

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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Orthodox Jews in America

- *Exotic and Otherwise*
- *Partners in Torah*
- *Days of the Founders
in Text and Photograph*

– also –

Letters and Responses

HOLOCAUST



THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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Orthodoxy — Exotic and Otherwise

Some pointed comments on Jewish self-definition

"Arnold?" "Present" / "Avrohom?" Absent

My first professional position — this was some fifteen years ago — was in the general studies department of a yeshiva high school, where one of my responsibilities was a daily review of the roll books. I would note the first names of the students: Arnold, Irving, Paul, Stanley, Dennis. I knew the parents of these young men; these were not the names they were called at home.

Today, Arnold, Irving and Paul have children whose names are listed on legal documents exactly as they are blessed at the *Sefer Torah*. In part, this change expresses the growing confidence and assertiveness of Orthodoxy in America; in addition, it no doubt reflects a sense of identification with the State of Israel.

An interesting reference to this can be found in the Commentaries on the Torah's identification of "The Plains of Mamre" — Mamre being the one out of three brothers who, when asked by Abraham, advised him to go ahead with G-d's command of circumcision. It seems strange that Abraham should poll the opinions of three heathens in regard to fulfilling a mitzva!

Perhaps one can say that Abraham solicited their views for the purpose of judging *them* — to see how they understand the importance of following a divine command — not to guide his own actions. But for many of Abraham's descendants, especially in recent years of geographic and socio-cultural mobility, it is the views of *others* that determine their choice of personal deed.

My students of fifteen years ago were born fifteen

years before then, right after the World War II. Their parents felt lucky to be alive in a hostile world. They did not wish to stick out. Many yielded to what they perceived to be hostility against any parochial identity, and completely gave up their religious commitment. Others maintained that commitment, but preferred to avoid advertising it — hence, their children carried non-parochial names on their official papers. And *some* — instead of viewing their reflection in the eyes of gentiles — sought their reflection in the eyes of non-parochial Jews, who had felt that commitment to "Old World Judaism" would bring the complete downfall of Jews.

The recognition of Mamre is credit deserved, but it is more than that: it is a lesson to Abraham's descendants to seek reflection in the views of those who support authenticity. In 20th Century America, this lesson is not completely learned, although advances are being made.

The Orthodox Jew — By Whose Definition?

In the opinion of many, Orthodoxy's growth is not hindered by forces outside the Jewish people — if anything, oppression provokes inner strength — but rather by those Jews who do not define their Jewishness, or their concept of Jewish destiny, according to the Torah and its commandments. Hence, even Orthodox Jews can suffer a self-imposed identity crisis: *Shall their acknowledged Orthodoxy be defined from within, from the collectivity of Orthodox Jews and its criteria of Torah and mitzvos — or from without, from the mass of Jews who do identify as Jews, but do not accept Torah and mitzvos?*

In a Talmud Torah I once taught, I came up against a classic identity crisis. A pre-Bar Mitzva boy whom I had instructed about *tefillin*, asked if he would have to put them on at his ceremony. No, I told him, because they are not worn on *Shabbos*. *Then when are they to*

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be put on? he asked. On your birthday. *That's all?* No. Every day after that except for *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. *For how long?* For the rest of your life. *So how come my father doesn't put them on?* You'll have to ask your father.

Though usually boisterous, for the next few days he sat almost inert, stunned. Then one day he bounced in, smiling. "I asked my mother," he said, "and she told me only religious people have to put them on, and since we're not religious, I don't gotta put on *tefillin*."

He was boisterous once again. His identity crisis was resolved. For him and his mother, non-observance of Torah and *mitzvos* was an acceptable definition of being Jewish.

I do not fault him or his mother. How are they to know better? But how did they view me, and my *tefillin*? — That it was just another way to be Jewish? — That we are the same, except for some cosmetic difference, which she is good enough to tolerate?

There is no Jewish man, woman, or child who does not know about *Shabbos*. While many are ignorant of detailed prohibitions such as carrying in a public domain, and sophisticated needs such as for an *eiruv*, all are certainly aware that *Shabbos* is different from Tuesday. Yet nothing keeps Jews who ignore that difference from assuming roles of leadership and spokespersonship on behalf of the entire Jewish people. In their eyes, the difference between their form of Judaism and mine is only cosmetic. Yet, some Jews are nagged by the question: *Whose definition of my Judaism am I to accept — theirs or mine?*

To them, I am Tevye, and I live in Anatevka. I am quaint, perhaps cute, and some of my practices are even impressive. I am tolerated, somewhat respected, and perhaps in a historical sense admired. I am often nice to have around. But in their opinion, I have nothing to do with their acceptance of themselves as good Jews. I can be accepted as an equal to a degree — that degree is exceeded when I pose a threat to their definition of being a good Jew. As long as my Orthodoxy remains exotic, they are content with being different from me. When, however, I have everything they have, including acceptability in the eyes of the world, *in spite* of my being Orthodox, then I become a threat: I have replaced, in their own terms, their own definition of being a good Jew. I will have proven that rejection of Torah is not a prerequisite to gaining acceptance in the broad outside world. Today's man can also be an Orthodox Jew.

The Chassidic Attraction

Perhaps this explains the romance enjoyed by many non-Orthodox Jews with Chassidism. It is encouraging that many Jews who might otherwise have no personal relationship with Torah observance choose to expose themselves to at least one form of it. — But why this form, and not one of the others?

Even at the risk of oversimplification (and perhaps

error), we can say: the non-Orthodox perceive Orthodoxy as non-worldly, and themselves as worldly; they are therefore content in being non-Orthodox. They perceive Chassidism as non-worldly (perhaps even other-worldly), so they are comfortable with it and in fact are happy to support it: it bolsters their definition of Orthodoxy as something exotic and archaic, not something to get personally involved with. By contrast, they view non-Chassidic forms of Orthodoxy as less removed from worldliness, providing less excuse for non-observance. Hence, they would rather ignore its existence.

The romance with Chassidism would be fine, if the spectators would become participants. My Lubavitcher neighbors are, I'm sure, as critical as I of the Reform spiritual leader who calls himself a Lubavitcher *chassid* because he goes to see the Rebbe, *shilta*, studies *Tanya*, raises money for *Chabad*, and wears a *yarmulka* at all times — even while advocating Reform as a legitimate form of Judaism.

National Geographic can run a pictorial essay on the Chassidim of Williamsburg ("different" the way Eskimos on the Bering Straits are different), and the Brooklyn Museum can run an exhibit on the Chassidim of Crown Heights; no one is expected to join the ranks of the exotic. The Museum can even exhibit Five Chassidic Artists, offering renderings of exotic scenes, but would probably decline a show of pictures by Orthodox artists like you and me of scenes that are all around us. If we are not "different," why should we be special?

And what greater intoxication with reflection of the self can there be than through the pages of the *New York Times* (published and edited primarily by Jews), where the passing of a leader of Reform Judaism rates a page one "Inside" headline, while in similar circumstances, Torah personalities must vie for attention (when they get it) with hosts of world personalities on the crowded obituary page. The *Times* does give space in its news pages to Orthodox Jews — almost always to those who pray at the Western Wall in beard, black hat, and *Kaftan*. Lovely — but what about smooth-cheeked folks who work for the firms the paper writes about, and shop in the stores it advertises? The image of Orthodoxy desired by this paper is one of "no threat." Orthodox Jews who speak the *Times'* English and live in their world are a threat to their concept of worldliness without Orthodoxy, and Orthodoxy without worldliness.

But I'm Not Tevya

So my problem when seeking my reflection in "Jewish" news is that I am not Tevya, and I am not in Anatevka. For they do not exist, while I and my peers, and my community and its peer communities, are very much alive. "Fiddler" is forever in the psyches of the contemporary, religiously-rootless Jews. They need him and they will applaud him. But then the lights go on, and — poof! It isn't Tevya, but an actor. It isn't

The assimilated Jew does not deny his roots — as long as it is only an external association with an image, without implications in regard to personal practice: We came from somewhere — preserve it in a showcase. Admire it, but don't let it touch us.

Anatevka, but a theater stage. It's time to go home, to the spiritually barren life where tradition is a form of entertainment. The therapy is over, it is return to rootless reality: "May the good Lord bless and keep him — far away from us."

The assimilated do not wish for total alienation from their Jewish roots. They want to know that the linkage is there. Tradition is fine — as long as it does not carry obligations. Mysticism is fine, as long as it leaves one free to carry on as desired — an external association with an image, without implications in regard to personal practice: We came from somewhere — preserve it in a showcase. Admire it, but don't let it touch us.

To the "Jewish outlaw," the exotic Orthodox is not only "no threat," but is a great opportunity, offering identity without the encumbrance of commitment. The normative Orthodox, however, spells danger: he demonstrates that contemporary American society is not incompatible with the religious practices of pre-war Poland; he is proof that it was not necessary to discard the *Shulchan Aruch* to reap the benefits of American pluralism. The "outlaw" would prefer to keep Judaica Exotica alive and well in restricted preserves, so the rest of Jewry can be comfortable in an unrestricted habitat '78.

Definition From Non-Jewish Sources

How, then, does the Jew who does not define himself through Torah understand himself? Not from within, but from without — by the way he perceives the gentiles perceiving him. Whomever the non-Jew considers Jewish, becomes Jewish. Or to put it in a negative light, whoever is the object, or potential object, of oppression against Jews, is a Jew. Hence the grand concept of *Klal Yisroel* — robbed of its sanctified meaning (such as through standing at Sinai and jointly proclaiming "na'aseh v'nishma") — becomes a rallying cry for self-preservation against all enemies, real or imagined.

This negative thinking reaches its height in the "Who is a Jew?" controversy. The Torah Jew offers a response from within: whoever the Torah says is a Jew. The non-observant offers a response from without: whoever is willing to say he is a Jew in face of the scorn of the *goyim*, is a Jew.

The magnificent commitment of non-Torah Jews to the moral and financial support to the State of Israel is surely admirable. Yet — on the conscious level — their support is not motivated by Biblical, Talmudic and halachic imperatives; by the Holy Land's centrality in Jewish spiritual life; by the presence of the *Makom Hamikdash*, the *Kosel*, *Ke'ver Rachel*, the *Me'oras HaMachpelah*, and countless other holy places on its soil; or by the exclusive applicability of many *mitzvos* to its terrain. Rather, it is motivated by concern for Israel in face of its hostile neighbors: an obviously noble reason, that should stand alongside the other reasons, rather than in place of them.

The Mamre Reflection

When Abraham was commanded on circumcision, he decided *from within* to comply. He defined himself through divine direction, and not through the guidance of others — not even through partners in a covenant. But he was interested in determining their reaction to this move. So when Aner and Eshkol rejected the idea of circumcision, divine though it was, Abraham rejected them. But when Mamre accepted the new image of Abraham, Abraham accepted Mamre.

The parents of my yeshiva students could not help but be sensitive to the mood of their time, so they gave their sons "acceptable" names. These sons, now grown, perceive a different mood, so they gave their own sons traditional names, by now also "acceptable."

The superficial recognition by non-Orthodox of the exotic form of Orthodoxy does not reflect the choice of the Orthodox, but the convenience of the others. The views of the non-committed can never become a determinant for the form of commitment. Chassidism grew from holy sources *from within* its adherents, and not from a perceived popularity *from without*. While bringing the alienated closer to Torah remains a fundamental goal, rejection by the alienated of forms of Torah observance should never alter those forms. Orthodoxy is defined through Torah and *mitzvos*, through people and society who live by them, and not through the reflection it finds among those whose concept of Judaism and Jewish destiny arise from non-Torah standards.

The Many Crises of Yeshiva Day School Education

A number of articles in popular journals, including *The Jewish Observer* (Oct. '76, Dec. '76, Jan. '77), dealt with the crisis in Yeshiva-Day School education. Some of these articles tended to suffer from a "reductionist fallacy," whereby one reduces all the major problems of Torah education to only a few, and attempts to solve all of these issues with one all-encompassing solution. If only we could, in reality, reduce all of the many crises and issues confronting the yeshiva movement to but a few! If only there were a simple all-encompassing solution to our many problems! Unfortunately, there is not any one major problem facing day schools today. There are myriad problems, each perhaps as unique as the school from which it emanates.

In hope of acquainting the readers of *The Jewish Observer* with more of the critical concerns of Yeshiva educators, I have undertaken to briefly discuss some of the issues we confront in Chinuch today:

I. STUDENT POPULATION AND BAALEI-BATIM

□ One of the most crucial problems confronting the principal of a yeshiva in a larger community is the composition of his school's student population — specifically the ratio of *Shomer Shabbos* students to non-*Shomer Shabbos*. In fact, one pundit recently remarked that in New York City a yeshiva is defined as having a preponderance of *Shomer Shabbos* children, and a day school as one that has a majority of non-*Shomer Shabbos* children. While we pay lip service to student recruitment and publicly proclaim that no Jewish child

should be deprived of a Torah education, when it comes to admitting a large number of non-observant students into their schools, many big city administrators face a moral dilemma.

□ In the smaller communities, many of the Hebrew day schools are referred to as "community schools" — a euphemistic title, belying the fact that they are often controlled by Conservative and Reform rabbis and their *baalei-batim*. The Orthodox *menahel* and his religious teachers are up against the proverbial "brick wall" when they attempt to introduce *Yiddishkeit* into the school's program. This article will not even attempt to describe how this can be accomplished; suffice it to say that although every situation is different, the principal must always be highly principled while at the same time mastering political arts.

□ But here, too, we cannot delude ourselves into thinking that if we produce even a few religious students in the school, we have succeeded. We cannot pat ourselves on the back by pointing to figures which show that the yeshiva movement has grown to about 500 schools and 100,000 students on the North American continent, when, in fact, only a small proportion of these students remain loyal to Torah and *mitzvos* after graduation. I am reminded of the remarks of a colleague, who compared this to a tie manufacturer who produces 5,000 ties a day. If 4,500 of them are defective, the owner will take little consolation in the fact that he has successfully produced 500 good ties — however beautiful they may be. This man desperately needs "quality control" — and so do we in yeshiva *chinuch*. By exposing the borderline students and their families to the contagious enthusiasm of religious youth groups, to the twenty-four hour Torah atmosphere of overnight camps, and by having them experience the spiritual beauty of Shabbatonim, Oneg Yom Tov and religious retreats, we can bring many of them back into the fold.

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□ We are committed to the premise that every Jewish child is entitled to receive a Jewish education. But, how — within the limited facilities of the *yeshiva ketana* — do we deal with such common problems as slow learners, under-achievers, emotionally disturbed, or those who have various learning disabilities? How do we relate to the concerns of recently arrived Russian Jewish children, or to the needs of youngsters who come from broken homes? How do we find, especially in smaller communities, the specialists and consultants to help us with these problems, who are sensitive to the religious concerns of the day school?

II. CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

□ There are no adequate, well-written texts *al taharas hakodesh* on Hebrew Language. For example, Hebrew texts produced in Israel for their 5th grade students are frequently used in our junior high schools; our students cannot handle an Israeli junior high text because of the difficult vocabulary and reading content, and perforce must read texts used by Israeli 5th graders, which are far below our students' interest level.

□ Another prime need is for Jewish History texts written *al taharas hakodesh* in both an authentic and interesting manner. Over the years, we have had to make do with some poorly written Hebrew texts which are of little interest, even to little children, or we have had to use some questionable English texts, censoring whole sections or omitting entire chapters.

□ Materials for grouping, individualized instruction, and open classroom are almost non-existent in the *limudei kodesh* (religious studies). While a school such as S.A.R. (Salanter, Akiba, Riverdale) in New York City has embarked on some bold pioneering efforts in this direction, this area is a virtual wasteland for all but the most creative teachers who construct their own materials.

□ There are no standardized or uniform tests for evaluating Yeshiva students in elementary grades on a national scale, even in such basic areas as *Chumash*.

□ In another vital area, development of good character and *middos*, the only work available for the *yeshiva ketana* is *B'ikvoseihem*, a book which highlights the great *middos* of the *Gedolei Yisroel* throughout the ages, written under the aegis of the Fryer Foundation of Torah Umesorah. One book — no matter how good — cannot fill the needs of all eight grades.

III. THE TEACHER

□ The lack of a strong network of good teacher/administrator training programs leaves a lot undone. Supervised student teaching and other valuable "on-the-job" training experiences are few and far between. Although there are many Beth Jacob and other post-high-school teacher seminaries for girls, the *yeshivos*

gedolos, by and large, have not created teacher-training programs of their own. As a result, out-of-New York day schools have difficulty in finding *bnei Torah* who are trained for positions in *chinuch*. Similarly, many New York *yeshivos* cannot find properly prepared *rebbeim* even though that city is amply endowed with *talmidei chachamim*. Unfortunately, there is no corollary that every *talmid chacham* is necessarily a good *rebbe*.

□ Perhaps an even greater problem is: how do we get young people interested in entering *chinuch* in the first place? What are the incentives? — too little pay to make a living ... which often comes too late? — job security, which often rests upon the whims and will of the principal — and, in the principal's case, upon the ever-changing pleasures of his board? Short of unionizing, what can be done to improve the professional status of the teacher? Why should a teacher who has taught for over thirty years in a New York City *yeshiva* be earning only \$6,000? Why should any teacher aspire to a principalship when the constant turnover in day school administration is a game of musical chairs?

□ What is being done to maintain and even raise the professional standards of *yeshiva* education? How many of our schools offer in-service training for their faculties, or see to it that their teachers never stop *learning* — in every sense of the word? How many day schools make it possible and encourage their *rebbeim* to learn after hours? How many require general studies faculties to take college refresher courses in their chosen field? How do we relate to the apathetic and mediocre teacher, whose services have only been retained because he has tenure?


IV. ET CETERA

There are a number of other "crisis" areas confronting the *yeshiva*-day school movement today, but we cannot possibly treat them within the limited scope of this article. Some examples:

□ There are problems of fierce competition between many *yeshivos* in New York City and in other large metropolitan areas, resulting in concern for the ethical practices of soliciting students.

□ Federation funding of day schools, despite our propaganda, is still woefully inadequate.

All these and many more issues face the *yeshiva* movement. Let us not delude ourselves into seeking simplistic answers of all-encompassing solutions. Each school is different; every situation is unique. The only generalization I would venture is: we must discuss each and every situation with our *gedolim*; only they can give us the guidance and direction we so urgently need.

We can do no less. We can expect no less. The fate of our people — our children — hangs in the balance. 



The October Jewish Observer featured an article by Rabbis Yaakov Feitman and Chaim Feuerman based on a discourse by the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner שליט"א, dealing with Churban Europe — the destruction of European Jewry in World War II, followed by a review article on "Holocaust literature" by Rabbi Joseph Elias.

The articles inspired an unusual amount of discussion, some of it in letters to the editor. While some representative letters appear in the regular section in the later pages of the magazine, several that pose provocative questions are reprinted here, followed by a "Chazara" — a restatement of salient points of Rabbi Hutner's discourse, presented in a manner to clarify points raised. Rabbi Elias also comments on some of the letters.

Terms and Historical Periods

To the Editor:

In dealing with the acceptability of the term "Shoah", Rabbi Hutner finds that it implies an "isolated catastrophe unconnected to anything before or after it."

No historical event can be taught or studied in vacuum. Every historical event has long range and immediate causes and ramifications. In studying the destruction of European Jewry, one cannot only study what happened during the years 1939-1945 or even during the years prior to 1939. Rather, one has to go as far back as 1215 when the Fourth Lateran Council ordered Jews to wear distinctive dress (i.e. yellow emblem) as a "badge of shame" for the first time. Thus, the "Era of Disappointment" that the article discusses would be studied.

If the term "Holocaust" just indicates an "isolated catastrophe of great magnitude" then by all means the term is not acceptable and should be changed. But Random House Dictionary defines it as "a great or wholesale destruction of life esp. by fire from the Greek word *Holokauston* — a burnt offering." Thus, the term is ap-

propriate for what happened to European Jewry.

The article also points out that at times powerful governments mold public opinion by "rewriting" history. That even the State of Israel is guilty of this crime. Rabbi Elias in his article discusses how not only did the world remain silent but even American Jewish leaders (i.e. Wise) and Zionist leaders (i.e. Weizmann) did not help save Jews. He lists an abundance of books that give false versions of what occurred during those tragic years. There is only one way to combat the spreading of lies, and that is by spreading the truth. Holocaust studies must be taught. But where are these courses taught? Basically in either secular colleges or Zionist-oriented high schools.

Why, then, isn't the history of European Jewry during WWII taught in the traditional yeshivos? Why, when 150 High School seniors were asked about Kristallnacht, were only 5 remotely familiar with the events of November 9-10, 1938? How could today's youth know about what the *Gedolai Torah* did (or did not do) during the war years if they just read the popular books that are on the market?

Yeshivos not only do a great injustice to their students by not teaching them what happened to their parents during the war; but also deny the last request of those who died — to tell the world what happened.

ROCHEL LICHT
Brooklyn, New York

Searching for Culpability

To the Editor:

... In the article, it is purported that "the founders and early leaders of the State of Israel were culpable ("were a factor" ... "contributed") in the destruction of European Jewry." This judgment is justified on the basis of a causal chain which simplified goes as follows:

(a) The founders and early leaders of the Jewish State created "public pressure for the establishment of a Jewish State."

(b) This caused the Mufti (who until then had "cordial" relations with Jews) to decide to prevent the influx of millions of Jews into Palestine.

(c) The Mufti then "influenced" Hitler and Eichmann to proceed

with all dispatch to destroy the Jews of Europe.

May I pose the following questions:

1. A causal factor is one in whose absence the event in question would not have happened. Is there evidence that without the activity of the Mufti, Hitler and Eichmann would not have proceeded with their evil work?

2. The article implies that the real mistake was creating "public pressure for the establishment of a Jewish State." But what if, instead, they had simply called for permission for the victims of Hitler to immigrate to Palestine? Would that have kept the Mufti a friend and prevented the destruction of European Jewry? Or would it have been wrong to mention Palestine at all; that things would have been different if we would have urged all Jews to go to Canada?

3. Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that the alleged causal claim could be demonstrated by hard historical evidence. Would it really prove that the founders of Israel were "culpable" i.e., guilty of some criminal or immoral deed? Only if it could be shown that these "founders" should have known in advance that by calling for a Jewish State they would infuriate the Mufti to the point where he would decide to exterminate "all the Jews of Warsaw, Budapest and Vilna" and that he would have enough influence on the leaders of Germany to develop an elaborate system of destruction and actually carry out their "final solutions". Can such knowledge be assumed?

4. Is it right at any time to call for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz Yisroel and seek the *aliyah* of Jews? If yes (and nothing in the article says that it is not), then surely Jews have to do what is right and not be concerned with the reactions of evil Anti-Semites. Our Sages have taught us that one of the root causes of hatred of the Jew is the fact that he bears and observes the Torah. In a sense, therefore, we the

observant Jews are "culpable," are a "factor" and have "contributed" to the rise of a Amalek. Does it follow that we should abandon our Torah because it brings out the worst not only in the Mufti and Hitler but also in Haman and Torquemada?

Yelamdeinu Rabbeinu!

Rabbi SHUBERT SPERO
Young Israel of Cleveland
South Euclid, Ohio

Re: "Holocaust"

To the Editor:

It may seem presumptuous of me to question the premises of Rabbi Hutner who is a leading Rosh Yeshiva in this country. However, as Rabbi Akiva already said, "It is Torah, and I must learn." Therefore, I take the liberty of seeking clarification on a number of points.

1. If it is an "innovation of recent times" for gentiles to pass laws and regulations on behalf of the Jews and then rescind them, what are we to make of Pharaoh of old "who refashioned his decrees"? Of Cyrus the Great who at first gave official permission (nay, encouragement) to rebuild the Beis Hamikdash and then withdrew it? Of the *gezerot* of Antiochus coming on the heels of the solemn promise given by Alexander the Great? Of the many changes in the legal status of Jews which took place throughout centuries in Spain, in Portugal and under the Ottomans?

2. I fail to understand what special inference can be made from Unkelos's translation of אלהי נבר when in fact it is the standard form, used for almost every single reference to idol-worship in the Torah.

3. One can accept that pressure for a Jewish State was the catalyst for the unholy alliance of Yishmael and Eisav, and still maintain that this was but a tragic miscalculation on the part of well-intentioned people. After all, none of us is a *yode'a machshavos* (mind-reader). Is it

right, then, to speak of guilt and culpability? These terms, and the phrase "shameful episode," are better applied to the conduct of Zionist leaders *after* that Devil's pact was struck (as recounted in Rabbi Elias's review article in the same issue).

4. Rabbi Hutner says: "... since the *churban* ... was a *tochacha* ... we have no right to interpret these events as any kind of specific punishment for specific sins." But isn't Rabbi Hutner doing precisely that when stating that the *churban* came as the "direct result of trusting and relying upon the gentile world"? And again when saying that by clamoring for a Jewish State the Zionists were "clearly a factor in the destruction of many Jews"? (Certainly, as believers in *Hashgacha* (Providence), we must see the political cause-and-effect relationship for what it really is — merely a tool of the higher causality of *poal ugemul*, human deed and Divine response).

Further, shouldn't we try to interpret the *churban*? *Hochacha* (proof) and *tochacha* (reproof) are very closely related, to the extent of sharing the verb *le'hochiach*. It follows that *tochacha* is meant to *prove*, to *clarify*, to *instruct*. And how could it be otherwise? Would a father flog his child while saying to him "Don't ask me why, it is beyond you anyway"? True, it is impossible for us, in our insignificance, to grasp the meaning of such an immense, all-encompassing *tochacha*. But that does not absolve us from the obligation to learn from it as much as we can on our level, so that the lesson not have been in vain.

YACOV CHAI AMITAI
(currently in Brooklyn, N.Y.)

Guilty — of a Mitzva?

To the Editor:

In his discourse Rabbi Hutner states that "the founders and early leaders of the State (of Israel) were clearly a factor in the destruction of many Jews." The founders were fulfilling the *mitzva* of *yishuv*



CONTINUED

ha'aretz, and only indirectly caused the Mufti to urge the murder of many Jews just as any Jews performing a *mitzva* may invite hatred. Does that make them guilty? I am looking forward to a clarification. Thank you.

RACHEL GUNDERSHEIMER
Beth Jacob School, 10th Grade
Philadelphia, Pa.

"Churban Europe" — Exceptional in Scope

To the Editor:

I was very gratified to have an opportunity to read the thoughts of the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Hutner, on *Churban Europe* in your respected journal. I studied the essay the way I would study any expression of Torah thought. I came up with several questions; and in line with one's approach to a *D'var Torah*, I am posing them to you with hope for clarification.

While I was fascinated by the catalyst role the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem played in the destruction of European Jewry, I suppose my lack of awareness of his importance till now can be attributed to secular ignorance and low spiritual sensitivity. I was surprised, however, to see the scope of Churban Europe marked as one of "quantity" rather than of genre. When, since the time of Haman, did anyone declare war on world Jewry with the purpose of להשמיד להרג ולאבד (total destruction) — and come so close to succeeding ר"ל? When, in all the history of Jewry, with the exception of the first Churban and the expulsion from Spain, was such a major portion of world Jewry absolutely wiped out, leaving no remote possibility whatsoever of rebuilding that which was destroyed on the

very same soil? For all practical purposes, Frankfort, Warsaw, Lublin, Lvov, Budapest . . . no longer exist.

I am puzzled — in fact, deeply confused — in regard to how to deal with Churban Europe — in dealing with *any* explanation of that tragedy — that does not cope with this sweeping aspect. True, Rabbi Hutner says that we should not shy away from the painful, in search of "sunnier" aspects of Judaism . . . So we must not avoid the tragic and the painful. But this doesn't make them any less painful, now that we recognize that they can be exceptional. And can one deny that the tragedies of Churban Europe 1939-1945 are exceptional?

RICHARD ISAACSON
Brooklyn, New York

The Need to Deal With "Holocaust" Separately

To the Editor:

Beyond question, the Holocaust must be viewed as an integral part of Jewish history, and the term "Shoah" by its very usage is apt to isolate that phenomenon from the rest of our glorious and tragic history. Chazal have usually seen fit to allow some distance in time to elapse before putting cataclysmic events into their proper historical perspective.

It appears to this writer, however, that as long as there are *living survivors* of the Holocaust, the teaching of the Holocaust as a separate series of lessons within the context of the larger discipline of Jewish history will achieve what Chazal term "seeing [which] is infinitely superior to hearing" when it comes to the impact of the matter to be learned. One is reminded of the famous definition once made of the difference between the *Chassid* and the *Misnaggid*. The *Chassid* argues, "I have a Rebbe, so why do I need the *sefer*?" The *Misnaggid*, on the other hand, argues, "I have a *sefer*, so why do I need a Rebbe?" In this instance who would not agree that it

is from the "Rebbe" that one can most poignantly absorb lessons connected with the tragic period of Hitler's domain.

E. MUNK
Downsview, Ontario

Why Not Examine Tochacha?

To the Editor:

The article based on the Rosh Yeshiva's discourse states: "We are left with a riddle and we are not able to single out this or that reason." But didn't Chazal ask: "Why was the land lost?" Where is the source of the assumption that only a *Navi* can come forth with reasons for the Churban?

The viewpoint that we cannot give cause to the tragedy because it represents a "*Tochacha*" phenomenon as an integral part of being the *Am Hanivchar* seems an evasion of the uncomfortable thought of our own guilt. The *Tochacha* itself and all the Prophets have been quite outspoken.

To dig into the past and to try to find out how we have sinned is not necessarily an insult to the martyred "whose *madreigos* we will never reach." Of course there were individuals, but critical investigation of historical processes does not deal with individuals; and if it does, then only under the aspect of how they were instrumental to influence collective attitudes and behavioral situations — which arise precisely because of the inability and failure of the leaders. Sometimes they were so busy with erecting fences that they let their own garden wither. The Chazon Ish remarked in one of his letters: משמרים את החבית ושופכים את היין ("They guard the barrel but spill the wine").

To everyone familiar with the goings-on in pre-war Eastern Europe among the Orthodox masses, comprising the *Kamus* and *Eichus* (quantity and quality) of Jewry, there was that sad spectacle of terrible feuds among the different groups in total disregard of

what the "others" might think of us. Wasn't that a colossal *Chillul Hashem*? Shouldn't that make us think? In fact, all these phenomena continue today. It reminds one of the Bourbons in France at the time of the Restoration when it was said: They have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

It is of course much easier to deal with the sins of Stephen Wise and Ben Gurion. Instead, I think, we should torment our brains about what happened in the past and what is happening now within ourselves.

The fissure and the inner strife which divided the Orthodox masses in Eastern Europe continue today. This realization does not "trample in vain upon the bodies of the *Kedoshim*" but is rather an important subject in the understanding of Jewish history and a valid attempt to interpret it. To avoid a deeper examination of our own behavior and

that vis-a-vis society, is just a further step in our way of pedestrian self-righteousness which enables us to go about our business undisturbed.

What is the role of the "Orthodox" Jew in this society? Does it cause the others to say: *Nas- si Elokim ato besochenu* (You are a heavenly prince in our midst)? And this question does not only refer to our own role in American society, it refers to *Eretz Yisroel* as well. Does it ever occur to us that the "others" might be a product of our own caliber? Why should we speak about an impenetrable mystery when we just have to look at the *haftorah* to *Parshas Poroh*?

Rabbi Weissmandel, whom I came to know intimately, indeed tortured his mind with the question: What was wrong with us?

SIEGMUND FORST
Brooklyn, New York

Source of the Term "Shoah"

To the Editor:

The article states: "The term Shoah was coined by the founders of *Yad V'Shem*." But "Shoah" is found at least seven times in *Nach* and *Yom Shoah* once. To be sure, these words have not been used in recent past history. However, as your article points out: "Recent Jewish history has shifted dramatically in two new areas...." And "this historical period culminated in the Holocaust, the largest scale annihilation of a people in history." So, very properly, a word not in common usage was resurrected.

NACHUM DICKER
Brooklyn, New York

Other letters regarding this topic are in the "Letters" section.

Yaakov Feitman

REVIEWING A SHIUR:

Rabbi Hutner's "Holocaust" Seminar

Holocaust, Shoah, or Churban?

Much discussion centers on the etymological merits or demerits of each of the above words in depicting the tragic events of World War II. This is not the point. Like human beings, words have a *יחוס בריף* — a history, a source, and indeed a genealogy. As stated in the article (page 8), the word to be substituted for "Churban" — be it "holocaust," "shoah" or whatever else — is less

One of the unique aspects of the traditional *chazara* — the in-depth analysis and review — of a Talmudic lecture is that the question and answer process not only clarifies the lecture itself, but often uncovers previously unnoticed paths and byways which can be explored on their own. Similarly, the article based on Rabbi Hutner's lecture on Churban Europe was meant to be a *shiur*, inviting the same type of scrutiny, deduction and exploration of inferences. It is hoped that the following will help in the clarification of specific matters, revealing that — as in a spoken *shiur* — the original text holds much more than a first reading can yield.

important than the fact that the secular establishment (through the agency of *Yad V'shem*) sought a substitute at all. For millennia, Jewish children have grown up knowing of the *Churban Bais Hamikdash*, *Churban Yerusholayim*, *Churban Betar*, among others. Imbued with the concept of *churban* as an integral part of Jewish history, they were not shaken in their *emuna* — their faith — if they learned of a new *churban* *ר"ל*.

However, the term *Shoah*, which was not coined in the time-forged mint of Torah experience, confronted a new generation with a psychologically devastating quandary. Not only were post-World War II Jews faced

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The ways of Divine retribution are mysterious and operate across gulfs of time and space ... Imagine the possible perversions in understanding Divine Will if one would attempt to attribute the deaths of the Ten Martyrs — Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues — to specific contemporary sins, when in reality, the Midrash teaches, their deaths were an atonement for the ten sons of Yaakov who sold Yoseif.

with an overwhelming tragedy and destruction; those who interpret events by re-defining them denied the survivors the consolation of being part of a historical continuum by removing these links from the eternal chain, banishing them to the purgatory of free-fall.

Holocaust, *Shoah* — it doesn't matter what the Oxford English Dictionary or Marcus Jastrow tell us about the exact meaning of the words themselves. It is enough the through their medium, a generation of Jews has subconsciously been conditioned to believe that one form of destruction is outside the realm of the Creator's plan for His people, actually opening the way for all kinds of philosophies of G-d's denial. Indeed, once the historical pattern was broken, the ground was ready for the insidious seeds of unbelief, blasphemy and "alternatives" to the Torah view. By contrast, "*Churban*" is rooted in that holy terrain where suffering and tragedy leads to *geula* — redemption.

It is interesting that Menachem Begin — who has withstood the demands of Chayka Grossman and her ilk to isolate *Yom Hashoah* from *Tisha b'Av* which commemorates all *churban* events — at least has the sense of history to place Churban Europe in the continuum that includes other such incidents. In any case, the healthy corpus of *Klal Yisroel* will ultimately reject the foreign body of an arbitrarily convened *Yom Hashoah* from its system.

The Era of Disappointment

As has been pointed out, there have been periods of disappointment in erstwhile benevolent gentiles, long before the Churban Europe epoch. Pharaoh, Cyrus and others have been mentioned. However, as in many aspects of Jewish history, a distinction must be made between Biblical and post-Biblical times.

From the time of the close of Scriptures until the 1930's, no such comprehensive retraction of previously granted rights had ever taken place. Of course, individual monarchs had, for their own personal gain, temporarily granted certain privileges to Jews and later revoked them. But the total pattern of official and legislated rights being eradicated by formal legislation as discussed in detail in the article, is a phenomenon uniquely epitomized by Nazi Germany.

"Tochacha" and Divine Punishment

Perhaps the most basic question in the post Churban Europe era is "What does it mean for us?" From those whose *emuna* is less than totally secure, we receive answers from the extreme of radicals who have created a post-Auschwitz theology — that belief in G-d is no longer possible — to those who claim to have grappled courageously with the "*problem*" and concluded that it is meaningless to us. From yet others, whose *emuna* is such that they can leave *no event* untouched by detailed interpretation, we receive specific, painful correlations between sin and punishment: this for that, tit for tat.

As the Rosh Yeshiva states (page 9), not only is the former unacceptable, so is the latter. While every individual is permitted — even required to search his personal actions in time of trouble *אם רואה אדם שיסורין באין עליו יפשפש במעשיו (ברכות ה)* to ascertain the cause of the Divine displeasure, this concerns each person's relationship with his own soul and his Creator. No mandate has been given any human being in today's times (the era of prophecy and Talmudic sages being over) to recognize, interpret and draw matching lines between sin and punishment.

The ways of Divine retribution are mysterious and operate across gulfs of time and space. To claim to have the keys to such esoteric knowledge is to assert an omniscience which no one can claim today. An example of the inscrutable paths of sin and its consequences is the tragedy of the *עשרה הרוגי מלכות* — the ten great sages who perished horrendous martyrs' deaths at the hands of the Roman government (see *Eicha Rabba* 2:2 and *Sota* 48b). Our sages (*Tanchuma Yashan*, *Vayeishev*, 2; *Yalkut Mishlei* 929) reveal to us that the death of the Ten was an atonement for the ten sons of Yaakov who participated in the sale of Yoseif. Imagine the possible perversions in understanding the Divine Will if anyone attempted to attribute the deaths of Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Channina ben Tradyon and their holy colleagues to specific sins and transgressions, when in reality, the Ten Martyrs were deemed by G-d as being *worthy enough* to atone for those giants of *kedusha*, the *שבטי קה*, the sons of Yaakov! We, too, dare not set ourselves up as arbiters of the Creator's mysterious ways in dealing with His creatures.

It should *not* be concluded, however, that our in-

ability to point out the *specific* sin-punishment relationship empties Churban Europe of any meaning for us. Clearly, such a cataclysmic event must serve as an impetus for increased *Yiras Hashem*, serious fear of the Lord. Of course we must appropriate the moment, using the opportunity to repent and reflect upon our own possible fate and become the better for it. But all this is with the *general* knowledge that the Creator chose to give us a sign and chastise His child. Yet, it must be remembered that this special child exists across the barriers of time and space, as does his father, who conducts His affairs with the infinite wisdom which only He possesses. Thus, for *ourselves*, each of us can seize the moment and awaken his own motivation for repentance and self-improvement. For *them*, those who, like the Ten Martyrs, died the deaths of Holy sacrifices — we can say nothing but *Kaddish* and *Yizkor*. *About* them, we dare say no more than, "may their memories be a blessing."

Cause and Effect

Apparent contradictions are often the result of a failure to distinguish between superficially similar but essentially different words and concepts. The Rosh Yeshiva speaks of "two new directions in recent Jewish history," the first being the era of disappointment in the gentile world. A perfunctory reading of this section could lead the reader to be puzzled when he later discovers that we today are unequipped to explicate the Divine reasons for allowing "the Holocaust" to take place.

A closer reading reveals that nowhere is there mention of terms such as "punishment" or "guilt" in discussing the trend of trusting in the gentile world until that trust was forever shattered. Of course, there does exist a causal relationship here — but not one of sin-retribution. A simple example may be taken from the beginning of the Book of *Shemos*. The Jewish people multiply and fruitfully bear many children, and Pharaoh responds by torturing them with ever more arduous labors. A number of levels may be seen to be operating simultaneously. The fact that the Jews are fulfilling the *mitzva* of "be fruitful and multiply" is a direct cause of Pharaoh's treacherous new work orders. Although there is obvious cause-and-effect at work here, surely the enslavement is not a punishment for the immediate cause — the fruitfulness. ... Cause and effect, yes; sin and punishment, no.

Correcting The Record

It is therefore so painful to be confronted by the accusation of the early Zionist leaders that רבותינו הקדושים (our rabbinical leaders) of the previous generation were contributing factors in trapping European Jewry in the Hitler-purgatory in which they perished. They claim that these Torah giants, the selfless leaders of *Klal Yisroel*, counseled their followers not to abandon their homes and traditional surroundings.

Rabbi Hutner has pointed out that, unpleasant as it

may be, this is merely an illustration of the pernicious molding of public opinion by those upon whose shoulders a causal relationship to the Hitler-cataclysm has recently been documented*; who then found themselves in a position to poison Jewish minds and hearts by indicting רבותינו הקדושים והטהורים, our rabbinical figures.

Should one ask why we suddenly seem so preoccupied with the causes of this latest catastrophe in Jewish history, and concerning earlier ones (such as Chmelnitzky's pogroms of "Tach V'Tat" — 1648) we offer no such causal relationships, the answer is simple. The Rosh Yeshiva's discourse was in no way an exercise in seeking to *place* blame, but to *remove* it from those who deserve better from us. Concerning the terrible events of "Tach V'Tat," it has never dawned upon a single Jewish mind and is unthinkable to place blame at the doorstep of the *Shach*, the *Taz*, or other *gedolim* of that period. Suddenly, in the 20th Century, it has become fashionable to blame the true Torah *manhigim* (leaders) of the age. This is unprecedented in Jewish history. Never before was the Jewish mind poisoned with distrust of his *gedolim*, thus undermining the entire time-honored edifice of "ask your elders and they will tell you."

Some have commented that there seems to be a lack of *ahavas Yisroel* displayed in the article. To be sure, they are correct. For those to whom *ahavas Yisroel* is identified with equanimity towards the undercutting of *kavod gedolim*, the criticism is quite fitting. However, they should be aware that the discourse was not meant for them in the first place.

The Power of the Mufti

Questions have been raised concerning the Mufti's actual influence upon the Nazis and the degree of his power even among the Arabs. First of all, the article in no way exonerates, by one iota, the culpability of the Germans themselves. The Nazis surely needed no instructions in anti-Semitism nor outside motivation for their evil plans.

However, as a practical, although rarely discussed matter, it is a fact that, as Joseph B. Schechtman notes, after much documentation, "the program of wholesale physical extermination began only after the Mufti's arrival on the scene" (*The Mufti and the Fuehrer*, p. 153). Until mid-1941, the official German policy, Schechtman shows, was forcing Jewish mass emigration from the Reich's "vital space." Only at the Wansee interdepartmental conference on January 20, 1942 (2 months after the Mufti's arrival in Berlin!) was the decree להשמיר להרוג ולאבד formally made.

A specific objection which has been raised to this chronology is the documented directive from Goering to Heydrich which Gideon Hausner sees as the order to begin "the killing of all the Jews in the Reich and the

*in *Hatziyonut Ha-Post Ugandit* by S.B. Bais Tzvi, Tel Aviv, 1977.

pillage of their property," (*Justice in Jerusalem*, pp. 84-85). However, a careful reading of this directive* reveals that there is no specific mention of total destruction and certainly not with the specificity of the Wansee conference. Even in March 1941, when Eichmann's title was ominously changed from Minister of "Jewish emigration" to "Jewish affairs and deportations," there is no evidence that the "Final Solution" went beyond merely removing Jews from Germany. Indeed, as Hausner (p. 84) states, at the time, "further emigration of Jews though still possible was of no primary interest" to the Nazis. Thus, even had the "Final Solution" been implemented without the Mufti's urging, there can be no question that in a war which was being inexorably won by the Allies, precious time was lost by the Mufti's machination behind the scenes to speed up the murderous process. As to the Mufti's influence among the Arabs in the 1930's and early 1940's, a glance at almost any page of Schechtman or Maurice Pearlman's *Mufti of Jerusalem* will be eye-opening. As to his prestige among the British, it is enough to quote the British Secretary for the Colonies, who announced at the St. James Conference of February 7, 1939, concerning a thorny issue, "I shall have to consult my Mufti — the Prime Minister" (Schechtman, p. 89).

Where Destruction is Total

To place something into a larger context is not to remove its uniqueness. Every major historical event has a character of its own, yet as the article explains, it must belong to the pattern as well. Many note that the Churban Europe was singular in that it was the only time a complete apparatus was designed and put into motion whose sole purpose was a Haman-like: להשמיד ולהרוג ולאבד — the total destruction of a nation from young to old; men, women, and children. Surely this is the determining factor in assigning a "character" to the events of World War II. Where else had communities centuries old been so totally decimated that they could never be rebuilt again!

Once again, a careful reading shows that the Rosh Yeshiva has dealt with this aspect of Churban Europe, carefully placing it in its *tochacha* context. "Only here does the Torah mention the terrifying punishment of becoming consumed by our enemies" (page 5). This reference is to the words והי לאכול — and they will

become consumed — which is the direct follow-up to "fall prey to the lure of strange nations and trust in them." Such a dire prediction, as we must realize today, exactly corresponds to Churban Europe down to the most literal meaning of those awesome words והי לאכול, as survivors have painfully attested. Thus, in its execution, this Churban was unique because of the extent and mechanics of its destruction. However, to dwell on this point in seeking to plumb the depths of the Churban's meaning for us, is to settle for a shallow exploration when there are miles of unfathomed churning waters to probe.

A Revealing Targum

There are two forms of idolatry: following the gods of strange nations and falling prey to the lure of those nations themselves. We learn from the Targum upon the words טעות עממי ארעא which is: טעות עממי ארעא, what might be taken to be pure idol worship — אלהי נכר הארץ — in truth refers to the temptation to follow the ways of the nation itself.

What was not elaborated upon in the article itself is the fact that this Targumic translation is not limited to this passage in *Vayeilech*. The Targum in general, except for the phrase אלהים אחרים in the Ten Commandments is, טעות עממי ארעא. Thus, the significance of the Targum and the Rosh Yeshiva's interpretation hold true throughout. The phrase in the article, "reflects the sense of the passage" (page 5), was used only because the wider ramifications of this Targum were not under discussion.

Why indeed is the Targum different in the Ten Commandments? The Rosh Yeshiva שליט"א discussed this publicly on another occasion (one evening in the Succa). The essence of his talk was that since the terrible decree of *galus* — exile — was not given until after the occurrence of the *Meraglim* — the spies who misled *Klal Yisroel* concerning the land of Israel — which was a direct outgrowth of the shattering of the *לוחות*, we must distinguish between two completely separate times in Jewish history. At the moment of the giving of the *לוחות*, there was not yet a decree of exile upon the Jewish people. When the Jews heard the first two Commandments they were not yet destined for *galus*. Therefore, the Targum on אלהים אחרים could not refer to the *galus* phenomena and was an exhortation against paganism itself. Only later with the pronouncement that the Jewish people would be "strewn among the nations," (see *Teh llim* 106:23-27 that the decree of Exile came directly from the sin of the *Meraglim*) did the danger of "following the lure of the nations" become an actual threat. Therefore, only in translating the Ten Commandments themselves does the Targum refer to literal idol worship. From the moment those first unique *לוחות* lay shattered, our history took a different turn and our concerns became involved with assimilation among people rather than the trepidation of falling into idol worship. ✠

* "In supplementing the task assigned to you on January 24, 1939, to bring the Jewish problem to a possibly satisfactory solution through emigration and evacuation in accordance with circumstances obtaining at the time, I hereby commission you to make all necessary preparation, in the organizational, material and financial sense, to bring about a total solution of the Jewish problem in the German sphere of influence in Europe.

"Wherever other government agencies are concerned, they are to be called upon to cooperate. I further commission you to submit to me as soon as possible an over-all plan concerning the organizational, substantive and financial measures for the execution of the desired final solution of the Jewish problem."

Comments on "Dealing with the Holocaust"

Comments on the review article on the Holocaust came in several forms: as letters to the Editor, as personal communications, and even in the columns of various newspapers. A number of comments focused on specific details. Thus, it was pointed out that Professor Dawidowicz had included some letters of Rabbi M.B. Weissmandel in her anthology on the Holocaust, even though she did not deal with him in her writings on this subject. Others asked why Rabbi Weissmandel's "*Min Hametzar*" was not included among the books reviewed, not taking note that only recently published books were the subject of the article — however, M. Shonfeld's book, which I dealt with at length, draws in largest measure upon the writings of Rabbi Weissmandel. (Incidentally, through an oversight, the bibliographical note on M. Shonfeld's work failed to point out that the English version of the book has been enlarged by some additions, and that the shrill tone of language used by the translator takes away something from the impact of the material.) Despite the fact that Rabbi Weissmandel's thought is reflected in Shonfeld's book, it would have been in place to enlarge upon this heroic personality whose greatness in Torah directly led him to the heights of unparalleled unselfish rescue work.

More basic are some comments that touch on the overall thrust of my article, and indicate a need to spell out once more in concise form what it meant to say. The purpose of the article was to point out a crucial fact that emerges from a review of the literature of *Churban Europa* — the role and impact of Torah during this tragic period. The

Torah provides an explanation for the callousness of the non-Jewish world; it served to inspire extraordinary acts of heroism — in martyrdom as well as in rescue efforts — whereas among those alienated from Torah there could and did arise some who tragically failed the test of the time.

"Therein lies the particular importance of remembering the *Churban Europa* in all its aspects. We must not only seek to feel some echo of the pain and horror of those days; we must also learn from the *mesiras nefesh* of the ordinary Jew who, going to his death, would not have changed places with his murderers, and of his leaders who inspired him; also, however hurtful this is, we must be aware of the danger to *Klal Yisroel* which results from the forgetting of Torah and the emergence of leaders estranged from it; and, finally, we must remember that we must go our way without expecting anything from the world around us."

This in no way means that Torah Jewry adequately heeded the will of G-d and did its duty as it should have. Far from it! There is a guilt that *everybody* carries who lived through this era — for not making true Torah observance more of a reality in the pre-war world, by living up to it to the fullest; and for not doing enough when disaster struck. "With the exception of a few very rare individuals ... and the organizations that they succeeded in inspiring, nobody did enough for *Hatzalah*, and therein lies a terrible lesson for us."

The lesson of our guilt certainly deserves to be analyzed and spelled out to the fullest, as Mr. Forst suggests, but this in no way affects the

validity of the point made in the article, namely that attaching oneself to Torah and seeking to be guided by it — even in our imperfect manner — makes a difference in what we are and how well we will discharge the duties that G-d imposes on us.

And can such an approach be termed a "witchhunt", "blaspheming the victims" as one heated newspaper comment declares? Obviously our Sages did not take this view when they bid us declare in our prayers that "it was because of our sins that we were exiled from our land..." Clearly, such a statement is not intended to insult the victims of the *Churban* — it is a warning to us to pay due attention to the demands of Torah. A refusal to view our historic experiences in this light will inevitably lead us — as it led the author of the newspaper comment quoted — to arrive, in effect, at the conclusion that Torah is irrelevant by equating blindly the "resistance of the spirit" of a Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandel and Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, and the "spirit of resistance" of the non-observant. This is surely a great disservice to the cause of Jewish survival and meaningful national unity for "it is only through the Torah that our nation is a nation" (Rabbi Saadiah Gaon).

If, however, we do view the *Churban Europa* in its historic context, as the tragic fulfillment of the *Tochacha* — and this in no way takes away from the enormity and uniqueness of its horrors — and if we teach our children to view it in this light, then we can all find in it a source of inspiration to struggle for the rule of Torah within our people — and for its even truer observance by those already committed to it. □

And Now a Word From Our Fathers

Irving Howe reaped many awards for his *World of Our Fathers*. The American Literary Society declared it the best work of history for the year. The *Atlantic Monthly* praised it saying, "What you have on paper is a socio-cultural study of the East-European Jew who migrated to America in the 1880-1924 era." In his book, he tells with great detail how the Bundists, Socialists, Yiddishists, and other ideologists of all shades came to these alien shores and made their way despite terrible obstacles of poverty and hostility. But as a history his *World ...* is terribly incomplete, for what about the people who founded the magnificent yeshivos during these very same decades — and the parents who enrolled their children in them, despite hardships and ridicule?

These men, *our* fathers, contended with the very same crushing poverty, the self-same sweat shops, the same Triangle Fire, the same language difficulties, the same loneliness of separation from fathers, mothers, wives and children that Howe's fathers dealt with. The setting was the same, but the additional set of obstacles they contended with made their survival struggle a very different one, and their success that much more triumphant.

To dramatize the contrast between Irving Howe's fathers and ours, allow me to quote the words that greeted Harry Fischel (who subsequently became a well-known Orthodox philanthropist) upon his arrival on these shores: "Young man, you have just landed in the great city of New York, where all the opportunities are open to you. But if you want to succeed, you must forget about G-d and your religion, and especially about the Sabbath and the dietary laws. You must work every day, including the Sabbath, and eat what you can get, for G-d has been left on the other side of the ocean."

The exhortation was spoken by Irving Howe's fathers. But our fathers did not forget about G-d and religion, did not forget *Shabbos* and *Kashrus*, and especially did

not leave G-d on the other side of the ocean. It is their story that set the stage for the viable, vibrant Yiddishkeit of New York City of today.

Who Came, When, and Why?

The jacket of *The World of Our Fathers* proclaims the subtitle, "The journey of the East European Jews to America and the life they found and made." Who came and why? Very briefly (as Irving Howe states): The years 1881-1914 were the years of the great immigration. The pogroms of 1881 left the Jews stunned and bleeding. In 1891 the Jews were driven out of Moscow and other Russian cities. The climax was the Kishiniev massacre of 1903. The masses of Jews emigrating to America included thousands of refugees in direct flight from pogroms, seeking a normal life on these shores.

Before 1905, Jews who held any kind of strong convictions — whether religious or political — were less likely to emigrate than those who did not. The Socialists of the Bund believed they should stay in Russia and Poland to organize the Jewish working class; the Zionists were convinced that America was a false hope; and the Orthodox feared that America was a jungle of worldliness in which faith risked destruction.

After 1905, however, many Jews of all stripes no longer found shelter in their "idealism." Even Orthodox Jews felt compelled to risk their religious security simply to stay alive. So they came in droves, seeking the relief embodied in Emma Lazarus's immortal words, gracing the base of the Statue of Liberty: "Give me your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free."

In 1914, the outbreak of World War I stopped the flow of immigration, but the years 1918 to 1924 again brought a tremendous upsurge of immigration.

The General State of Education

For the most part, Jewish education in this period consisted of a *cheder* set up in a dark, windowless basement without ventilation ... in garrets

MRS. FUCHS teaches for the N.Y.C. Public School System. This is her first appearance in these pages.

... behind stores ... above stables ... over saloons and dance halls ... and in many other unpalatable locations. The *melamed* was often a man with a little more learning than others and a little less ability in the market-place. A familiar figure on the East Side was also the *Siddur* peddler who taught children at home. For 10¢ one got *Aleph-Beis* and *Siddur*. My mother told me that even in 1919, which was before the establishment of the Mesifita Torah Vodaath, my oldest brother had a *melamed*. One day my mother asked him when my brother would begin learning *Chumash*. "If you'll pay me 25¢ I'll teach him *Chumash*," was the retort.

Mrs. Dicker, a member of the well-known Weberman family, told me how her brother Ben Zion's Rebbe would teach him in the back of their store, and seat himself near the door, so he could sneak out before the hour was over. Another veteran of those days described how the Rebbe would move the clock ahead, so the lesson would be over sooner.

At this time, missionaries were also very active. To counteract their activity, Jewish Mission schools were set up under Reform sponsorship. Teachers in Jewish Mission schools taught without hats. Orthodox opinion considered them as dangerous as the Christian Mission schools. In 1889, the assets of the Jewish Mission schools were transferred to the Educational Alliance, under wealthy German sponsorship. Also existent were several communal Talmud Torah's established for poor children — notably Machzike, Montefiore and Polonis. These, however, did not satisfy those religious parents who wanted more for their children.

On this bleak horizon, appeared in the early 1890's several incipient stars: Talmud Torah's Eitz Chaim and Yitzchok Elchonon, and the Tifereth Jerusalem school which was subsequently to be known as the Yeshiva Rabbeinu Jacob Joseph. These schools became the precursors of the Yeshiva Movement in the U.S.

In a book of 714 pages, Irving Howe grants only passing mention to this phenomenon. In one sentence, on page 203, in another one-liner he says, "On the East Side, a number of yeshivos were established as day schools to offer intensive traditional learning, usually with a thin smattering of secular subjects." There then follows one short paragraph on conflict which arose in 1908 between the students and administration of Yeshiva Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon. Period — sum total of *World of Our Fathers'* interest in the founding of yeshiva education in New York City. This is a gap we must fill.

Recollections of the First RJJ Student

As a start, let us trace the beginnings of the Yeshiva Rabbi Jacob Joseph, as related by its first student, Frank Andron:

In the year 1892 my father, Rabbi Samuel I.

Andron, and my oldest brother, Rabbi Jacob L. Andron, arrived in the United States. My mother and the rest of the family arrived the following year.

My father immediately secured a position as a Hebrew teacher with the Uptown Talmud Torah and my brother continued his studies for the rabbinate. After several months as a teacher, my father resigned and became an insurance agent. His opinion of the Talmud Torah's in America was that the children were unable to receive the proper Jewish education by merely attending two hours a day in the Talmud Torah and the only solution was to establish a yeshiva where the boys would receive their Hebrew and secular education in an all-day yeshiva.

On a Friday ... [in] December, I came home from school and told my father that a Christmas tree was set up in our classroom ... the boys [were] to bring ornaments on Monday to decorate the tree. My father's reaction was that I could not go back to school. He immediately engaged a Hebrew teacher to teach me from 9 A.M. to 2 P.M. and a public school teacher to teach me secular subjects from 4 to 6 P.M. He then persuaded several of his clients to have their children join me. The following boys were the first to be enrolled. Frank Andron, David Faston, two Tenenbaum boys, Joseph Robinson, Sam Lurie, Bernard Gordon, Greenberg, Salwen, Kraemer, and Rosenberg. The yeshiva was named Tifereth Jerusalem, after the name of Congregation Tifereth Jerusalem, the Orthodox shul situated at 101 Hester Street.

Every Saturday morning I would accompany my oldest brother to services at the home of (New York City's Chief Rabbi) Rabbi Jacob Joseph, who was completely paralyzed. Every time I came to services I would grasp the Rabbi's hand to say "Good Sabbath" to him; he would smile faintly. It was heartbreaking ... When the saintly scholar died, my brother Jacob suggested to my father to rename the Yeshiva as the Yeshiva Rabbi Jacob Joseph ...

All Hebrew teachers were interviewed by my father. I vividly recall when my beloved teacher, Rabbi Simon came to our modest home at 195 Clinton Street for an interview. He recited a Chapter of the Talmud and was immediately engaged. All Hebrew programs were outlined by my father. At his request, all students were required to come to the Yeshiva every Saturday afternoon for weekly examinations. Thus my father would know whether the students had made any progress.

His reminiscence goes on to record the school's program under his father's 13-year presidency. Certainly, Rabbi Samuel Andron, a man of great vision,

richly deserves to be counted as one who had a tremendous impact on the World of *Our Fathers*.

The Eitz Chaim Roots

The second fore-runner of the Yeshiva Movement was Eitz Chaim, begun as a very fine Talmud Torah.

When Rabbi Moses Matlin and his family came to New York in 1892, he enrolled his son in the school. Later, in 1895-6, when Rabbi Matlin's son Akiva was about 16, and no longer attended Eitz Chaim, his father assembled several lads of the same age and taught them personally in his apartment on Clinton Street. When the group grew to some twelve students, they moved to the Marionpol Synagogue. Since most of the founders were Lithuanian, one could be sure that a picture of Rabbi Isaac Elchonon Spector, Chief Rabbi of Kovno, hung in each of their homes. Not surprisingly, when the school was incorporated in 1897, it was as the Rabbi Isaac Elchonon Theological Seminary, the first Orthodox seminary in America. Its specific purpose at that time was to provide further education for youths who could study a page of Talmud with *Tosofos* on their own.

Many years of growth and controversy followed. I shall just make brief mention of some highlights of this period: The Yiddish press gave little coverage to Yeshiva Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon; — instead, its attention was focused on the Jewish Theological Seminary ... The Agudath HaRabbonim, at its 1903 Philadelphia Convention decided to recognize Yeshiva Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon as the only yeshiva of higher learning in the United States.

The ranks of the school were swelled with refugees from Kishiniev and Odessa. The administration of the school did not want to sponsor the teaching of any secular studies, rejecting students' repeated requests for

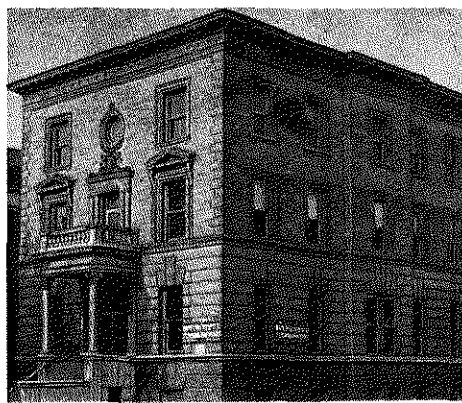
a secular program.... In 1906, 15 students clamoring for secular subjects were locked out. This turned into a public quarrel with much coverage in the Yiddish press. The yeshiva administration insisted that those students seeking financial aid must be full-time religious students. The *Tageblatt* (an Orthodox Yiddish daily) now took the stand that "they (the students) are entirely justified in these demands. Jewish scholars without American education arrive daily on every ship.... On the other hand ... cultured students without Jewish scholarship are to be found in the Seminary. The Yeshiva on Henry Street must be the common ground where Torah and culture can be blended."

After this controversy, the yeshiva was reorganized under Rabbi Moses Sebulun Margolis. June 1912 brought the merger of Eitz Chaim and R' Yitzchok Elchonon. The constitution of Yeshivas Eitz Chaim had stated as its purpose: instruction for poor children in Talmud, Bible, and *Shulchan Aruch* from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.; from 4 in the afternoon, two hours to be devoted to teaching the native tongue, English, and one hour to Hebrew, and to reading and writing Jargon (Yiddish).

With the merger, Eitz Chaim was to be the preparatory school with upper elementary and high school secular classes supplementing the religious program, and R' Yitzchok Elchonon was to be the Rabbinical Seminary, promoting the study of the Talmud and educating and preparing students of the Hebrew faith for the Hebrew Orthodox ministry.... The college was not added until 1928.

Torah Vodaath Beginnings

Yeshiva Torah Vodaath is the last yeshiva whose founding I shall deal with. Although Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin is older, I have chosen Yeshiva Torah Vodaath for purely personal reasons. Before 1910, my grandfather, Reb Zecharia Dershowitz, had moved to Williamsburg and had established the first *shtiebel* in the neighborhood. My



FIRST HOMES: Yeshiva Rabbi Jacob Joseph, Yeshiva Yitzchok Elchonon, Yeshiva Torah Vodaath

parents soon followed. By 1916, my three older brothers were attending public school and receiving inadequate instruction from privately engaged Rebbes. My father chanced to meet an acquaintance, Mr. Benjamin Wilhelm. In extolling the virtues of living in Brooklyn, my father asked Mr. Wilhelm why he too doesn't move to Williamsburg. "I can't," said Mr. Wilhelm, "because there are no yeshivos in Williamsburg." My father promptly countered, "So we'll make one."

From this seemingly casual conversation* between Mr. Louis Dershowitz and Mr. Benjamin Wilhelm grew Yeshiva Torah Vodaath. They in turn solicited the help of many others. During the years of its early organization, they were joined by Mr. Menashe Stein, who still plays a central role in Yeshiva and Mesifita Torah Vodaath. Mr. Stein told me how he went knocking on doors to solicit students. He was derisively greeted with taunts, "*Vus villst du, machen Rabbonim?*" Although the tenor of the school was not on "*machen Rabbonim*," but on creating *talmidei chachomim*, in time Yeshiva and Mesifita Torah Vodaath produced many fine *Rabbonim* for the American scene. Would but one of its fine alumni channel his talents into writing up the history of Torah Vodaath.

Suffice it for me to add these illustrious names to the World of *Our Fathers*.

P.S. — Two Letters

With a bow to Irving Howe, who quotes quite extensively from the "*Bintel Brief*" letters of *The Forward* to paint a picture of the times, I too wish to use this device. I have chosen excerpts from two "*Bintel Brief*" letters that graphically depict the end result that has been wrought by the efforts of *Our Fathers* during the early years of this century. First, a letter written in 1906: "Dear Editor, I am a young man of twenty-one. I have a seventeen year old cousin, and she and her parents would like me to marry her. I like the girl. She's educated, American-born, not bad-looking.... She is very religious and I am a free-thinker. I ask you, esteemed Editor, could this lead to an unpleasant life if we were to marry?" The editor answers: "The fact that the girl is religious and the man is not can be overcome if he has enough influence on her."

And now a similar letter written in 1967: "Dear Editor, ... " (*Bintel Brief*, pg. 206). ... The letter is a detailed lament of a grandmother describing the problems created by her granddaughter's falling in love with a *Shomer Shabbos* boy. It is the editor's reply which I consider significant — as follows: "We feel your granddaughter's boyfriend's strict religious background need not be a hindrance to marriage." This from the "*freie*" *Jewish Forward*!! Surely, it was the

growth of the yeshiva movement which did so much to "establish G-d on this side of the ocean."

To those of *Our Fathers* who had the vision and dedication to break the ground, plough the soil and plant the seeds of these institutions, we *shomrei mitzvos* of today owe a tremendous debt of gratitude.

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Footnote From a "Father's" Daughter

The conversation "seemed casual", but those who came in contact with my father פ"ע (Mr. Wilhelm), knew that founding the yeshiva was dominant in his mind. My mother was anxious to move to the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn from the Lower East Side — as many young couples were doing at that time. My father agreed to move — conditionally. If he could open a yeshiva by the fifth birthday of my older brother, Shea (Chaim Yehoshua, four years old then), they would stay. Otherwise, they would move back to the East Side.

He immediately got to work, leaving my mother alone with their three babies many a long evening, trying to get people interested in helping — mostly meeting not just indifference, but outright discouragement. The mere thought of not sending children to public school was described as an impossible, crazy idea, totally incompatible with living in America.

My father approached *Rabbonim* to speak to their congregants. One of them opened his hand, telling my father that, just as hair would never grow from the palm of the hand, so would his dream of a yeshiva never become a reality.

Despite opposition and hardships, no one ever saw my father waver. He recognized opening the yeshiva as an absolute necessity for the future of Yiddishkeit in our community.

Once he undertook the task, he never thought of it as a trial effort. Of course, my father was not alone in this endeavor. A few of his closest friends from his *Chevra* the *Adas Bnei Yisroel* — were at his side, as were many other friends, such as Mr. Dershowitz. In some ways, the mere existence of the *Chevra* was also indirectly instrumental in founding the yeshiva. It is doubtful that my father would have come to America altogether, had he not seen a leaflet, sent by a friend in America, describing this organization of young *Shomrei Shabbos*, encouraging their members to come to study Torah at night, after a long, hard day's work. Thus he came, knowing that he would have a "home" in this *Chevra*.

My father wrote his memoirs (as yet unpublished) in Yiddish, recounting the founding years in great detail. But the yeshiva itself is the greatest memorial to his efforts.

Chana Belsky

Song of Faith

Shouldn't it be unnecessary to address a sophisticated, scholarly readership with words of simple faith? These past few months, however, I've been badgered by questions from friends and relatives who, I had assumed, had gleaned basic concepts of emuna from their own study, and from lectures and discourses they had heard in their yeshiva days. Yet, to my dismay, I encountered major gaps in their comprehension of axioms we all should take for granted. So I've referred my questioners to Kuzari, the writings of Maharal, the Sefer HaTanya, and the essays of Rabbi Nachum Braslaver. But after some second thoughts I decided that what they really sought — and needed — was a simple and abiding faith.

This may sound strange, for we are enjoying a proliferation of Torah study and frumkeit! Shouldn't our teachers and all our daily life's experiences have taught us to acquire a vigorous faith to sustain us

against all adversity? All of this should be; yet, no one is blind or deaf to what surrounds us ... the questions at times of tragedy and bereavement from many who should know better ... the old cry of Why me? Why my child? Why my husband ... wife? With some, the questions remain unarticulated, yet their silence seems to beg for answers — or, better said, for an expression of simple faith.

What do I speak of? The simple faith and the unassuming attitude typified by my grandmother. I speak of her faith because it was she who, almost by indirection, indoctrinated her grandchildren with a strong faith by her own unsophisticated methods.

She spoke to us of faith. She sang to us of faith. Above all, her life personified an impregnable faith, which no blow of adversity could shatter ... a Rock of Gibraltar, which could not be moved. Allow me to tell you something about my grandmother.

Grandmother — 101 Years Ago

She was born in 1877 in the small town of Uhel, in the Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire. The town was famous for its men of faith, especially the great "Yismach Moshe," who peered out of his window every time he heard a commotion in the street to inquire whether *Moshiach* had arrived. His constant, loving faith rubbed off on the simple inhabitants of his town — my grandmother included.

Grandmother arrived in America at the tender age of nine after the tragic death of her father and several of her brothers and sisters. Needless to say, America in the 1880's was no paradise for the faithful. *Shomrei Shabbos* had to look for a new job every Monday morning because all jobs required work on Saturday. Organized Jewish education was in its embryonic stages, and any religious endeavor was, to say the least, extremely difficult. Grandmother clung tenaciously to her faith and observance. She managed to work and save enough money to get married and rear her own

family in keeping with *Ruach Yisroel Sabba* (the tradition of her fathers).

All of this in the face of the greatest adversity. She lost two of her sons in the flu epidemic of 1918, and other members of her family in various tragedies — she was widowed by the untimely death of my grandfather followed by my own father's passing shortly afterwards. Throughout it all, she maintained her own routines with an unbelievable cheer: Every Wednesday morning she trudged to the chicken market to select her own chicken, bring it to the *shochet*, have it "flicked," and then home to have it opened under her own watchful eyes, which searched out any *she'eila*. After being satisfied that all was well, she proceeded to soak it and salt it. She knew nothing of the ready-for-the-pot poultry used today even by the most pious ... I would come home from Yeshiva at night to find her rolling a out a "lace tablecloth" of dough to make her own noodles. The sticky covering often stretched over the entire kitchen table because her *lokshen brett* (lit., noodle board) was too small ... Need I add that she baked her own *challa*, chopped her own fish, and prepared all of her own sidedishes and desserts? There were even times when she churned her own butter!

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Pennies in the Ticket-Kitty

She didn't have to do all of this herself, since my grandfather, when he was alive, gave her enough money to pay for hired help. But she deposited extra household money into a separate kitty, together with monies he had given her to buy herself dresses and a fur coat. Once a year she took together this substantial collection, made the rounds to a lawyer and travel agent to arrange for affidavits and passage aboard ship for yet another of her nieces whom she brought over to these shores.

The Song

I tell you all of this as background for understanding my grandmother's simple faith. This *emuna peshuta* would leap out to the foreground for me on various occasions — for instance, when I came home from Yeshiva during a particularly bad polio year with my camphor bag dangling from my neck and a tale of woe on my lips: one of my classmates had been taken to the hospital and he was in bad condition. She was busy rolling out her *lokshen* dough and she began to hum a tune I had often heard from her. But this time it was different. She had added words to the song, something like:

"G-t in zein mishpot is gerecht
M'tor nisht zogen az G-t is umgerecht
Veil G-t vaist vos er tut
Kayner shtruft er imzist neet
G-t in zein mishpot is gerecht."
(G-d in His judgement is right
We must not say that He is unjust
For G-d knows what He is doing.
No one is punished for nought
G-d in His judgment is right.)

Simple, succinct and yet eloquent. These words capture an entire philosophy and, in spite of their brevity, convey the message of tomes of discussion. All kinds of adversity had been hers — did she have one complete year of happiness in her life? Yet faith, imbedded in her body and soul, sang out clearly and enunciated her affirmation of G-d, her Creator ... acknowledging the complexities of His Torah, accepting His way of reward and punishment. She sang this song because she believed it, and wanted to transmit its message to her children and grandchildren.

Extra Curricular Activities

She sacrificed to bring a *melamed* into her home to educate her sons, and even her daughter at a time when teaching a girl was unheard of. She enrolled her grandchildren in the Yeshiva Torah Vodaath on Wilson Street, and made it her business to welcome them

during recess with a jar of chocolate milk and a cookie. No one would accuse us of being undernourished, but this was her way of sweetening our learning and quest for Torah knowledge.


She was a member of a now-legendary group of *Nashim Tzidkonios* in Williamsburg — which included the sainted Mrs. Karp, Mrs. Young, and Mrs. Yutkowitz — who cared for the sick, and washed and clothed the dead. Grandmother's uncommon faith was again demonstrated to me when I was taken ill with scarlet fever. The doctor wanted to hospitalize me, but she would hear nothing of it. She told him that she would watch over me, give me my medicine (evil tasting powders!), and help me sweat out the fever. For weeks we were confined to the house as she nursed me back to health. She cheered me, encouraged me, and sang to me of her conviction that "all is in G-d's hands, so it *must* be for the best."

The Community

In Williamsburg we were surrounded with men of sincere faith: Reb Shmuel Leib Wolfson זצ"ל, the grocer (who knew *Shas*); Reb Moshe Yehuda Lieberman זצ"ל, the eggman, a frequent visitor to the house; and, יברל לחיים, Reb Chaim Gelb, who ran a commission bakery (while collecting *tzeddaka* and teaching children to say a resounding *Omein!*).

She was deeply respected by many of our luminaries. My Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Fink זצ"ל, to whom she brought all of her *shailos*, treated her with great deference. She would meet her illustrious *landsman*, Mr. Shrage Feivel Mendlowitz זצ"ל (legendary leader of Torah Vodaath and founder of other institutions) at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Menashe Gross on Rodney Street. She often took me along to breathe in the atmosphere of holiness and *mesiras nefesh* that dominated there. Their home was the cradle of *Yiddishkeit* in those days. (It was there that Mr. Tress met with the pioneers of Zeirei Agudath Israel of America.) I distinctly remember Mr. Mendlowitz sitting in the Gross *succa* expounding on the Torah's approach to the events of the days ... in particular, the upsurge of Adolph Hitler.... In later years, he often asked me about my grandmother and details regarding her way of life.

Where is Her Song?

Grandmother's simple yet powerful faith sustained us in all situations. She lived the life of the righteous, and inspired her children and grandchildren to believe with a firm faith to study and to live according to the Torah. Her response to all situations was a song of faith which affirmed her belief and trust in a Creator who revealed His Word in the Torah and rewarded the righteous and punished the evil. I don't know if her song would really answer everyone else's questions, but it surely would have negated their need to ask. 

Fire Destroys A Yeshiva Building in New Jersey

— and therefore . . . ?

- **and therefore** seven years of devoted Chinuch effort should end up in ashes?
- **and therefore** lock up a yeshiva that won acclaim from appreciative Torah leaders, grateful parents, and loving students, for dealing with each individual boy with admirable success?

NO!!

- **and therefore** respond to the pleas of 150 students who want to stay on in Adelphia!
- **and therefore** respond to the call of Gedolei Torah who ask you to give generously to Project Restore to rebuild what was destroyed!
- **and therefore** listen to your own heart that tells you to do something special for a very special yeshiva in the heart of New Jersey!
- **and therefore** write a very generous check to:

Project Restore

PROJECT RESTORE

Talmudical Academy of New Jersey
P.O.Box 7 / Adelphia, New Jersey 07710

Gentlemen:

Enclosed please find my contribution of \$.....
for **Project Restore**, to keep Torah alive in the Yeshiva
of New Jersey.

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

full high school
Bais Midrash
student dormitories
dining room
on-campus faculty
residences
campus in rural
Central New Jersey



Variations on the Yissachar-Zevulun Theme

I. The Gladstein Corporation

"I just made the best business deal ever!"

"Yitzchok Gladstein" was extremely successful in the plastics line, but I had never seen him so enthusiastic about his business before.

"I have a new partner."

"Mazel tov!!" I replied, but now I was curious. I had known Yitz for years, and he was not one to share his business with anyone. He had told me many a tale of how partners quarrelled, often driving a business into ruin. Besides, his business was thriving, and he certainly had no need for additional capital.

"So, who's your new partner?" I asked.

"A young man in the Lakewood Kolel."

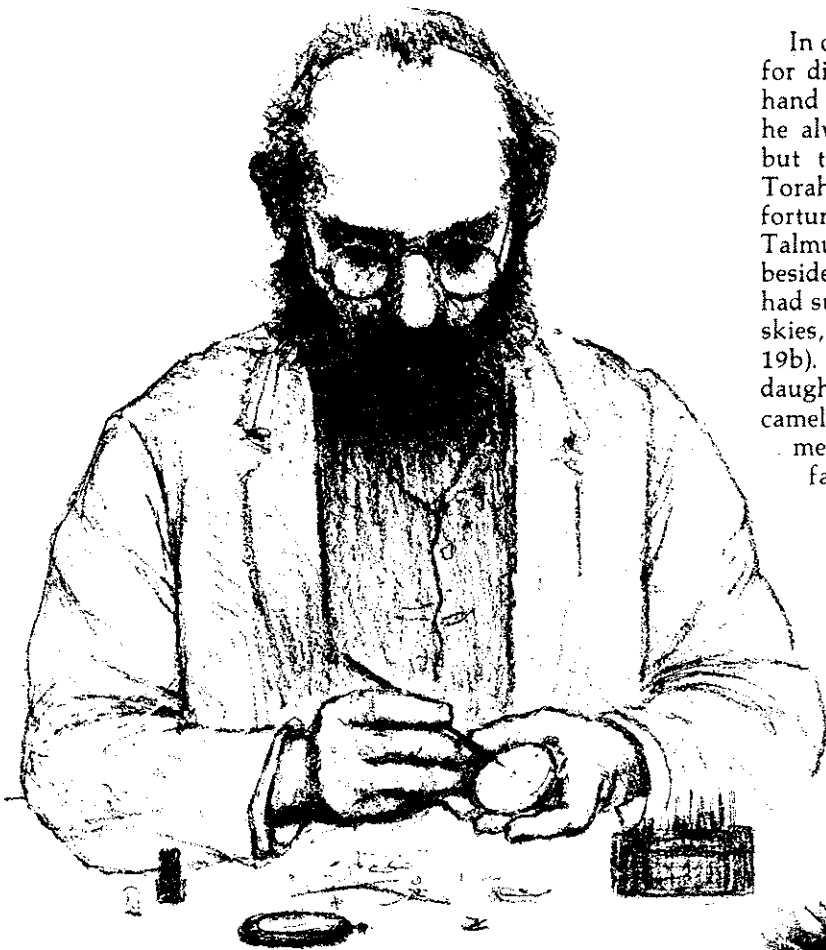
With a little encouragement, Yitzchok filled me in on the details. Although Yitzchok had had an extensive yeshiva background, he had long ago given up his full-time studies to enter the world of business. He had nurtured his investment from a small shop in a loft to one of the largest manufacturing plants in the region. His generosity grew with his resources. No collector for a yeshiva or other worthy cause went away empty-

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handed, and he gave a number of yeshivos major endowments. Yet, as he had often confided, something was lacking. He could not take off time from his business for intensive study. Sure, he attended a regular *Shabbos shiur* and he made certain not to let a day go by without "cracking open a *sefer*" — honoring the minimum requirement of daily Torah study — but that was barely enough to tease his appetite.

Then during the summer, Yitz had heard a lecture expounding on the famous partnership between Yissachar and Zevulun, bringing certain details to the fore: Two entire tribes of Israel — over a hundred thousand men in all — had made an agreement. The tribe of Zevulun engaged in trade and commerce, earning as much money as possible. Half of the income would go to their partners — the tribe of Yissachar. Freed of the responsibility of earning a living, the tribe of Yissachar devoted their entire time to Torah study. And the merit of the study would also be divided equally between the two partners — Yissachar and Zevulun.

As a result of this remarkable partnership, the tribe of Yissachar was able to develop some of the greatest Torah scholars of all time — they were among the only scholars who succeeded in determining precise *halacha* (Yoma 89b). In the time of King David, they were famed for their penetrating understanding (see *I Chronicles* 12:33). But the tribe of Zevulun had equal share in all their learning.



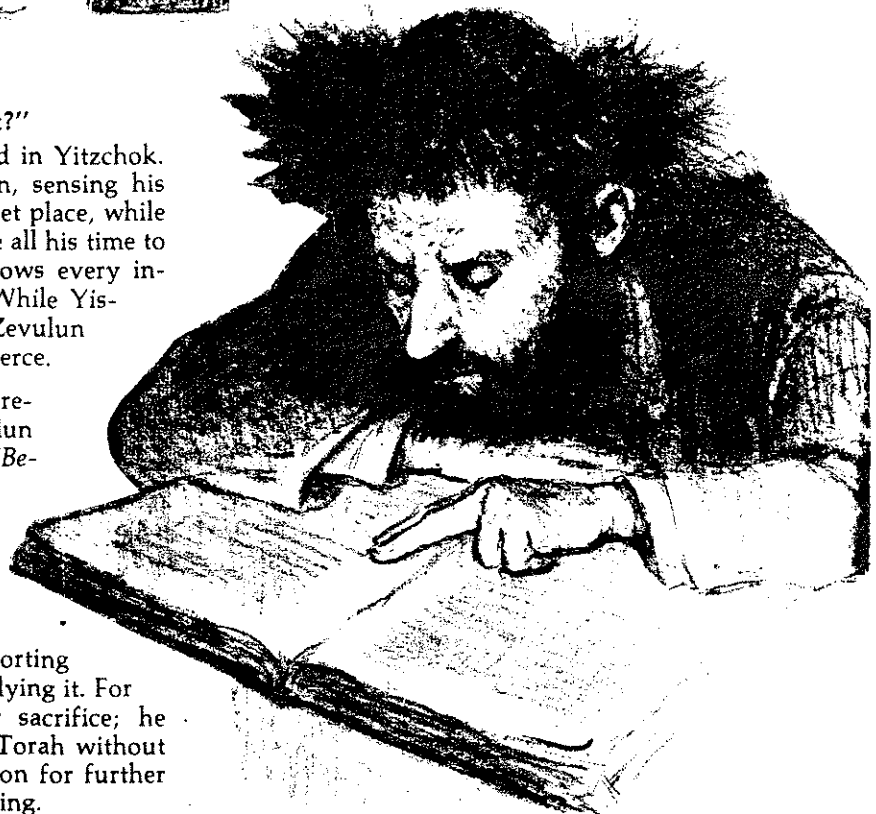
"Am I Carrying My Weight?"

The lecture awoke a responsive chord in Yitzchok. He could well empathize with Zevulun, sensing his sacrifice, entering the realm of the market place, while his brother-tribe would be able to devote all his time to his sacred studies. But Providence endows every individual with special individual gifts. While Yissachar had a talent for Torah study, Zevulun had been given a particular gift for commerce.

Zevulun's sacrifice had not gone unrewarded. As the Midrash teaches, Zevulun is always mentioned first in the Torah (*Be-reishis Rabba* 99:9). And, as the Chofetz Chaim points out, in the World-to-Come, Zevulun will have an equal share with Yissachar in all the prestige, reward, and the scintillating insights that are bestowed upon the Torah scholar. In some ways, supporting Torah is an even greater virtue than studying it. For one, the supporter makes the greater sacrifice; he devotes his major efforts on behalf of Torah without the satisfaction, incentive, and motivation for further devotion that come from actually studying.

In our private conversations, Yitz had often searched for direction in his life. If Providence had guided his hand to wealth, it must have been for a purpose. True, he always supported yeshivos and other institutions, but this was a distant, impersonal involvement in Torah. Moreover, he was haunted by the wildly erratic fortunes of Nakdimon ben Guryon as reported in the Talmud. On the one hand, he was the only person besides Moshe Rabbeinu and Yehoshua bin Nun who had succeeded in stopping the sun in its path across the skies, so great was the merit of his charity (*Ta'anis* 19b). Yet several years later, his fortunes fell so that his daughter was reduced to picking wheat kernels from camel dung for her daily sustenance. Shouldn't the merit of his vast charity at least have assured his family minimum financial security? No, said the rabbis. "The burden is proportioned according to the capacity of the camel." Nakdimon could have done so much more, and he is faulted for his charity deficit. "I've got *breite pleitzes* (broad shoulders)," mused Yitzchok. "How can I be sure that I'm carrying my weight?"

The Yissachar-Zevulun relationship offered much more direct linkage and more satisfying an arrangement. If he could not devote an appreciable amount of his own time to study, perhaps he could find a partner totally immersed in Torah who could share



the fruits of his labors with him. But the partnership between Yissachar and Zevulun had taken place in Biblical times. Had anyone done anything like it since?

Since Biblical Times

Then Yitzchok heard that lecture last summer. The rabbi related the story of Rabbi Shimon Achi Azariah. Azariah, father of the famed Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, was a fairly successful business man. His younger brother, Shimon, decided to devote himself fully to Torah study, but he needed support for his family. The two brothers made a partnership: Azariah would share his wealth with Shimon, if Shimon would share the merit of his Torah study with Azariah.

Both brothers kept their bargain, and Shimon eventually became one of the leading sages of the Mishna. In recognition of his debt to his brother, he always referred to himself as Rabbi Shimon *Achi Azariah* — *Brother of Azariah*.^[1]

I had seen the story in the Midrash, but never had it seemed so alive as when Yitz repeated it to me. It brought to mind a similar agreement in more recent times, involving one of the most famed commentators on the Talmud — the *Maharsha* — Rabbi Shmuel Aidel's (1555-1631). He insisted on being called "*Aidel's*" because his wealthy mother-in-law, Aidel, had supported him and his students for twenty years while they had studied Torah.

Yitzchok had inquired if any similar arrangement was possible today. He had discovered that the Chofetz Chaim had discussed such partnerships — from a practical viewpoint.^[2] And, the Chazon Ish had even provided a contract form to be drawn up between such partners.^[3]

By now my friend was convinced. If he himself could not be fully immersed in Torah, he would achieve this through a partner. He approached the proposition as carefully as if he were actually bringing a partner into his business. The partner would have to run his end of the deal just as meticulously as Yitzchok ran his.

Discussions with several Roshei Yeshiva revealed that such partnerships were not unheard of — even in this day and age. He interviewed several candidates, and finally found a young man whom he would consider a proper partner in his enterprise.

A formal contract was drawn up, sealing the agreement. Yitzchok would generously support his partner, making sure that he would have absolutely no financial concerns. A trust fund would be set up guaranteeing that this support would continue as long as the partner lived. In return, the other partner would devote his entire day — every day — to Torah study. The merit for his study would be shared with my friend in exchange for his support.

Interestingly enough, the Kolel fellow had insisted on an additional stipulation of his own in the contract:

If, during the first year, Yitzchok would feel that he was not getting his money's worth — that is, not experience a conscious spiritual growth — he could break the contract. Yitzchok assured me that he feels that he had gotten the better end of the deal.

Even in America

Yitz Gladstein's story gave me pause. A generation ago, something like this would have been unknown. America was a backwater of Torah, with Torah-study barely surviving. But now the United States is one of the world's major Torah centers and even seems to be rivalling pre-war Europe in some ways. Yeshivos are mushrooming across the land and kolellim are filling, some to capacity.

The secular world might deride the "professional student," but in the Torah world, there is no higher calling. Every day in our prayers we say, "Torah study outweighs them all." To study the Torah — the expressed will of the Creator — is the loftiest involvement for a human being, and one who can devote his entire life to this calling is fortunate beyond comparison. The ambition to devote oneself fully to Torah study is now an American reality.

But still, there is one ingredient missing. Very few young men are able to extend their studies for more than a few years beyond marriage. Lurking in the back of every kolel man's mind is the eventual need to step out into the world and earn a living. Many of our most promising students end up in the business world, or at some other occupation that allows little time and no mind for deep immersion in Torah — surely at an immeasurable loss to the Jewish community as a whole. Some at least serve the community as teachers, but still never realize their potential in Torah scholarship.

Aside from the individual's aspiration to be a "*Shivti*" Jew ("*Shivti* — *May I dwell in the House of G-d all the days of my life*" — *Tehillim* 27), the community has a constant need for *Gedolei Torah*, true Torah giants for leadership. America is surely ripe for producing its own *Gedolim* — giants of Torah scholarship, piety, and observance. But if we are to produce *Gedolim*, our best minds will require the years of uninterrupted study that are needed to develop this most rare type of human being. They would have to be years uninterrupted by worries of earning a livelihood — years totally immersed in Torah study.

Discussions with people involved with yeshivos and kolellim reveal that the idea of the Yissachar-Zevulun partnership is spreading. For the "money-partner," of course, it entails a major commitment. He must agree to support the student for a given period of time, usually an appreciable number of years. Some might make it a lifetime commitment. But in return, he knows that he has a "Torah-partner" with whom he is sharing the merit of Torah study — the most important of all the mitzvos.

On the practical level, a number of variations are possible. One businessman I know placed a kolel member on his payroll as "religious advisor"; he is a full-time employee of the firm. His primary occupation is to study with the understanding that he be available to advise the businessman on the ethical implications of any business venture that arises. One such question sent the young man to the *Choshen Mishpat* section of the *Shulchan Aruch* for over a month.

II. The Congregational Option

I recently learned of a synagogue that had made a Yissachar-Zevulun partnership with its rabbi. (Since the arrangement is still experimental, they have asked me not to reveal names.) For years the congregation had agonized over the role of the rabbi. Now they were seeking a new rabbi, and the issue was pressing. What really was his job? Delivering a sermon was a once-a-week affair, and visiting the sick could just as well be done by a committee of laymen.

The congregation had formed a committee to investigate the traditional role of the rabbi. The more they probed, the more they found what a rabbi was not expected to be. He was *not* meant to be the community fund-raiser, nor a social director, nor the membership chairman. Visiting the sick and the bereaved were certainly very important, but they were also certainly not a particular responsibility of the rabbi.

What they did discover was that the traditional role of the rabbi was that of resident scholar, spending all his time in Torah study, always available to answer any questions that the congregants might have — especially halachic problems, but personal and communal ones, as well. Preaching was the job of a professional preacher (*maggid*, *darshan* or *mo'chiach*), and if performed by the rabbi, it was secondary to his prime responsibility of scholarship, learning, and guidance. Indeed, the great European communities of old vied with each other to attract the greatest scholars.

The congregational leadership was sophisticated enough to appreciate this. They decided to engage a rabbi with a well-defined job description — namely, to study Torah the entire day — and, of course, to be available for consultation and *psak* (halachic decisions). One of the committee members had heard about the Yissachar-Zevulun partnership in the course of his research, and had discovered that a congregation could make such a contract with their rabbi.¹ Every member of the congregation would have a share in the merit of the Torah study of their resident scholar.

The proposition was presented to the membership, and surprisingly it was accepted without excessive debate. Candidates for the position were interviewed on the basis of their Talmudic scholarship and willingness to devote their full time to Torah study. The congrega-

tion engaged a brilliant young *talmid chacham* as its rabbi.

Too Good to Be True?

When I first heard this story, I was skeptical; it seemed too utopian to work. But then I interviewed several members of the congregation. The membership is young and highly educated, and is truly ready for exceptional leadership. So instead of conventional "timely" sermons week after week, they are treated to an exciting exploration of a Torah topic in depth. The congregation feels that they have succeeded in setting their rabbi above the pettiness that often surrounds such a position.

If this approach succeeds and is picked up, it could spell a radical change for the American synagogue. Some of America's best yeshiva minds have avoided the rabbinate because, among other reasons, such a position often meant the end of intensive Torah study. It was an old joke in the yeshiva that *Chullin* (the Talmudic tractate that deals with laws of *Kashrus*, studied by all rabbinical candidates) was not the key to the Talmud — but its lock. After studying *Chullin*, one puts aside the Talmud and locks it up.

To be sure, this is not the hard-fast rule, and it surely was not traditionally the case. The rabbis of Europe's great communities were among the foremost Torah sages of their time. It is a truism that the history of the European rabbinate is the history of Europe's Torah leadership. The position of the rabbi was the most highly honored in Jewry, for he was the one man who truly was able to devote his entire life to the study and teaching of Torah — in theory and in practice. His constant devotion to Torah and his enviable scholarship served as an inspiration to all, uplifting his entire community.

Aside from drawing from the rabbi's example as a role-model, the congregants also had a direct share in his Torah study as a result of their support. Imagine having a share in the accomplishments of a Rabbi Akiva Eiger or Chasam Sofer! For although the Yissachar-Zevulun relationship might not have always been spelled out in the rabbinical contract, it was always implicit in it.

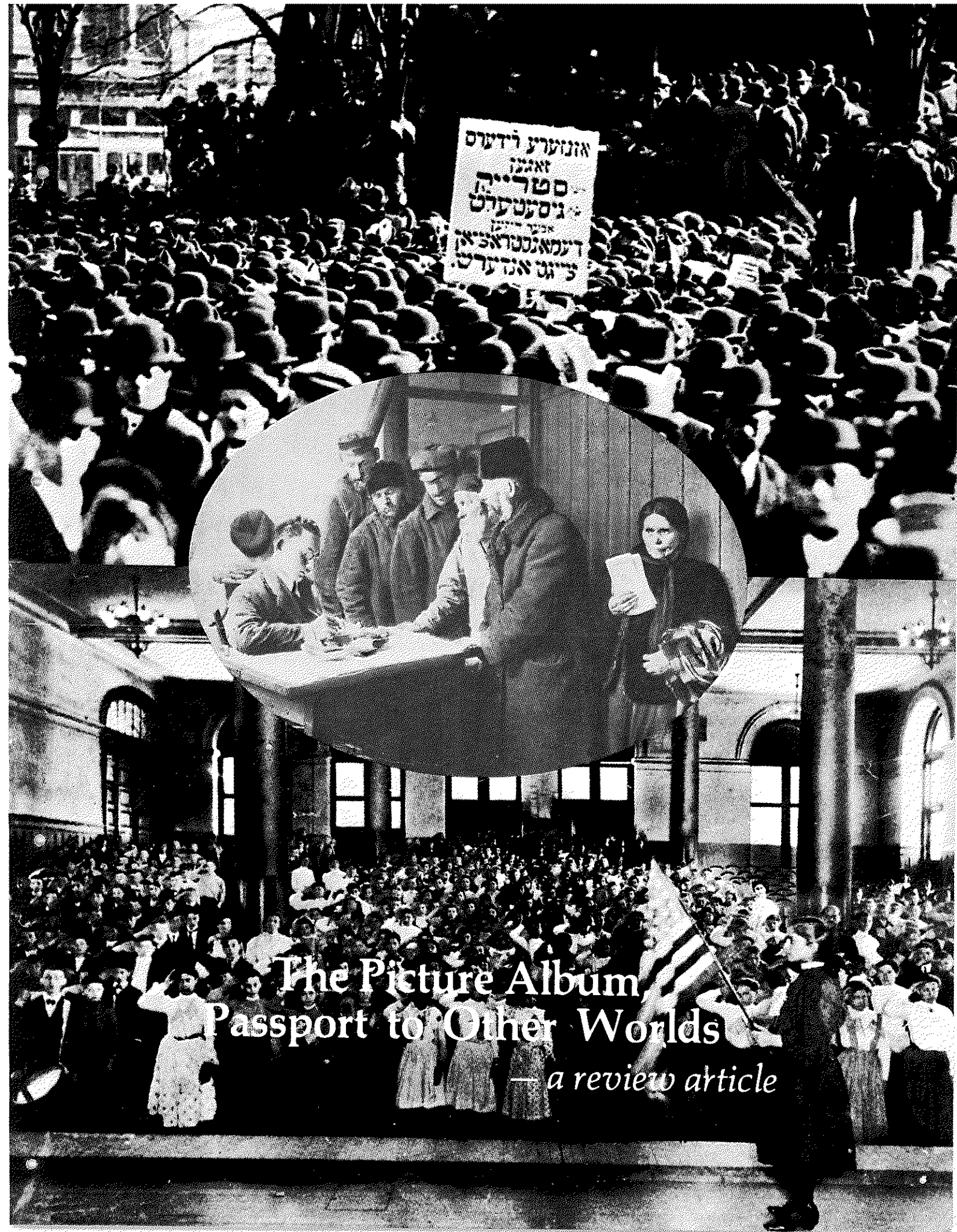
The American Jewish community is the wealthiest in the long history of the Jewish people. Money is certainly available to support a great Torah community. With the further development of Yissachar-Zevulun partnerships, America can become as wealthy in Torah as it is in financial resources.

1. *VaYikra Rabbah* 25:1; *Rashi*, *Sotah* 21a, *Zevachim* 2a, s.v. *Shimon*; *Bertinoro*, *Taharos* 8:7, s.v. *Shimon*. See *Yoreh De'ah* 246:1 in *Hagah*.

2. *Ahavas Chesed* 20:4.

3. *Iggros HaChazon Ish*, 47.

4. See *Tehsuvo Tazhbatz*, Part 1, —144; Rabbi Yoseif Caro, quoted in *Birkei Yoseif*, *Yoreh De'ah* 246:13.



אונזערע לידערס
זאגן
ס'מיר
גיסטערס
אבער היינט
דעמאנטראציען
צו גוט אנהערטן

The Picture Album
Passport to Other Worlds
— a review article

THE NEW COUNTRY, Jewish Immigrants in America, *Forward* by Abraham Shulman, (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1976, \$12.95).

THE AMERICAN JEWISH CALENDAR 1977-78/5738 (Hebrew Publishing Company, New York, 1977, \$3.50).

We leaf through family albums and cocktail-table picture books to try to get the feel of what it was like then.



A fascinating picturebook, *The New Country* attempts to convey what life in America was like for the Eastern European immigrant of seventy years ago. There is texture to the photography, enhanced by a frayed edges here, an undoctored crease there, and a sepia tone that seems to waft a remembrance of spilled *branfen*, a smear of herring sauce, and kichel crumbs. Young-faced people in old gay-nineties costumes; bearded men and sheiteled women, anomalies in American surroundings; crowded ships, crowded processing centers, crowded streets in crowded cities, and crowded union halls.

But the pictures do not tell the entire story. They only serve as a backdrop of sorts for Mrs. Fuchs's story of "Our Fathers," and Rabbi Brenner's Grandmother's



"Song," which appear in earlier pages of this issue. Except for just a few photos, religious life in terms of shuls and Torah study are nowhere to be found. And even in this role of backdrop, the book is somewhat inadequate, drawing as it does from pictures available from old files of *The Daily Forward* and private sources. Today's home Kodak and Polaroid, and the ubiquitous official photographer simply were not features of daily life at the turn of the century as they are today.

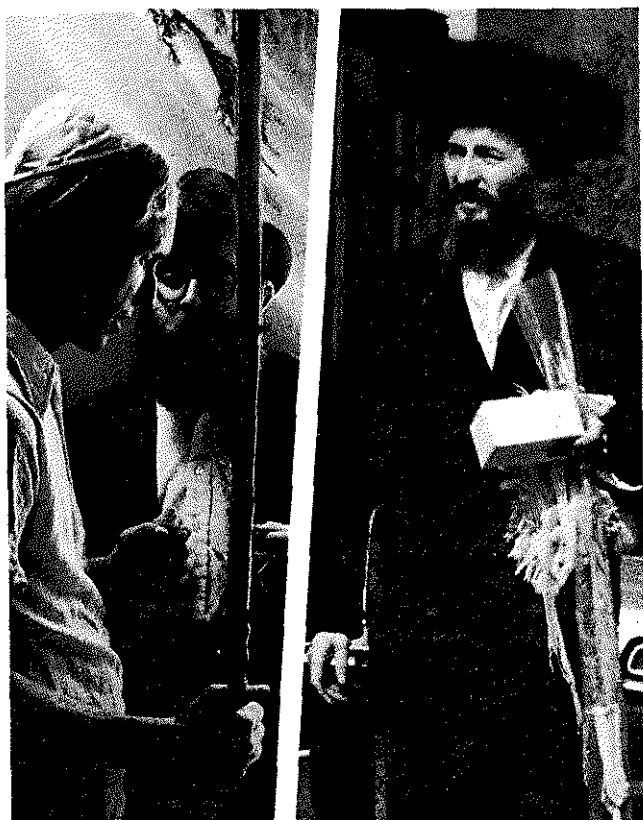
Abraham Shulman's text does succeed in painting a vivid picture of the immigrant's gradual transition from the yesterday-tomorrow Old World to the today-focused New World — a theme that is amply illustrated by some of the photographs of three four and five generation family groups.

Some of his comments, however, betray his own *Daily Forward* orientation, such as his conviction that "The old existence ... and becoming fully Americanized ... obviously were contradictory and mutually exclusive." Shulman's thesis merely illustrates the assimilation-bent drive of those who did not have the sense of purpose of the Antron's, Wilhelm's and Dershowitz's, who believed that the old existence was indeed compatible with America, should one really want it. Contrary to the cliché, many of these pictures may not be worth a thousand words, but they do provide a moving frame for those words.

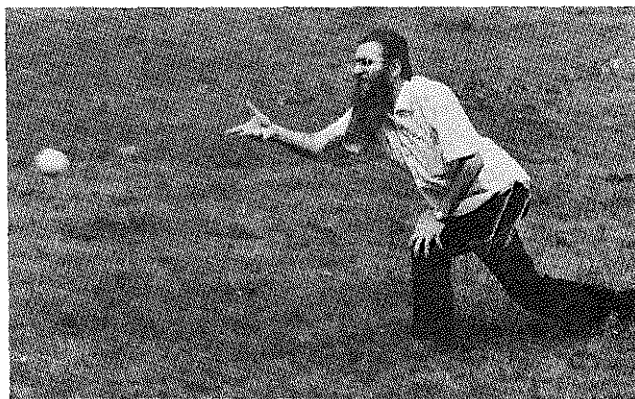
The Calendar has some unusual photos depicting Jews in unexpected surroundings. In this respect, the calendar is an oddity, although it doesn't make your everyday kitchen calendar, not offering much in terms of inspirational art to drink tea with.

TRADITION, Orthodox Jewish Life in America, by Mal Warshaw (Schocken Books, New York, 1976, \$14.95).

Just as photographs can be a portal for entering the world of times gone by, so can they afford the viewer glimpses of life in other segments of Jewry. Thus Mal Warshaw took his camera — and the book peruser — on an in-depth visit to the Lubavitcher community in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, with an occasional side trip to Williamsburg. The dark tones of the interior shots add a heavy patina of atmosphere to some of the Chassidic scenes that is extremely effective.

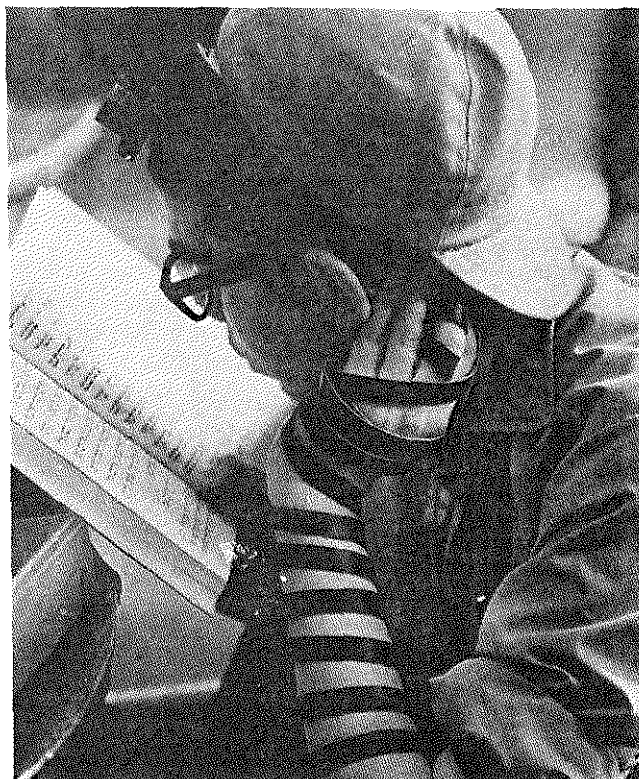


One major objection: the title of the book. Rather than "*Tradition — Orthodox Jewish Life in America*," the book should have been entitled "*The Lubavitcher Tradition*" — period, for reasons of both omission and emphasis. *Tradition* is a tricky word. Does it refer to "customs ... handed down from generation to generation" (as per definitions 1 and 2 in *Random House Dictionary*)? Then, while not describing the broad spectrum of "Orthodox Jewish Life in America," it is an apt description of the content of the book, where "The Stages of Life" section goes from "Bar Mitzvah" to "Fabrengen" to "Betrothal," and "Death" is represented by the kvittel-strewn burial place of the previous Rebbe זצ"ל.



On the other hand, if *Tradition* refers to "body of laws and doctrines ... received from Moses" (definition 3a in *Random House*), then why are all "American Orthodox Jews" either wearing Chassidic garb, or, if in modern clothing, responding to the *kiruv* entreaties of someone else wearing Chassidic garb? The picture album of Orthodox Jewish Life in America should also show the West Hempstead accountant in plaid double-knit suit making *Kiddush*, and the clean-shaven Phoenix ophthalmologist breaking *shemura matzos* at his Seder.

This thematic sore-point, echoing the message of Elkanah Schwartz's article in this issue, is but a mere quibble in terms of the visual excitement this book offers. And, after all, this is a picture book. ✻



Update: Coalition Agreement in Action

The agreement whereby the Agudath Israel in Israel gave its crucial support to the Likud coalition stipulated forty-three points, which the government guaranteed would be enacted to improve the religious situation in the State. Several areas that have long been a source of anguish to the Torah community have already seen various degrees of change worthy of note. They are: military conscription of women, draft deferment for yeshiva students, and unauthorized autopsies, unchecked missionary activity, and comparatively low stipends to yeshivos.

I. Conscription of Women

The draft of women into the Israeli Army has been a sore spot for over twenty years, of questionable military value, and uncontested moral harm. This law has been decried by religious leaders since its inception. While the law grants religious women exemption, review boards screened claimants, often harrassing girls with questions on obscure information, drafting some girls over protest, even jailing some resisters.

By the terms of the coalition agreement, a new law will grant automatic exemption from all kinds of service to every girl who declares herself to be religious or lives with parents who for religious reasons are opposed to military service for girls. Once passed, this law will take effect retroactively to cover those girls who hold the current postponement notices. Until the passage of such legislation, action on every contested case of religious exemption is being deferred.

This has given way to some confusion and outright misrepresentation of the current status of the religious exemption. As a result, the revered Ponovezher Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Eliezer Menachem Schach wrote to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein in New York in response to a letter from the famed Rosh Yeshiva, that:

"As I have been informed from individuals whom I consider trustworthy, who are deeply involved in the matter, not one girl — without exception — who has claimed religious exemption, has been arrested or otherwise penalized. And, should a girl ever perchance have been arrested, she was immediately freed upon intervention on her behalf."

Rabbi Schach continued his letter, explaining that notifications received by some girls informing them of a date of conscription three months hence, were in fact letters of extension based on

the expectation that during the interim, laws will be drafted and passed granting them full, unconditional exemption. These notices are based on the old laws that are now being revised. In general, the attitude of the Minister of Defense is a good one, Rabbi Schach continued in his letter.

The Rosh Yeshiva's report was further confirmed in a telegram to Rabbi Feinstein that the Gerer Rebbe sent through Rabbi Pinchas Levin, in reply to Rabbi Feinstein's query, that:

"In truth, all girls have received deferment until passage of the law that frees them entirely."

II. Yeshiva Opportunities

Since the founding of the State, yeshiva students have been granted deferment from military service for as long as they are enrolled in a recognized yeshiva — as is the case in all Western countries. There were two discriminating clauses in Israel, however, that have no counterpart in our democracies: a student was required to have been enrolled in a recognized yeshiva high school (one accredited before the '67 War) immediately upon graduation from elementary school, or his later enrollment in an advanced yeshiva would have no bearing on his military status; and only advanced institutions extant at the time the law was drafted, close to thirty years ago, were recognized for exemption purposes. This had put a veritable strangle-hold on possibilities for expansion of the yeshiva system. These past few years have witnessed an unusual awakening of interest in Torah in many who had been far-removed from the Torah scene. Yet their aspirations for personal growth were clouded by the threat of a three-year interruption in studies — a situation that can be fatal to these hopes.

As a result of the pre-coalition policies, a number of cases of extreme discrimination have been documented. For instance, a Soviet *oleh* who registered in an advanced yeshiva was not granted military exemption, because he had not attended a recognized yeshiva high school. The fact that he had been in the USSR, where he had no such opportunity, was no consideration; his Torah career in Israel was aborted. Similarly, a young man who had attended an agricultural high school responded to the influence of his local rabbi and enrolled in a regular yeshiva with the hopes of advancing in his Talmudic education — but was forced to change his plans when he called up to serve in Zahal.

By the terms of the coalition agreement, newly opened yeshivos — which have been springing up

EZRIEL TOSHAVI observes the Israeli scene for JO readers.

across the countryside — can be recognized; and they may accept students who had previously attended other types of schools, thus accommodating the hundreds (perhaps thousands) of *baalei teshuva* who have elected to join the Torah community some time after their fourteenth birthday — not at all uncommon in today's Israel.

III. Unauthorized Autopsies

The current pathology law in Israel allows for post-mortem operations on any patient who dies in an Israeli hospital, providing an authorization form is signed by three physicians — a procedure usually done in advance, on blank forms. Only protest by next of kin could prevent unauthorized autopsies from taking place, and, tragically, even this was often ignored. The new government's announced intention to change this situation (in accordance with the agreement with Agudath Israel) by adopting the Western procedure, requiring informed prior consent in advance of any such operation, has triggered protest from physicians' groups, that are accustomed to free rein over patients' rights.

Rabbi Eliezer Schach made references to this in his letter (quoted earlier) to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, in which he reported that:

"The over-all religious situation is better than in the past, notwithstanding a large number of problems that still need correction — for example, that of unauthorized autopsies which doctors persist in performing in violation of the law. Our representatives [here Rabbi Schach refers to the Agudath Israel Knesset Members] have responded to every such incident with demands that the violators be punished. But it is hoped that the situation will continue to improve."*

IV. Missionary Activity

An anomaly that has plagued Israeli society for decades is the unchecked missionary activity that has taken its toll in conversions of poverty stricken families in Israel who have succumbed to dangling tributes in compensation for "accepting" a new belief. According to a JTA release:

"A bill (to limit missionary activity) was originally submitted to the Knesset in 1975. It was passed only late last year in accordance with promises made by the Likud government to its

*Several such cases were publicly protested by Knesset Members Rabbi S.Y. Gross, and Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz, who called on the Health Minister A. Schostak to initiate legal proceedings against the violating physicians, as reported in *Hamodia*, December 27, 1977. Meanwhile, the government's legal counsel is preparing introduction in the Knesset of a new law which, following the terms of the coalition agreement, will put teeth into any ban on a pathologist's arbitrary dissection of a cadaver.

Agudath Israel coalition partners. The Agudah has been inveighing against missionary activity for years, claiming its was conducted on a large scale.

"The law provides penalties of five years in prison or an IL 50,000 fine for anyone attempting to persuade another person to convert to his religion in return for material benefit.

"A person who converts for material benefit is subject to three years imprisonment or an IL 30,000 fine. The law itself does not mention missionaries nor does it contain the word 'Christian.'"

"But the explanatory paragraphs attached to the bill when it was presented in the Knesset warn against the allegedly growing influence of missionary elements in Israel who take advantage of financial difficulties of Jews to convert them to Christianity.... The explanation aroused the anger of the Council of Churches."


V. Financial Support for Yeshivos

As the inflation spiral rises, it has become increasingly more difficult for Israel's *yeshivos gedolos* — its schools of advanced Talmudic study, to make ends meet. The government policy had been to allocate aid in the form of stipends to all students of higher education at the rate of a mere IL 1,200 per year for yeshiva students, and IL 1,500 for *kolel* fellows, as compared to some IL 20,000 per year for university students.

One of Agudath Israel's conditions for giving the Likud bloc its support was that the government redress this imbalance. Appreciable steps have been taken in this direction, although full parity has not yet been sought — as per a decision by the leading *Roshei Yeshivos*, who have deemed it unwise to make the yeshivos totally dependent upon the secular establishment for their financial existence.

Now, according to Rabbi Lorincz, who chairs the Knesset Finance Committee, the per-student annual stipend has tripled to IL 4,000 per yeshiva student and IL 5,000 per *kolel* fellow. While this only covers 20% of the annual yeshiva budget as compared with 80% in the case of the budgets of the States' universities, the change is nonetheless an appreciable one.

In addition, the government has for the first time allocated funds for *Reshet Shiurei Torah*, Agudath Israel's Adult Torah Education Network, which until now has been forced to limit its activities and now can become a major Torah force in the length and breadth of the Holy Land.

These increases only represent steps toward correcting long existing imbalances, but they are nonetheless praise-worthy in that — beyond the material help they entail — they signal more positive policies toward the Torah community on the part of the Begin government. 

second looks

Criticize Reform? — Why Bother!

When faced with yet another Reform departure from tradition, members of the Torah community tend to respond with a shrug of the shoulders and a diffident "So what else is new? It doesn't touch us anyway."

Since its beginnings 150 years ago, the Reformers have systematically abandoned virtually all of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith. Everything — from belief in a personal G-d, the efficacy of

prayer, the authenticity of Torah, and the binding nature of the words of the prophets, to hope for Moshiach and belief in resurrection of the dead — all these have been dropped. In the Reform confession, ritual and mitzvos have no place, and the spiritual element of religion was replaced with the social concerns of "Prophetic Judaism" — in effect focusing on a continual rule-of-thumb updating of the social element of the prophets' message, divorced from its divine source.

With the passage of time, the top priority has been shifted from improving the conditions of factory workers to civil rights campaigns to protection of the itinerant farm laborer (so that non-union lettuce is "treif", mind you!).

These activities in and of themselves might be brushed aside as just so much social action (although a good case could — and perhaps should — be made against the Reform tendency toward attaching religious significance to activities that are purely political, that rest on dubious moral foundations, or that are determined by inverted priorities that can do untold harm to Jewish interests — witness the terrible backlash suffered by Jewish merchants in the Deep South as a result of conspicuous Jewish participation in the civil rights movement). But a dominant Orthodox attitude remains: Leave the Reformers to their own.

There are, however, reasons why Reform *must* be taken more seriously. Whereas in the past there was no Reform presence to speak of in Israel, this is changing. It was almost a truism that the prickly-skinned Sabra is not amenable to a watered-down Judaism — either he

commits himself to full-bodied demanding Torah Judaism, or he rejects it with both hands. So Reform had no possibilities at all in Israel. In addition, at its very founding, Reform deleted the particularistic aspirations for Return to Zion and the Coming or Moshiach from its lexicon. To Reform Judaism, the messianic era was to be marked by social justice everywhere — in Hamburg, Cincinnati, or Los Angeles — dropping all references to Palestine from the Jewish psyche, in either a religious or political context. It was not until Stephen Wise and Abba Hillel Silver that Reform Judaism began to turn around in its attitude toward the Holy Land, climaxed recently with the official Reform entry into the Zionist Movement with the formation of ARZA (American Reform Zionist Association). In fact, Israel's first Reform kibbutz was established last year in Kibbutz Yahel ... All this might presage a more tangible Reform presence in Israel, perhaps bringing clout to its warning that Orthodoxy not be permitted to provide Israel's only recognized established Jewish religion. Thus, any shift in Reform ideology and conduct bears close watching, indicating the range of its tolerance for deviation from Torah Judaism, perhaps ... perhaps spelling out what the future could hold in store in Israel.

Moreover, as time goes on, and popular mores change, Reform espousal of liberal social action veers further and further away from its Jewish base, and even from societal norms. As a result, Reform Jews are getting trapped in the "if it's liberal, it's good for mankind, and it's therefore good Jewish ideology" syndrome, carrying it to a shameful extreme.

A most striking example of this trend is a resolution at the recent convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (the Reform lay movement) held in San Francisco, urging tolerance and understanding for the plight of the homosexual. To the credit of most of the delegates, the resolution was

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ultimately returned to the committee because "it failed to contain any reference to the Jewish position opposing homosexuality." After a bitter debate, however, an ambiguously worded motion was passed urging an educational campaign "to provide greater understanding of the relation of Jewish values to the range of human sexuality," with no element of dismay at gay activism, no vote of condemnation, not even a reference to *Vayikra* 18!

Recent efforts among gay groups to seek official legitimization of their deviant way of life have called forth the strongest objections from the broad reaches of society, with Orthodox Jews very much in the forefront of the objectors. (A prominent example is Dade County, Florida, where gays were

denied "equal rights" in a public referendum, in which the local Agudath Israel organization played a conspicuous role.) Obviously, this is not a matter of civil rights, as it is being misrepresented; at issue is official tolerance of public manifestations of private deviation. Under no circumstances can a normal society confer acceptance on the perverse.

Yet, in following the newest "liberal" line the Reform Jews are hedging and carrying on debate, whereas in Torah circles no such debate would ever be waged.

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Several weeks ago, *The New York Times* carried a display advertisement for a \$2,000 necktie — a velvet creation studded with diamonds. Apparently, *Times* readers viewed the "gift" as objectionable, for the *Times* found it necessary to defend the ad in an editorial. With tongue in cheek, the *Times* conceded that initially the idea "might seem obscene" but after all, what should the very-wealthy spend their money on after having met sundry charity obligations? On the \$2,000 necktie. Of course.

Letters-to-the-Editor writers were not amused, and with no difficulty found more purposeful ways of spending the extra change burning a hole in the pocket of the would-be Tie purchaser. So much for The Tie.


JO neither runs such ads — negating the need for editorial defenses thereof; nor do its readers

indulge in such foolish ostentation — at home or on nights out — to call for JO finger-wagging against such waste. The \$2,000 tie is more joke than temptation.

This does not mean, though, that our society is without its counterparts to the diamond trimmed cravat. Somehow, celebrations of milestones in Jewish life, which assume so important a place in the Jew's personal calendar, have become prototypes of ostentation and indulgence to the outside world, and — more harmful, in some ways — have set standards beyond the reach of many poor (and middle class) cousins. One might not care to question the right, or even the taste, of the affluent Jew to equip his home with a marble-covered dust-bin shed (the crystal chandelier of the 70's?), or to celebrate his child's *simcha* with a catered affair equipped with \$400 floral centerpieces (for each table), rolling relish carts, and orchid bridal thrones. But one man's lark or one-time indulgence easily becomes canonized in the caterer's book of minimums; and one man's light-headed soufflé becomes the

stuff of another's impossible debt burden.

But more: while life does have its high points, and they should not pass unmarked, we dare not lose sight of our standing as members of the generation of survivors. True, we are entitled to respite from the unmatched horrors and suffering of Churban Europe. If any generation is to be selected as the Affluent Generation, shouldn't it be ours? Survivor status, however, also confers certain responsibilities on its members. Ours is also the generation of rebuilding, giving affluence another purpose besides rest and recuperation.

Thumbing through the pages of this journal as well as other publications, and leafing through the daily mail, uncover a growing number of truly worthy enterprises that are brinking bankruptcy. In addition, creative people, men and women with schemes, dreams, and plans to save communities, or individuals, or segments of *Klal Yisroel*, are asking for a sympathetic ear and some visionary help. Fine. The affluent may tithe religiously, giving *ma'aser* to the needy and the worthy. But after *ma'aser*, there's still so much more to invest in, besides \$2,000 neckties — and sundry other clever creations that tend to choke more than they decorate. Doesn't every generation grow up, eventually outgrowing old clothes, accessories, and toys? 

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complete *teshuvah*. I truly hope that you will sincerely forgive me.

I am seeking your help on yet another matter: I would like to return whatever I can — to the very last cent — to the victims I do remember. Whoever is prepared to help me in this endeavor, please contact me through POB — Jerusalem, Avor Moshe.



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Letters to the Editor



On the Mufti and All "Easterners"

To the Editor:

I want to thank you for publishing Rabbi Hutner's statement on "Holocaust" and, of course, Rabbi Hutner himself for making it.

"The Holocaust" has long since become a world-wide industry (sometimes for humane ends, and frequently for exploitative ones). This puts it in the forbidden class of *"hana'at hamet"* ("profiting from the dead"). Rabbi Hutner has commandingly reminded us that the annihilation of European Jewry is an integral, infinitely tragic part of the universality of Jewish history and that it must always be thought, and when necessary spoken, of only as such — with the humility and wariness which the holy always demands.

Jewish history being universal, Rabbi Hutner has also re-established the universal framework within which he annihilation of European Jewry must be envisioned — e.g. some of its contributor causes produced by Jewish politicians, and the universal, messianic, moral obligations which it imposes on us.

I venture to put one follow-up question to Rabbi Hutner.

Must the Mufti of Jerusalem really be regarded as personifying all Moslems, even all "Easterners," or is it not the case that decent Moslems, i.e., gentiles that abide by the Noahide laws, have a different status in the *halacha* from that of the "Westerners"? May it not also be the case that, even as Jewish politicians before World War II contracted some responsibility for what

was to happen, even with regard to the Mufti (quite as Rabbi Hutner has courageously stated), so also some present-day Jewish politicians and their retinue may be doing injustices to Jews and non-Jews? In that case, we would, of course, again have to go to Torah to obtain better guidance than current Jewish "public opinion" offers.

STEVEN S. SCHWARZSCHILD
Professor of Philosophy
Washington University
St. Louis, Missouri

(We refer Dr. Schwarzschild to the "Chazara" in the earlier pages of this issue in which the Mufti's vast power is documented. His unprecedented power is sufficient impetus to comment on his role as "Yishmael." Y.F.)

"Holocaust" Interest Abroad

To the Editor:

The October issue on the Holocaust just arrived in Zurich (delayed because of the dock strike) and has become a big hit here. Here in Europe, too, I sense renewed interest in this period. I — and my friends, too — have long felt a strong desire to learn more about what happened then, probably because our generation is finally coming of age and our parents would not discuss their experiences with us. In Zurich, the few known copies of Ben Hecht's *Perfidy* and of Schonfeld's new book are being passed around with an eager impatience.

During a recent business trip to Munich, I made a point of visiting Dachau concentration camp.... I was impressed with the steps the Germans had taken to "legalize" absolutely everything they wanted

to do (as per Rabbi Hutner's thesis). Since I now understand German, it was very clear and most enlightening.

Also, it was obvious that it was virtually impossible to organize a revolt or escape from such a place, unless one had a lot of outside help — which one wasn't going to find near Munich in those times.

MOSHE RAPPOPORT
Zurich, Switzerland

No "Yom Hashoa" in "Nissan"

To the Editor:

I was pleased to read Rabbi Hutner's special insights into why Yom Hashoa should not have a special day. I always found it confusing and frustrating when memorial gatherings for the martyrs of Churban Europe were convened on 27 Nissan. I wanted very much to attend, yet the *Shulchan Aruch* specifically forbids eulogies of any sort during the entire month of Nissan. Tisha B'Av is both permissible and logical.

YAAKOV ALTUSKY
Brooklyn, New York

Grateful for "Churban Europe" Issue

To the Editor:

The article on the Holocaust (Oct. 77) really hit the nail on the head, especially when it comes to the secular viewpoint so prevalent among so many of us. How many times have I been lectured by non-observant friends and family, that the Holocaust was some terrible, senseless aberration of history, pointing without a doubt to the fact there is no G-d, for (they argue) "How could He have let the Nazis do such things, if He really cared?" The answer, to the agnostic secularist, obviously is that just as the Chassidism suffered most for not abandoning halachic rulings, for not being "reasonable," so then they must have brought it all on themselves. Since being religious didn't help any of the victims, then clearly G-d doesn't care if a Jew is religious or not, and those who do opt for the only "Jewishness" there is, had better be prepared for the consequences their "unreasonableness" will cause. Of course! What

an excuse for assimilation! "We don't want another Hitler, so we'd better not offend our good gentile neighbors." Isn't it funny how ideas never change?

Tragically, however, without a proper viewpoint, so many otherwise well-intentioned people are lost. Without G-d, the Holocaust becomes a death wish for survivors — and that includes *all* of us, regardless of age. Without looking at these things in the context of overall Jewish history, it is easy to reason that "since G-d has abandoned us, we might as well abandon Him." The sense of betrayal becomes acute, bitter, and self-destructive. Even an otherwise excellent television presentation such as seen recently on *The World at War* does nothing more than reinforce this hopeless attitude. Segments of the program were permeated with the secular despair so deadly to the desire to live Jewishly. In one particular scene, a survivor recounted how he and a companion who, he said, was a Chassidic rabbi, watched in horror while the assembly line killing

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LETTERS CONTINUED

proceeded. The Chassidic rabbi then supposedly declared he no longer could believe in a G-d who could let His people die so horribly.... And so the propaganda continues. One can almost hear in the background a voice reasoning, "Well, if a Chassidic rabbi can lose his faith, then the Holocaust *must* be a sign that G-d either doesn't care or doesn't exist," and with a jolt you suddenly realize that this voice is your *own*.

Believe me, it's good to read a Torah-oriented viewpoint, for once. Moral torpor can be a deadly sickness to the soul; and with the soul, the body as well. May this "sickness" soon be cured, and you can be sure that I'm sending my copy of *The Jewish Observer* along to those I know who are afflicted with it.

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LETTERS CONTINUED

For Token Ambassadors

To the Editor:

The articles in the October issue under "Torah Ambassadors at Large" were both informative and inspiring. The experiences recounted in these stories reaffirm the belief that a *chaver tov* can be a most powerful *mashpi'a*. The programs in Los Angeles and in Mexico City underline the importance of establishing a meaningful peer relationship in reaching teenagers in their most impressionable years. The students of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim and of Prospect Park Yeshiva High School for Girls are truly to be commended for stretching their hands across thousands of miles to befriend and

to influence adolescents far from Torah Judaism.

It does seem ironic, however, that while the rich New York yeshiva community is fishing to save *neshamos* drowning yonder it has not considered similar programs to save the mass spiritual drowning of Jewish youth here in New York. You write of our "Ambassadors," but what happened to our local Representatives?

There is a Yeshiva in Queens with students identical in background to those in the distant cities referred to in the article. In fact, under one roof are American Jewish adolescents with others from South America, Russia, Israel, and Iran who are in dire need of a meaningful relationship with a truly religious friend. Why shouldn't our yeshivos involve their elite to act as step-brothers and step-sisters to foster such a relationship here

with these and other non-committed teenagers? With proper direction and supervision, a regular peer-oriented program (unlike JEP or NCSY) would show great dividends to all parties concerned.

Menahalim and *Mechanchim* who would have liked to send their Torah Ambassadors on Mitzva Missions, but who thought that it would have been too costly, can now reconsider. For they no longer need a plane ticket; just a subway token.

(RABBI) HERBERT HEXTER
Principal, Ezra Academy
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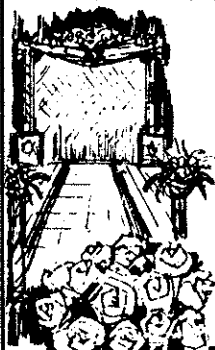
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Washington, D.C. — The U.S. Congress could help "stop pocketbook coercion which forces a parent to send his children to public schools against his will because of skyrocketing costs of non-public education," by passing the Tuition Tax Credit Act, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, executive president of Agudath Israel of America told a hearing of the Senate Finance Committee on January 18. This act, introduced by Senator Daniel P. Moynihan of New York and Senator Bob Packwood of Oregon, allows parents of students attending any type of school from elementary through higher education to deduct a 50% tax credit for tuition payments up to a maximum of \$500 annually per dependent student. This credit would be fully refundable, even to families that pay no taxes.

The Orthodox Jewish leader stated that the Packwood-Moynihan bill would help "partially end the injustice from which non-public school parents suffer because they are victims of double taxation." He pointed out to the Senators at the Committee hearing that

since Agudath Israel began testifying for government aid to non-public school parents 17 years ago, there has been a growing climate of approval for this help among the broad American masses.

Rabbi Sherer emphasized that this bill "breaks the constitutional barrier which has obstructed certain other methods of assistance" because it helps people instead of schools, covers all classes of parents regardless if their children attend public or non-public schools, and is federally designed.

"If tax credits can be used to encourage business, simple logic dictates that this method also be used to encourage Americans to exercise freedom of choice in education," the Agudath Israel leader declared. "The overwhelming majority of Jewish parents sending their children to yeshivos are poor or middle class people who are reeling at the ropes from the financial pressures of meeting tuition payments, often at the expense of denying their families basic needs."

Tale of Three Cities

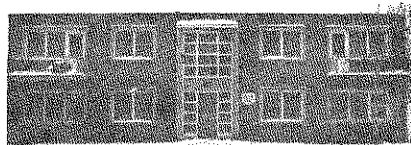
Far Rockaway, Montreal, Chicago

Far Rockaway in New York, Montreal in Canada, and Chicago in Illinois are the three latest areas to undertake the development of buildings for their local Agudath Israel chapters as their base of activity. Local Agudath Israel chapters serve the neighborhoods in the fields of youth and adult education, focal points for responsible religious activism, and as the community conduits for the worldwide projects and programs of the 18 divisions operating out of Agudath Israel's national headquarters

Last month, the Far Rockaway community joined to mark the "Chanukas Habayis" of a newly constructed modern building, the Agudath Israel of Long Island. The new



edifice was built on the lot of the former building of the local chapter. Prominent speakers at the weekend celebration included Rabbi Moshe Sherer, Rabbi Shlomo Freifeld, Rabbi Moshe Weitman, Rabbi Yechiel Perr, and Rabbi Shmaryahu Karelitz.



On Sunday, December 11th, a large crowd braved the bitter Canadian cold to hear Rabbi Pinchas Hirschprung, Chief Rabbi of Montreal, and Rabbi Sherer dedicate the new multipurpose center of the Agudath Israel of Montreal. To serve as the home of the branch's 17 areas of activity, it is destined to become a focal point of interest for the entire Jewish community of Montreal.

Agudath Israel of Chicago announced that it had acquired a building in the Peterson Park area to serve as its new headquarters. The new building will serve as the nerve center of the local Agudath's broad range of projects.

BNOS AGUDATH ISRAEL EXPANDS ACTIVITIES

200 Leaders at Convention

LAKEWOOD, N.J. Close to 200 girls heard prominent Torah leaders urge them "to assume a greater Torah commitment in their everyday lives," at the twelfth annual National Leaders' Convention of Bnos Agudath Israel of America, which was held at the Malibu Hotel, over the weekend of January 6-8. The convention traditionally gathers activist leaders from the broad network of youth groups sponsored by the Agudist youth movement. In addition to representatives from the New York metropolitan area, there were also delegates from Monsey, Scranton, Boston, Montreal, Toronto, Cleveland, and Los Angeles.

Amongst those addressing the convention delegates were Rabbi Schneur Kotler, Rosh Yeshiva of Beth Medrash Gevoha in Lakewood, and Rabbis Boruch Borchardt, Nisson Wolpin, Boruch Saks, Joshua Silbermintz, and Yisroel Miller. A common theme sounded by the distinguished leaders was for the girls to develop and strengthen their own Torah perspectives before fulfilling their obligation of communicating them to others.

The convention was colorful in many respects, reflected not only in its broad representation from all over the United States, but in the enthusiasm and diversity of the workshops and sessions. Most of the girls left the convention with a confirmed commitment to their activist role, pleased to learn of the heightened activities of the organization.

Bnos Tehillim Rally

BROOKLYN, N.Y. Marking a return to *Tehillim* (King David's Psalms), the classic sourcebook of all Jewish emotions from joy and thanksgiving to pain and despair, Bnos Agudath Israel successfully completed a competition aimed at encouraging its members to study and commit to memory various chapters from the sacred text. The contest involved girls from all over the United States and Canada in grades 1 through 8. The culminating activity of this unique contest was a special celebration convened on January 15 at the Beth Jacob of Boro Park. The only entrance requirement for the *Chagiga* was the knowledge of portions of *Tehillim*.

The convention and the National Tehillim Contest were arranged by the national director of Bnos Agudath Israel, Esther Weissberger, with assistance from the executive director of Agudath Israel of America, Rabbi Boruch Borchardt.

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AGUDATH ISRAEL ATTACKS GAY RIGHTS BILL

A gay rights bill, which is expected to be introduced in the City Council of New York City this month, is an infringement upon the religious rights of Americans and bestows legitimacy upon a practice which the Bible condemns as an abomination, Agudath Israel stated. Dr. Bernard Fryshman, chairman of the Commission on Legislation of Agudath Israel of America, announced that the organization, whose policies are set by distinguished Jewish scholars, will mobilize the Orthodox Jewish community to defeat any measures which would compel schools or camps to hire homosexual teachers or counselors. Dr. Fryshman stated: "It is a red herring to charge that those who refuse to hire homosexual teachers are violating their civil rights because society has the right to protect itself against any group or individual

whose conduct and practices violate religious and social mores. To establish the right of homosexuals to be placed in a position which could adversely affect impressionable young people disregards the higher duty of parents to protect their children from harmful influence, and is a shocking commentary on our times. This could even result in a mass boycott by parents of schools that have overt homosexuals on their staff."

The Agudath Israel spokesman declared: "A society in which bus drivers, as well as teachers, policemen and camp counselors can all be overt homosexuals will result in ever-increasing numbers of children concluding that homosexuality is a legitimate alternative lifestyle. Furthermore, legislation outlawing discrimination against such individuals can be a prelude to strong pressures to

'rehabilitate' the gay individuals in textbooks, television and the like. We may even ultimately face Affirmative Action programs to compensate them for discrimination of the past.

"Jewish law prohibits parents from allowing their children to be taught or counseled by people who are sexually perverted, such as homosexuals. Commitment to Biblical law, loyalty to ethical Jewish teachings, and our concern for public morality in society at large, moves us to launch an all-out city-wide effort to defeat the proposed gay rights bill," Dr. Fryshman concluded.

AGUDATH ISRAEL ELECTS NEW NATIONAL OFFICERS

The national administration elected at the 55th national Convention of Agudath Israel in Atlantic City is headed by a presidium consisting of: Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, chairman; Rabbi Moshe Horowitz (Bostoner Rebbe), vice-chairman; Rabbi Shneur Kotler; Rabbi Yaakov Perlow (Novominsker Rebbe); Rabbi Boruch Sorotzkin; Rabbi Chaskel Besser; and Rabbi Moshe Sherer, who was re-elected executive president. Mr. David H. Turkel was elected chairman of the Vaad Hanhala, Rabbi Yaakov Goldstein, vice-chairman, and Professor Aaron Twerski, chairman of the Vaad Hapoel.

Other national officers elected: vice-presidents — Mendel Berg, Dr. Ernst L. Bodenheimer, Rabbi Leib Cywiak, Benjamin Fishoff, William K. Friedman, Chaim Hertz, David Klien, Julius Klugman, Rabbi Shlomo Oppenheimer, Shmuel Roth, Leon Scharf, Menachem Shayovich; Treasurers — Eugene Fixler, Alan Rosenberg, Aaron Seif, David Singer; Secretaries — Eli Basch, Joseph Neuman; General Secretary — Joseph Friedenson; Executive Director and Secretary — Rabbi Boruch B. Borchardt.

Regional Vice-Presidents: Chairman — Rabbi Leizor Levin (Detroit); Canada — Rabbi Pinchas Hirschprung, Rabbi Fred Pfeiffer, Moshe Nussbaum, Hershel Rubinstein; Mid-Atlantic — Dr. S.I. Askovitz, Professor Laurence Katz, Ernst Gutman; Midwest — Reuven Dessler, Rev. Joseph Borenstein, Rabbi Abraham C. Levin, Rabbi Simcha Lyons; New England — Rabbi Levi I. Horowitz, Rabbi Shlomo Margolis; West Coast — Rabbi Elimelech Schwartz, Rabbi Chaim Boruch Rubin, Joshua Moshel; South — Rabbi Avrohom Groner.

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