — a light and simple craft, does not necessarily mean accounting or law.

In the long run, it should not really be remarkable that an Orthodox organization is succeeding in coming to grips with the fluid economic situation. An exhortation of the Rambam that "the highest form of charity is providing someone with a livelihood," is being transformed from the "*halacha*" to the "*lema'aseh*," from the abstract to the tangible. 

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## "In The Beginning" — a Re-run

by Abigail Engelberg

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IN THE BEGINNING by Chaim Potok  
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CHAIM POTOK has written a novel about a poor Jewish boy growing up during the Depression; Chaim Potok has written a depressingly poor novel about a Jewish boy. Potok's chosen background for this, his latest novel, is the Bronx of the twenties and thirties. David Lurie is a brilliant young boy whose unhappy childhood is made even more unhappy by a recurring illness which plagues him at approximately two page intervals. In between fever spells, little David is made miserable by an entire clan of Goliaths ranging from a seven year old anti-semitic Pollack to a seventy year old superstitious and "sour-breathed" old lady, all of whom live on his shady street in the Bronx. This little boy lives in a veritable vale of tears. He is always trembling with fear, crying, running away. His stern father and weak mother understand him very little and relate to him even less. Despite this unsurceasing sorrow, David manages to grow older, taller, wiser.

Thematically, David, with his recurring illness, his nightmares, and his persecution by the neighborhood bullies is meant to be a microcosm of the Jewish experience in Europe. David's fear of fighting and his retreat into the intellectual world for solace is meant to be representative of the Jewish response to repeated persecutions by the *goyim*. In fact, it is David's father's deeply ingrained hatred for the *goyim* that unites the greater and smaller worlds of European Jewry and little David Lurie.

### A Hop, Skip, and Jump to Secularism

UP TO THIS POINT, Potok may be forgiven. After all, if a man wants to write a repetitive and less than original book, that is his business. But one wishes that Potok would look to his literature and leave theology to the theologians. Potok plays the sophomoric game of "I

quote, therefore I know" to the hilt. Using his characters as a mouthpiece, he illustrates his Biblical prowess by having them rattle off Hebrew phrases, *midrashim*, *perushim* on *Tanach*, and sundry other items. To further let us know that he knows that we know, he enrolls David in a college, slyly left unnamed, which

*stood on a bluff overlooking the Harlem River. . . It has been built by Eastern European Orthodox Jews who wanted their American-born children to achieve a synthesis of Torah and modern secular learning.*

At this institution, David's curious mind reaches out to penetrate the works of Graf, Wellhausen, and others of their ilk. It is here, at its turning point, that the book is most lacking. David, a *frum yeshiva bachur* for two-thirds of the story, happens upon a Hertz *Chumash*, becomes fascinated with the world of Biblical criticism, and with a hop, skip, and jump reaches the point where he can toss off very casually: "The Torah is not the word of G-d to Moses at Sinai. . ." If David had gone through an intellectual and psychological Odyssey leading up to this statement; if David had undergone an emotional upheaval causing him to deny the authenticity of Torah; if, in the very least, we had watched the seeds of cynicism take root and grow in David's brilliant mind, or followed an increasing slackening of David's religious observance in response to the pressures of an attractive secular world — any of these would have sufficed as a true and real development of a literary character and a profound religious theme.

But David does none of these. Worse yet, no strong argument is presented for the side of Torah. An emotional outburst by an envenomed father and a few weak objections by a preoccupied friend are the sum total of David's obstacles. In the face of these soldiers of straw, no valiant spirit or intellectual genius are required on David's part to win the battle. The instant, glib transformation of a devout young *talmid chacham* to a Chicago University-Oriental Studies-Ph.D. who dons a "skullcap" only as a sign of respect for the dead is not only poor literature, it is an insult to the intellectual and religious sensibilities of the reader.

---

ABIGAIL ENGELBERG, a native of Cleveland, teaches at the Yeshiva University High School for Girls, Manhattan.

*"It was beautiful; listening to the voices of the centuries teaching me Torah — that was beautiful. But, Papa, listen. The Medieval commentators used the most advanced knowledge of their day to understand the Torah. But they did not have the tools we have today. They did not have anthropology, archaeology, comparative religion, linguistics, a true grasp of the texture of history."*

— David Lurie  
IN THE BEGINNING

### The Potok Pattern

POTOK MAKES NO BONES about using his novels as theatres for ideological jousting. He wants you to feel he is presenting the real problems of real people in a real world. He almost begs you to recognize Yeshiva University and Rabbi J. B. Soloveichik, and he obviously believes he is presenting a dialogue that states the convictions of the various "camps." Even a great novelist would be hard to put to invent such a dialogue; to come close to producing a true dialectic in fictional form, a writer would probably have to resort to the laborious style of the great Russian novels. But, as it is, the tennets of Orthodox Judaism simply cannot be packaged in a slow moving tear-jerker. We Pharisees have always been very touchy about simplistic popularizations of our beliefs. In religion, a half-truth is a complete lie.

The reader ought to be aware that David Lurie is not the first Potok hero to leave the ranks of Orthodoxy. On the contrary, the hero of every Potok novel, for one reason or another, finds Orthodox Judaism too stifling to bear and must for his own self-preservation, seek other modes of religious expression. Potok's novels can — indeed, must — be read as variations on this theme, a theme that may well be rooted in Potok's own experience. (See insert from *Who's Who in American Jewry*.)

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>POTOK</b>   | 700 |
| <p><b>POTOK, Chaim</b>, US, author, editor; b. NYC, Feb 17, 1929; s. Benjamin and Mollie (Friedman); BA, summa cum laude, Yeshiva U, 1950; MHL, ordained rabbi, JTSA, 1954; PhD, U of Pa, 1963; m. Adena Mosevitzky; c. Rena, Naama, Akiva. Ed, J Publ Soc of Amer, since 1965; mem fac, U Judaism, LA, 1957-59; scholar in res, Har Zion Temple, Phila, 1959-63; mem fac, Tchrs Inst, JTSA, 1964-65. Author, novels: <i>The Chosen</i>, 1967; <i>The Promise</i>, 1969. Lt, chaplain, US Army, 1955-57. Mem: RA; PEN. Recipient: for <i>The Chosen</i>: Edward Lewis Wallant Award, 1968; nomination, Natl. Book Award, 1968. Hobbies: painting, photography. Home: 2281 N 51 St, Philadelphia, Pa. Office: 222 N 15 St, Philadelphia, Pa.</p> <p><b>POUPKO, Bernard A</b>, US, rabbi; b. Vieliz, Russ, Feb 5, 1918; s. Eliezer and Peshah (Sapir); in US since 1932. BA, Yeshiva</p> |     |

### Comic Relief

THE READER DOES GET BACK a bit of his own in a darkly humorous way. Much of the emotional turmoil in the Lurie family is a result of the fact that Mrs. Lurie was originally married to David Lurie, the dead uncle of young David. Although it was David whom Mrs. Lurie really loved, she consented to marry his elder brother, Max, in order to fulfill the *mitzva* of *yibum*. Throughout the novel, Mrs. Lurie is haunted by the spectre of her first husband. Unbeknownst to the sad-eyed Mrs. Lurie, had she been a real flesh and blood person, she would not have married Max Lurie, because *yibum*, in this day and age, is not practiced in Orthodox Ashkenazic communities. One cannot help reflecting that this would have eliminated the possibility of young David, thus saving him, Max, and us a lot of trouble.

It really is unfortunate that the ignorant American public will read this book and swallow whole the "truth" it purports to speak. I have no doubt that this latest unholy combination of Maimonides and Mary Hartman will sell. After all, it is a tried and true formula. And who should know that better than Mr. Potok?

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# BOOKS

THE BAAL SHEM TOV ON PIRKEY AVOTH, gathered and arranged by I.A. and J. Dworkes, translated by Charles Wengrov (Feldheim, 1974, \$7.50)

THE HAFETZ HAYIM ON PIRKEY AVOTH, gathered and arranged by Rabbi D. Zaretsky, translated by Charles Wengrov (Feldheim, 1975, \$6.75)

THESE TWO VOLUMES represent outstanding additions to the Torah Classics Library published by Feldheim. It is most appropriate to draw attention to them during the summer months, when according to our Rabbis there is most danger that we shake off our usual restraint and there is therefore a special need to study the *Mussar* of our Sages. But it would be a mistake to view these works only from this angle.

The collection of thoughts from the writings of the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov, in particular, actually provides an overview of many of the basic doctrines of Hassidism. The relationships between G-d, man, and world, between Tzaddik and follower, pious Jew and Am Ho'oretz, are explored, as is the significance of Torah and Mitzvos, of wisdom and humility, all in the particular perspective of the Hassidic approach.

"If you are the same after your prayer as you were before, for what reason or purpose did you then pray?" This question of the Baal Shem Tov is found here, as is the famous explanation of how a wise man learns from every man: "When he sees another's shortcomings, he senses about himself how to correct his own."

There are many passages here which will stimulate the reader to think and ponder and, hopefully, to learn and be the better for them. It would have been desirable to have an index of topics touched on, and also the Hebrew text of the *Mishniyoth*; but even without these features, the volume is of great value.

In the same way, the Chofetz Chayim's thoughts culled from his many writings and arranged according to the *Mishniyoth* on which they bear, provide more than just some random comments on Rabbinic sayings. They reflect the full force of the personality and teachings of the Chofetz Chaim — his insistence that we keep in mind our true purpose in this world, his ability to translate high ideals into concrete principles of action, and to illustrate them with pithy parables and stories, so that they remain clear and self-evident in our mind.

On the *Mishna* stating that a man of fifty has reached the age of counsel, the Chofetz Chayim points out that the Levites retired from active service at this age — a hint to other people, as well, to prepare for their end. When we view the seven days of the week as cor-

responding to seven decades of man's life, the sixth decade corresponds to the Friday, the day of preparation for the Sabbath! Thus a man at this stage should not only counsel others "he certainly needs to take counsel with himself, about his spiritual affairs, to prepare 'provisions' for the house of his eternal life." It is in such fashion that the Chofetz Chaim reaches out to the reader, to pause, to take stock, and to grow from this.

THE SEVEN DAYS OF THE BEGINNING, by Rabbi Eli Munk (1974, Feldheim, \$6.95)

BERESHITH, a commentary by Rabbi Mond (660 Eglinton Avenue West, Toronto, Canada; 1972; \$6.00)

THE MULTIFACETED NATURE OF TORAH is always made clear to us anew when we are faced with yet another and novel treatment of its eternal verities. The two volumes here discussed are indeed a study in contrast, and each addresses itself to a distinct need that it seeks to fill.

Rabbi Mond's commentary, in very readable English, on the entire *Sefer Bereshith* aims to elucidate the text and at the same time, on hand of the classic commentaries, to throw light on the basic teachings that the text seeks to convey. Stressing first and basic fundamentals, it should be of particular interest to a student of the *Chumash* who has not previously studied it in depth; at the same time, the copious references given to other

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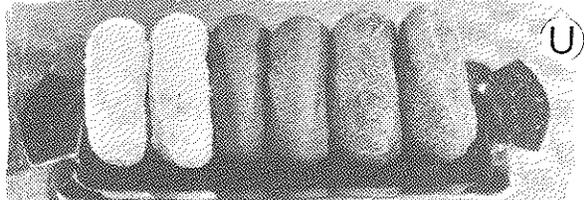
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parts of *Tanach* and to Talmudic and post-Talmudic sources will prove of much value to any reader.

In contrast, Rabbi Munk's work is entirely different in both aim, scope, and execution. It limits itself to a study of the first 34 verses of *Bereshith*, with the objective of deriving from the text an understanding of the process by which our world came into existence. Though the author warns that it does not claim to be the only possible interpretation, he has exerted himself to arrive at a correct perception of the process of creation through a painstaking analysis of the terms used by the Torah in these verses, and a searching study of *Chazal* and later commentaries.

The extent of his effort can be gauged from the analytical dictionary which is appended to the book and to which the reader is referred in order to gain a finer comprehension of word-meanings; and the long list of sources ranging from *Tanach* all the way to the *Meshech Chochma* and the *Chazon Ish*. There is also an index that reflects the scope of the work, with such entries as angels, evolution, and time.

The book takes the form of an exchange of letters between a Master, Tishbi, and his disciple, called Elisha. The letters first define how a proper understanding of the Torah's text can be achieved and then proceed to analyze the Torah's statements for each day of creation, word by word — leading up to a translation of the entire passage and a chart presenting the book's interpretation of the seven days in a graphic manner.

The reader cannot fail to find the book most interesting and stimulating. Moreover, he will have attained that rarity, a consecutive understanding of the difficult verses with which the Torah opens. At the same time, it must of course be remembered that *Kabbala*, the *Chochmath Hanistor*, provides an authoritative definition of the process of creation and we are left with the question whether the author's interpretation coincides with it. He emphasizes, quite correctly, that the Torah in addition to its deeper and hidden teachings, always has a simple meaning open to us, *pshat*; but the correct *pshat* must be in harmony with the hidden meaning and this the author has surely kept in mind.

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## New York State Assembly Passes Bill to Ban Non-Kosher Mezuzos

A MAJOR STEP FORWARD in the protection of the religious Jewish consumer from being victimized by consumer fraud regarding religious articles took place this week, when the New York State Assembly passed a bill introduced by Assemblyman Leonard Silverman. The bill, which was drafted at the initiative of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America, clearly spells out as a violation of the State's business laws the sale of *mezuzos* or *tefillin* which do not comply with *halacha* (Jewish law).

The consumer fraud protection bill on *mezuzos* and *tefillin*, which is now before the New York Senate, seeks to put an end to what an Agudath Israel representative described as the "wholesale deception of unwary Jewish purchasers of *mezuzos* and *tefillin*, who are sold such articles which have no religious significance whatsoever because they do not conform with *halacha*." According to Jewish law, both a *mezuzah* and *tefillin* must be handwritten by a scribe according to precise specifications on a piece of

parchment. Agudath Israel has obtained affidavits from purchasers of *mezuzos* which, upon inspection, were printed by ordinary letter press on regular paper.

The Silverman bill specifies that a merchant who sells a *mezuzah* which does not conform with *halacha* must give the purchaser written notification at the time of sale that this *mezuzah* does not meet the Jewish religious requirements; otherwise, he is guilty of misrepresentation and violates the business laws of the state.

Assemblyman Silverman, whose district includes large segments of the Boro Park and Flatbush neighborhoods in Brooklyn, stated that "the New York State Assembly acted to put an end to those who frustrate, for monetary gain, the desires of a religious person who seeks to fulfill the tenets of his faith but is victimized by deceptive business practices." He expressed hope that the bill will be passed in the New York State Senate and signed into law by Governor Carey. The chairman of Agudath Israel's Commission on Legislation is Dr. Bernard Fryshman.

## "Affirmative Action" Pamphlet

A NEW BROCHURE, "Affirmative Action," which provides an organized overview of the affirmative action and equal opportunity laws and their effects of the past decade, was issued by the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America. Written by Dr. Bernard Fryshman, chairman of the Commission, the booklet is designed to provide some insight to all aspects of the reverse discrimination problem arising out of the manner in which affirmative action programs are applied.

"It is our intention to help the average citizen develop an understanding of the total problem and its effects upon him/her," stated Dr. Fryshman. "We have also added perspectives developed during almost eight years of Agudath Israel activity in this area. We feel there is a need for clarifying legislation and hope that this document will help stimulate movement in that direction."

The 27-page booklet entitled "Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity — An Overview" is available for \$1.00 from Agudath Israel of America, 5 Beekman Street, New York City 10038.

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**Pelham P'kway Branch Founded**  
 COMMUNITY LEADERS and rabbis of the Pelham Parkway community in the Bronx launched an Agudath Israel chapter in their community at a founders' meeting at the home of Rabbi Schulem Rubin on June 16th. Rabbi Moshe Sherer, executive president of

Agudath Israel of America, was the guest speaker of the session.

The meeting was preceded by an unusual public proclamation calling on Jews in the Bronx to join Agudath Israel, which was endorsed by the leading rabbis of that borough. Those who signed the proclamation are Rab-

bis Jacob Bulka, Jekuthiel Fuchs, Jeruchem Gorelick, Louis Isbee, Isaac Liebes, Yisroel Rabinowitz, Schulem Rubin, Avrohom J. Twersky, and Gershon Yankelowitz.

The proclamation reads: "Although many individuals in our neighborhood have shown recognition of the accomplishments of Agudath Israel by joining the organization as individuals, we feel that the time is now right to start a local chapter in Pelham Parkway to help unite the *Yirei Hashem* in our community under the aegis of Agudath Israel."

**Agudath Israel  
 Joins in Top Level  
 Pentagon Briefing**

RABBI MOSHE SHERER, executive president of Agudath Israel of America, was one of a dozen Jewish leaders invited to an unprecedented high level Pentagon briefing on this country's military relationship with Israel. The approximately two-hour briefing in Washington consisted of remarks by heads of the U.S. Defense Establishment including Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, General George S. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; General David Jones, chief of staff of the Air Force; Admiral James Holloway, naval operations chief, and Army Secretary Martin Hoffman.

In a public address delivered in the spring of 5735, Hagoon Horav Moshe Feinstein שליט"א vigorously urged Yeshiva youth not to follow "the advice of the wicked" — to turn from the sanctity of Torah to the atheism and amorality of the university. He called upon Yeshiva youth to abstain from college attendance even in face of strong discouragement and opposition.

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## Agudah Conference in South America

AGUDATH ISRAEL OF ARGENTINA will be host to Rabbi Moshe Sherer, executive president of Agudath Israel of America, who will be in Argentina for a lecture tour beginning July 8th. In 1970, a similar visit by the American Aguda leader to Buenos Aires resulted in the establishment of a new *kolel* in Argentina, the only such institution in South America, and the expansion of Torah programs in that country by Agudath Israel. The second conference of Agudath Israel leaders of South America will take place at the same time:

One of the main purposes of the current visit will be to expand the *Kolel* and the *Yeshiva Gedola* which were launched at the initiative of Agudath Israel of America. In addition to the Pan American conference of Agudist leaders and the intensification of activities of Agudath Israel in Latin America, Rabbi Sherer will address a series of public gatherings, culminated by the formal dinner dedicating the new *Kolel* building. In recent weeks, Agudath Israel of Argentina revived reliable *shechita* for the community and has appointed a new rabbi, Yirmeyahu Menachem Cohen.

## New Hachnosas Orchim Program

THE NEW NATIONAL Hachnosas Orchim project (Travelers' Hospitality Program) recently launched by Agudath Israel to provide Orthodox Jewish travelers with "local information centers" for their unique needs while traveling has already been extended to 18 states. Under this program, traveling Jewish businessmen and visitors will be able to contact volunteer community leaders in 27 cities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, to determine where kosher food can be obtained, location of synagogues and other pertinent information.

The Hachnosas Orchim program of Agudath Israel will immediately include the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Washington. In addition, committees have been set up in Montreal, Toronto and Mexico City, Mexico.

If you are interested in a list of the various cities included in this project, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Traveler's Hospitality Program (Hachnosas Orchim) of Agudath Israel of America, 5 Beekman Street, New York City 10038.

## JEP Launches New Program for Yemenite Children

A SPECIAL PROGRAM for Yemenite children was recently launched in Boro Park by the Jewish Education Program (JEP) of Zeirei Agudath Israel of America. The program was first initiated at a Melave Malka sponsored by the Yemenite *shul* in Boro Park which was attended by over 100 people. Members of the Yemenite *shul* warmly greeted the offer by activists of JEP to begin an intensive program for their children. As a result, the children are now gathered every *Shabbos* and Sunday at the Yemenite *shul* to be taught the fundamentals of *Yiddishkeit*.

## Zeirei Agudath Israel Visitation

THE EZRAS CHOLIM Committee of Zeirei Agudath Israel, which was launched one month ago, has already arranged regular *Bikur Cholim* visits by volunteers for nearly thirty bedridden patients.

Scores of volunteers have responded to the call for involvement in this program and many more are anticipated.

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