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Yoseif Mendeleovich Comes Home!

letters from prison, conversations,
and the sweet taste of freedom

The
Torah
Family
Rabbi
Avraham Pam
Rabbi Elya Svei

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

in this issue . . .

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“From Bondage to Freedom”

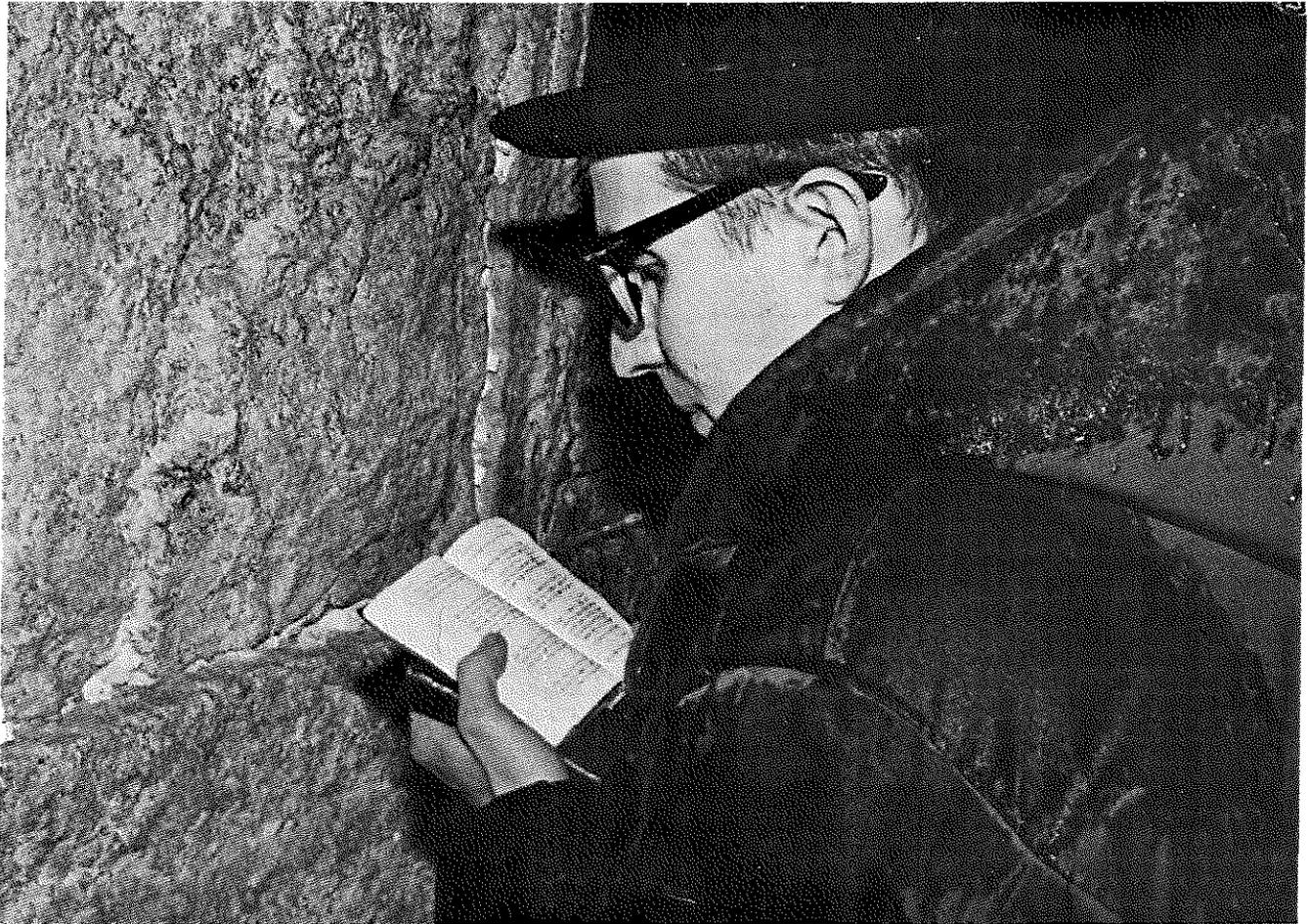


Photo by Robert Cumins

Yoseif Mendelevich

The name *Yoseif Nechemia ben Chaya*—Iosif Mendelevich—has been on lips of Jews off and on, for over ten years, beginning with the December 1970 Leningrad trial in which Iosif and eleven others were accused of attempting to hijack a plane to Sweden, from where they could proceed on to Israel. We read about his heroic declaration in the courtroom, when he shouted out *Shema Yisrael* . . . for all the world to hear.

And then we heard little more, until January 1976, when Shimon Grilius visited America in an attempt at winning freedom for Yoseif. Shimon was a former cellmate of Yoseif—incarcerated for applying for a visa to Israel when he should have known better. In an interview with *The Jewish Observer* (Jan., '76), he told how Yoseif had inspired him with his incredible devotion to Torah and *mitzvos*—even in the harsh prisons of the

Soviet Union . . . how Yoseif virtually risked his life not to work on *Shabbos* . . . how he refused to eat non-kosher food, avoiding *chometz* on Pesach to the point of subsisting on 800-900 calories per day; even insisting on keeping his head perennially covered! . . . and how he learned from Yoseif: "He taught me to read Hebrew, to *daven*, to keep kosher . . . *Shabbos* . . . we studied *lyuv* (Job) together—everything I know."

Then in March, 1978, Yoseif's sister Mrs. Rivka Drori visited the States to lobby on his behalf. She also visited *The Jewish Observer* officer and poured out her story, filling in intimate details of Yoseif's youthful dedication to Torah as inculcated by their parents. How their late father had copied page after page of the *tefillos* in his letters to Yoseif to use for davening in prison . . . how a rabbi in Israel adopted Yoseif as a pen-pal, and regularly wrote him letters with discussions on the week's *Sedra* . . . how she feared for his physical health and emotional well-being. (See JO, April 78: "*Shlichat Mitzvah*.")

In May, 1979, the Soviet government dramatically released five dissidents, including the last Jewish members of the Leningrad Twelve—except Iosif Mendeleovich. Rivka Drori returned to these shores to plead her brother's case. In a confidential interview (until now not published for reasons that should be obvious), Mrs. Drori related in detail how her brother had kept the previous Pesach (5739), as told to her by Iosif's former prison-mate, Hillel Butman, who had been among the five that were released. Notes from this conversation follow. We did, however, publish a call to the public to remember the forgotten member of the Twelve (JO, April, 79), reminding readers that "he was then [in '78] and still is [in '79] in solitary confinement—then in the notorious Vladimir Prison, now in equally severe Chistopol. As the reader may remember, this additional hardship was imposed on Iosif for refusing to eat non-kosher foods and insisting on completing his seven-day work quota in but six days to avoid working on *Shabbos*. This was considered a violation of the labor camp regulations." Since then—thanks to public efforts on the part of various communal organizations as well as the private intervention with hundreds of US Congressmen, Senators and State Department Officials by Agudath Israel of America, among other groups, as well as calls to prayer for the health of "*Yoseif Nechemia ben Chaya*"—Mendeleovich's plight has been a top concern of Jews the world over.

A dramatic, searching, and inspiring letter written in Hebrew by Yoseif to his Israeli correspondent reached us in November, 1980. We refrained from publishing it then, in the belief that not all that is known must be publicized. Now that circumstances have changed, we are publishing an English translation of the letter (prepared by Rabbi Nosson Scherman, editor of the Art Scroll-Mesorah Series) in the next pages.

During the weeks that followed, reports trickled out that Yoseif was wasting away . . . and then the alarming

news that his whereabouts were unknown. . . .

Which heart did not skip a beat when on February 18, 1981, the news services reported that Iosif Mendeleovich was released and was aboard a plane enroute to Israel via Vienna! Who did not rejoice to hear how, when he set foot on holy soil in Lod Airport, he was greeted by a large crowd, whom he told: "I am overwhelmed with joy to be in this '*kibbutz golius*' (ingathering of the exiles), where I have come to build *Eretz Yisroel* through fulfilling the *mitzvos* of the Torah. I hope to be able to continue to be '*mekadesh Hashem*'."

As his car approached Jerusalem he begged the driver to stop when he entered the city, so "I might proceed by foot to the *Kosel Maaravi*."

Further details of his press conference reached us, such as his words to hundreds of local and foreign newsmen. Before he entered the packed hall, he insisted that the television directors promise not to run his interview on *Shabbos*. . . . When asked what he hopes to see in Israel, Mendeleovich replied: "*Mamleches Kohanim ve'Goy Kadosh* (a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation)" . . . In the middle of the press conference, Mendeleovich took everyone by surprise when he said: "I notice that the sun is setting and I didn't *daven Mincha*. Let's have a recess until after *Mincha*!"

* * *

The Iosif Mendeleovich story is not finished. He has a life ahead of him, and we pray that he soon finds the opportunity to build a family of his own in the Holy Land . . . that he have the opportunity to continue his spiritual growth, fulfilling all the lofty yearnings from his lonely years of suffering and deprivation . . . and that the rest of us, who are so fortunate to live in lands of unlimited opportunity and freedom from oppressive restrictions, draw inspiration from Yoseif Nechemia's unstinting heroism and growth in *emuna* in the darkest of circumstances.

As Iosif Mendeleovich yearned to be released from spiritual bondage to freedom, so must we.



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Yoseif Mendelevich

Notes From a Conversation . . .

Notes from a Conversation with Rivka Drori on May 24, 1979, regarding Iosif Mendelevich's heroic conduct in Chistopol Prison:

Shabbos in Chistopol

Iosif is anxious to honor the *Shabbos* in every way possible. The prison wardens have already accepted the inevitability of Iosif working overtime on his basket-weaving assignment during the weekday nights so that his weekly quota is filled and he is free for his *Shabbos* rest. Iosif removes his striped prison tunic each Friday night: At first he was left only with his white undershirt. . . . He did not have any other special *Shabbos* garment. Then one of his fellow prisoners saw his predicament and gave him a shawl, which he reserved for *Shabbos*. Iosif had gone to prison nine years ago with a set of *arba kanfos* (the four-cornered garment on which *tzitzis*—ritual fringes—are fixed). This eventually wore out, but he salvaged the *tzitzis*—the strings. He tied these on to the four corners of this shawl and wears this “*tallis*” when he *davens* on *Shabbos*.

Erev Pesach

Iosif saved a few stray pieces of string, hoarded bits of oils, greases and wax, and fashioned these into a candle. When he lit the candle the night before Pesach, he was asked by another prisoner, “What are you doing?”

“Looking for breadcrumbs.”

“That’s ridiculous,” laughed the other fellow. “Who drops crumbs around here? And if someone ever did, the mice would have eaten it.”

“Nonetheless,” Iosif replied, “I am searching. This is a religious ritual.”

He also had kept an onion bulb in water so it should grow sufficiently, to use the greens for *karpas* at his *Seder*. . . . He reported to the infirmary complaining of back-aches, to be given mustard—ostensibly for a plaster. Instead, he used the mustard for *marror*—the bitter herbs for the *Seder*. . . . Earlier in the year, when raisins were common in the prison diet, Iosif pocketed his share and stored them in a mud-smearred old jelly jar that he kept in his cell. He added water in hope that a fermented raisin wine would result. When questioned by a prison guard regarding the muddy jar in his cell, he replied that it was something left over that he intended to discard—but he never did. He celebrated his Pesach with wine, *Karpas* and *marror*.

The Night of Liberation

Before entering prison, Iosif had written out the entire *Haggada* in a notebook. He recently memorized it so he could then pass it on to Anatol Shcharansky. First, he painstakingly wrote out a literal translation of the *Haggada* into Russian for the use of his fellow-prisoner, Hillel Butman. . . . When the guard caught him with a handwritten Hebrew text, and questioned him about it, he replied coolly, “This is Arabic. I am studying the language.”

He subsisted on a starvation diet of only 300 grams of food prepared without any grain derivatives. Butman offered him a potato from his own servings, but Iosif refused, not wishing to have someone else hunger because of his own needs. . . . According to reliable reports, Iosif has lost 20 kilo (about 48 pounds) since entering prison.

Preparing for Prison

Iosif is known to his fellow prisoners as a relentless *masmid*, studying Hebrew from any source available. When his father was still alive, he used to include different parts of *tefilla* in each letter. Now, as a result, Iosif has a complete *siddur*.

A correspondent from Israel has been sending Iosif thoughts on the *Sedra* each week for the past five years. Not all of the letters have reached him, but over the years Iosif has accumulated some 100 installments.

Iosif must have some access to a *Nach* in one form or another because his every letter is full of references to a different *psukim*, and he often poses questions on topics in *Nach*.

(Mrs. Drori then went on, speculating in detail on why Iosif was still detained and when he would be released. . . . While the first question continues to puzzle us, the second has been answered to our deep pleasure and satisfaction.)

The Man on the Ramp

At the time of the alleged Leningrad hijacking, Iosif's other sister and her husband, Leib Knokh, were also arrested. They were not aware that she was expecting a baby. Once the authorities realized this, they trans-

ferred her to a hospital for social deviants and prostitutes, where she gave birth to her child. Severe complications, i.e. RH Factor and infections set in. But mother and child survived and were soon permitted to leave the country.

Now finally!—Leib Knokh was being released from prison. This was an event of national importance in Israel, and the prime minister, Menachem Begin, was waiting at the airport with the Knokhs and the Droris, among others. The plane landed, the ramp wheeled to the door and several men stepped out. Begin asked the 8-year old Knokh boy if he sees his father.

"I don't know," he said. "I never saw him before."

"But didn't you ever see his picture?"

"Yes," he replied, "but he was young in the picture and I only see old men coming down the ramp."

"He's the one with the mustache," said the Prime Minister. "Run over to greet him."

The child hesitated, then grabbed his cousin with one hand, his aunt with the other and ventured to his father. . . . They are now beginning a new life as a family in Israel.

Rivka Drori brushed away a tear of happiness, but another took its place. "When will it be Yoseif coming down the ramp?" she asked.

May 24, 1979

✠

Yoseif Mendeleovich

A Letter From Prison

*Parshas Vo'eschanan
8 Av 5740*

"May your days be lengthened on the land that G-d gave us"—(Devarim 11:21)

My dear Rabbi Meir,

This is my first attempt after a long hiatus to write a letter in Hebrew. . . . I became so frustrated from the tremendous pressures of studying all these years without any possibility of utilizing my knowledge in the near future, that study has become a burden to me. . . .

You can imagine how I simply cannot contain my sense of exhilaration, now that I've ended my three years of stifling confinement! I was absolutely stunned by the abundance of light and fresh air that poured upon me from the heavens! What a pleasure to breathe pure air, to bless each morning the first rays of the rising sun, to marvel at the majestic world that G-d has created! All these feelings arouse my dreams for the Land and for that sublime reunion.

Forgive the many errors, the poor expression, and the paucity of the contents of this letter. A lack of study results in a lack of knowledge. I am almost like a vegetable, with only hopes and dreams filling my mind. Perhaps deep within the innermost recesses of my soul my thinking is progressing, even if only sub-consciously. In the past, I devoted much time to study of languages and to reading, but lately this is so far from my primary interest—the study of Torah! How mundane all secular studies have become by comparison!

. . . There is no hiding the fact that time takes its toll. I have not grown appreciably in any moral dimension. Granted that man is not subject to easy change; nonetheless, several of my traits from the past have now become sharper and more salient, and have emerged from potential to actual. It is my plan and my prayer to develop as a complete person someday. . . . Please forgive the vagueness of my words; the long interruption in my correspondence is at fault.

"And now, Israel, what does G-d demand of you." I endeavor always to be prepared and alert for revelation of the *Schechina*—G-d's Presence—which after all is the day-to-day concern of every religious man. When this awareness becomes difficult for me, I imagine that G-d's eye peers down upon me. It pains me that by nature I am not given to lofty thoughts. I am too materialistic—an *am ha'aretz*—an ignoramus.

. . .

It is already three years that no news has reached me about your farm. I am curious to learn about the success of the social work you planned several years ago—the investment in senior citizen housing, the Torah school, and the training program for young people who have come to the Kibbutz. What institutions have you established? Have you built any new workshops?

People who meet me now are astonished because they thought that I had already made *aliyah*. I am also astonished—although less than they; but I am not disillusioned. Everything is in the hands of G-d.

A Jew naturally tends to see the world as a prison from which a man must learn and become perfected from the accumulation of experiences. Beyond doubt,

this is why the world was created, for G-d is truly merciful, and He teaches us the proper and just way. At the same time, we are sadly oblivious to the fact that the world does not bend to the will of man. The world is beyond our comprehension and only rare glimpses are revealed to man; most events cannot be grasped. Many a scientist has erred in thinking that the world was created according to rules of logic and that one can dissect this world with intellectual tools. In reality, we merely try to come to grips with the world within the narrow confines of our limited capacity of understanding. It is more than coincidental that the two words "olam" (world) and "ne'elam" (hidden) are so similar in construction, and probably share a common root. . . . To be sure, this approach converts our lives into something undefineable, enigmatic, and confusing; the only support we are left with is that Tree of Life, our Torah. As a result, it is clear that there is no contradiction between the Jewish religious context and modern science, which also pins its faith

on an omnipotent natural force and recognizes the limits of our abilities. . . .

And now all that remains for me are a year and several months until that yearned-for emotional encounter and reunion with the Land of Israel, please G-d. All that is happening in our Land still fascinates me—within the limits of the information that reaches me. With deep interest, I inquire about efforts to settle the Land and our security in the region. By the same token, the coming elections also capture my curiosity. It is to my sorrow that I cannot participate in them.

We hope that the Al-mighty will rest His name in Jerusalem, and He will direct us in the proper way, and will send us in the end of days the one whom He has chosen to rule over Israel.

Yoseif Ben Moshe

translated by Rabbi Nosson Scherman



Hillel Goldberg

The Sweet Taste Of Freedom!

WESTERN WALL, JERUSALEM— Suddenly, I glimpse him. Through the crowd. White. Wan. On another plain. His eyes. Those eyes. Connectors to a different world. After 11 years. Fighting for existence. For Judaism. For the link to the Beyond. For his way. His vision. His ideal.

Fighting until it is not fighting anymore. Fighting until it is natural, until it has formed and shaped him into a person beyond our experience, on an altogether separate plane.

Yosef: He began at 19. Jailed as a boy. Released as a man. With a white face, an old hat, those piercing eyes, oblivious to the thousands dancing around him, oblivious to the shouting photographers: His long mission is not yet consummated.

Hillel Goldberg, an American who lives in Sanhedria Murchevet in Jerusalem, is Senior Editor of the Denver Intermountain Jewish News, where this article originally appeared.

He is out of prison, out of Russia, out of Vienna, in Israel, but not yet at the Kotel, The Western Wall.

He is not there yet. The going is slow. No matter. He waited 11 years and only because of hardship. Now he is waiting because of the people clamoring around him, dancing, singing, screaming. They will not let him move. Finally he approaches the wall. The crush is unbearable. No one can move. Shouting—the photographers again. Ten straight minutes. Lights, flash bulbs, clamoring for position.

Yosef is oblivious.

Finally the way clears. He draws near. The Soviet prison is hours ago. Vienna six hours ago. Now the Kotel. He prays. To himself. No false gestures. No singing in unison. No leading the mass in prayer. No speeches.

This is his moment!

The thousands around him—it is as if they were not there.

The photographers still clamor,

but the crowd is silent. From nowhere a tune begins to move throughout the mass: "I believe, I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah. Even though he tarries, I believe that he will come. I believe."

They sang it at the entrance to the gas chambers. They sing it now. The rain increases. The stones of the Wall glisten in the wet. The massive lamps overlooking the wall darken in the raindrops.

What is Yosef doing?

No sound is heard. Yosef is alone. Finally. Alone with G-d, at His holy place. Suddenly: *Kaddish*. Yosef intones in Russian-accented Hebrew, in the high Russian pitch: *Yitgadal, veyitkadash, shemei rabbah*. May there be magnified. May there be sanctified. . . . The *kaddish* ends. Silence. Suddenly, dancing. Restrained. Not like before. A circle is forming.

Yosef is still praying.

To himself.

The thousands are now circling

the vast plaza before the Kotel. And singing. "The lost ones in the land of Assyria will come to bow down to G-d at the Holy Mount in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem. In Jerusalem." Then another song, "To the Jews there was light and happiness, delight and glory." The song is from the Megillah. It is "Small Purim." The holiday of salvation in spite of the tyrant. *Salvation*. Not a concept. Not something of the

past. But here. Right now. The next song:

"O G-d, rebuild your Temple. Soon!"

11 years he waited. And now it is consummated. 2000 years the Jews have waited. And it too shall be consummated. Yosef Mendele- vich is home. Soon we shall all be home.

"Gather in the exiles from amidst the gentiles, our scattered wanderers from the

corners of the earth." The Wall. Glistening. Yosef finishes. Turns. A touch of a smile crosses his face. Wildly the crowd sings him away from the Wall, then disperses.

Five-thousand-seven-hundred- and-eighty-one years into the crea- tion: One night in the life of Jerusa- lem. On the way to the final gathering-in. "I believe. With per- fect faith."



adapted from introductory remarks by
Rabbi Yitzchok Kerzner

The family as an institution is in trouble on the American scene, as has been well documented. While the Torah society has managed to create vibrant communities that have shielded and insulated themselves from the devastating onslaught of the new morality, it would be a dangerous self-delusion not to recognize that some seepage has taken place into our own homes. One cannot escape the pervasive influence of a materialistic, secular, and hedonistic society.

The Torah describes Yaakov Avinu's return to the Land of Israel from Charan with his twelve sons as: "Yaakov returned sholeim—complete, perfect." Rashi quotes the Midrash as finding Yaakov "complete in body, complete in material possessions, complete in Torah."

This remarkable achievement has become the goal of every conscientious Jew. It is the sum total of the course of study of every yeshiva; and indeed, it is within our study halls of Torah that this ideal can best be realized.

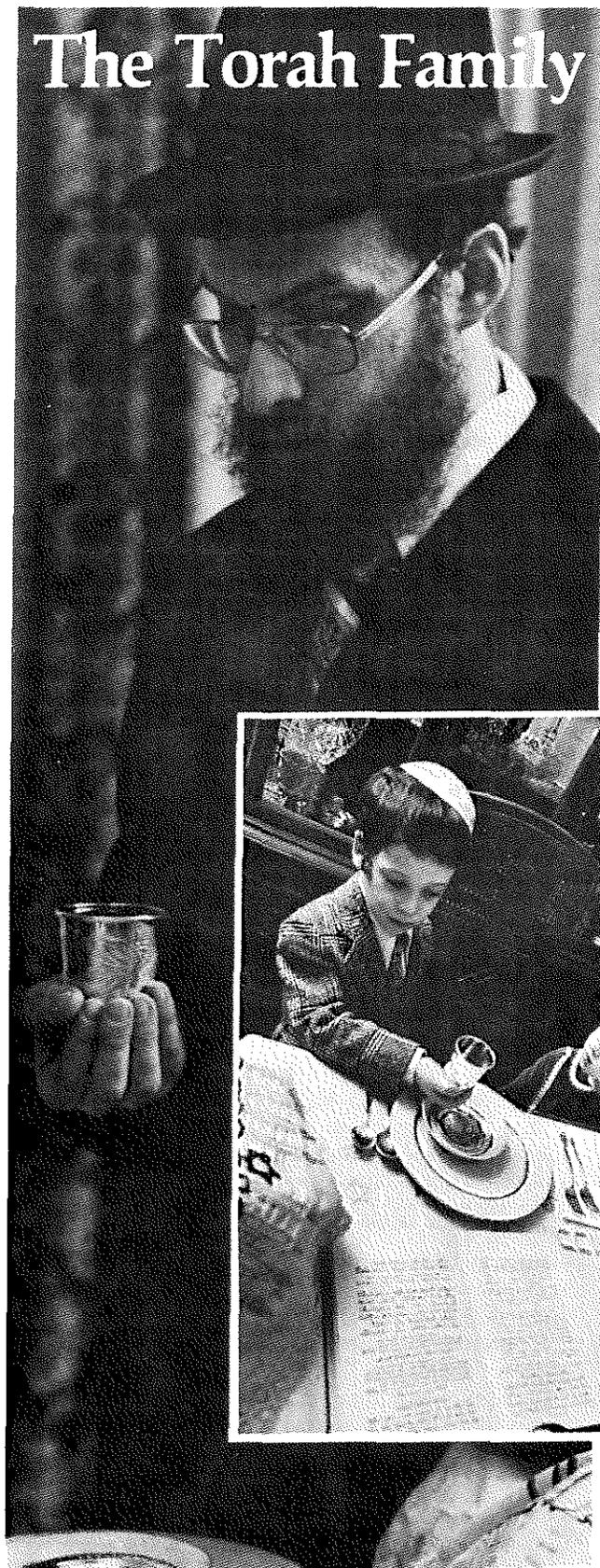
But there is a world beyond these walls, and it is essential that this tri-faceted perfection be pursued in the broader world, without compromise, acculturation, or accommodation to corrosive values.

*The rabbis add that Yaakov's arrival was "at twilight; and he established boundaries." The implication is that it was a time of ambiguity, when it was difficult to discern between right and wrong—so like our own complex era. Yaakov's task of drawing sharp lines of distinction has been assumed by the yeshivos. Inevitably, however, the point is reached when one enters the world of the marketplace, where one is so subject to the influence of foreign value systems. Here, we do not function in a setting of perfection, but in one of fragmentation and disunity. The tendency is to compartmentalize our values, and assume one mentality in the office or behind the counter, and another in the *beis midrash* or *shul*. It is tragic, indeed, if the criteria for "completeness in material possessions" is from a different source than "completeness in body" or "... Torah." Yet the affluence we are enjoying may well be responsible for some severe problems in our lives, and may have cut us off from the purity and wisdom of the *beis hamidrash*.*

All concerned parents surely harbor private anxieties and fears, hopes and dreams for their children's wholesome development; and it undoubtedly will be to their advantage to study the words of two leading *roshei yeshiva*, who offer their insights on how to raise a Torah family in a society that is so hostile to the Torah outlook on life. With their guidance, our goals become clearer, and our chances for success that much more possible.

Rabbi Kerzner, rabbi of Congregation Machzikei Hadas of Clanton Park in Toronto, chaired the symposium on "Preserving the Torah Family" at the recent national convention of Agudath Israel of America. This introduction and the articles that follow are adapted from the convention addresses.

The Torah Family



Photographs from Tradition by Miki Warshaw

Raising A Torah Family

The Family—a Keystone of Civilization

We are concerned about the state of the family, and for good reason. Before entering a discussion on the issue, however, let us first examine the Torah perspective on the topic.

The family structure involves a number of *mitzvos*, notably teaching one's children and honoring one's parents. These are not, as one might think, a Torah reaction to the existence of the family: grandparents, parents and children living together, often under one roof. Rather, because the Torah contains the *mitzva* of honoring one's parents, the world was created with each person having a father and mother. As the *Zohar* says:

one of the very foundations of our belief. The *mesorah* began when 600,000 Jews witnessed the revelation at Mount Sinai, heard "*Anochi . . .*," the first of the Ten Commandments, and passed on the essence of this experience from generation to generation. For a child to accept and believe in this tradition, he must develop loyalty to his parents. How is this nurtured? The child is born helpless, and relies on his parents for virtually all his needs. And the parents are *moser nefesh*—extend themselves beyond all considerations of comfort or convenience—for the sake of the child, engendering a loyalty in him. Then the *mesorah* can be transmitted. This concept of *mesorah*, by the way, is not limited to Jews, but applies to all of mankind. Non-Jews also have *mesorah*—

What is the role of the family in the Torah scheme of life? A noted Rosh Yeshiva examines an ailing institution, points to the problems, and suggests the ways of correcting some of the faults.

"G-d looked into the Torah and then created the world." Torah is the blueprint of the world.

What, then, was the underlying reason for the world to be set up in such a manner? No living creature except man has an ongoing family life. This is surely of significance.

Man is different in yet another way—he is utterly helpless at birth. It takes him many years before he develops any degree of strength, intelligence, and independence. By contrast, all other creatures are born with their potential in evidence. As the *Gemora* says: A day old ox is also called an ox. This is also a factor of importance.

The family structure—the sharing of lives and interests by members of different generations—is closely connected with the concept of *mesorah*—the passing on of our heritage from generation to generation, which is

Rabbi Svei is Rosh Yeshiva of the Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia. This essay is based on an address at the recent national convention of Agudath Israel of America.

the seven Noachide commands—which emanate from G-d's instructions to Noach right after the *mabul* (the deluge).

The condition of contemporary society, then, is easy to understand. After one generation of a weakened family structure, where in many respects transmission of *mesorah* has ceased to function, the level of society's morality has tumbled and general decency has sunk beyond any foreboding. Primarily, this is because we must rely on the health of the family to uphold the world, and the family itself is failing.

Parental Cooperation

Yet another aspect of man's uniqueness is underscored by the *Ra'avad* in the introduction to his sefer *Baale Nefesh*, and this, too, is a significant feature of family life. Whereas in all animals, the male and female were created as separate entities, in mankind woman was created as an integral part of man; later, when separ-

ated, Adam described Chava as "bone from my bone, flesh from my flesh," and they still maintained a special bond. There is a reason for this unique feature. Had the male and female been created separately, then they would be like animals in that no relationship would exist between the two other than that of male vis-a-vis female—to mate, for the perpetuation of the species. But human couples must share a spirit of cooperation, working together for a common purpose that goes beyond bringing a new generation into the world—to pass on the *mesorah* which they had received. There must be a relationship whereby she is the *eizer kenedgo* (helpmeet) and he views her in terms of "his wife is like part of himself."

The "Tznius" Element in Mesorah

Yet another feature of human nature, also exclusive to mankind, is the sense of modesty and privacy, with the capacity for shame, known as "tznius."

This, too, was implanted in the human personality—especially in the woman—as part of the Divine plan.

Chazal point to the term that describes G-d's creation of woman—"vayiven (and He fashioned)" as related to *hisbonen*—contemplated. That is, G-d (*kaveyachol*) had to consider (*lehisbonen*) which limb to select for the purpose of creating the woman. Had He created her from Adam's eye, this faculty of vision would be dominant, and women would have a compulsion to gaze, even where one should not; if from the ear, she would tend to hear too much, even that which one should avoid hearing; if from the mouth, she would be endowed with a tendency to talk too much . . . for that limb or organ would have been her very essence. G-d chose to fashion her from Adam's side, a part totally hidden from view, so that the woman would be a *tzenu'a*, modest. This feminine factor—her very essence, as interpreted by Chazal—is essential for the existence and successful function of the family, to facilitate the family's role in perpetuating our *mesorah*.

The Talmud refers to this in taking note of the decision of Rachel, the daughter of Kalba Savua, to marry Akiva, a decision that seemed something of an enigma. Her father was one of the three wealthiest men of Jerusalem who had helped support the city's populace when it was under seige. She could have had her choice of the finest of men as her husband, yet she selected a forty-year old, poor shepherd who was an *am ha'aretz*—an illiterate. What did she see in him?—his *tznius*, we are told—an attribute that is a binding prerequisite for Torah. With the necessary character traits, he was able to study Torah and grow in scholarship for forty years, and then teach Torah for another forty years, and became the *Rabbon shel kol Yisrael*, a key link in the chain of *Mesorah*.

The *Gemora* interprets the phrase חמוקי יריבך in *Shir Hashirim* as equating the thigh with Torah. Both require

concealment, for Torah is only acquired with *tznius*. Thus, woman—who is the *eizer kenedgo*, and whose province is the family which transmits the *mesorah*—was created from a hidden part of Adam, for this is an essential requirement of Torah.

The Family Under Seige

Smugness and complacency are dangerous, for they breed a lack of awareness to threatening problems. Proud as we are of the outstanding educational institutions that we have created in our communities, we dare



not take our blessings for granted. The morrow is never secure. By the same token, we take pride in the relative stability of our families. But complacency is a trap, and we dare not rest on our laurels. This very element took its toll in the "first family" of Jewish history: Yaakov Avinu and his family . . . the Twelve Divine Tribes, who in their perfection provided the foundation of *Klal Yisrael*.

One incident regarding Yaakov's children begs for clarification. How could this family, in its glorious perfection, suffer the degradation of Dena's violation by Chamor the crown prince of Shechem?

One of the explanations offered by Chazal, is derived from the *pasuk*: אל תתהלל ליום מחר, "Do not rejoice over the morrow." One may be sure of today's situation, but one can never be certain of tomorrow's. Yaakov apparently failed to honor this principle when he told Lavan, "And my integrity will answer for me tomorrow" (*Bereishis* 30:33). A harmless enough statement, yet Yaakov was faulted for saying it, for with these words he indicated a cer-

tainty in his integrity to which no one is entitled; he expressed a lack of self-doubt in regard to his future-standing as a righteous man, when one must forever question himself in this respect. As confident as Yaakov was, Dena proved the vulnerability of the family to outside assault.

Watching For the "Tznius" Factor

Our concern for our families and their integrity should make us question ourselves, even when our motives are honorable—especially in areas that touch on *tznius*. With this in mind, we must examine a pressing problem in the educational scene. Young women helping in the support of their Kollel husbands find drawbacks in careers in education. Teaching salaries are too meager, and positions are in short supply in the geographic areas where the men are studying. So even when the girls are yet single, they gravitate to "a clean and simple profession" such as computer programming, which they can continue to pursue in any location, after they are married.

Their argument seems reasonable, but it does not take into account that element of *tznius* which is so crucial to the Jewish family. Again we have a precedent from the first Jewish Family, that of *Yaakov Avinu*: Another factor of weakness pointed to as a cause for the breach in Yaakov's family is Dena's outgoing nature. The very words describing her excursion into Shechem just prior to her violation—"And Dena went forth"—are used to describe her mother's action when "Leah went forth toward [Yaakov]" to inform him that he was to spend the night in her tent instead of Rachel's. The Midrash describes Dena as "One who goes forth, the daughter of one who goes forth," implying that Dena's outgoing tendencies that invited trouble were inherited from her mother.

This is puzzling to say the least, for as a result of the initiative of "and Leah went forth," she conceived her son Yissachar, and Yissachar more than any of the other sons of Yaakov came to personify Torah study. In fact, the term Yaakov uses in his blessings to describe Yissachar, as "a donkey . . .," is a reference to the donkey Yaakov rode, coming in from the fields; Leah heard the donkey bray and then stepped out to greet him. When Yaakov praises Yissachar's forbearance, as "he bends his shoulders to carry the burden," he is referring to his total submission to G-d—as the braying donkey shoulders his burden. This admirable trait was inherited from his mother: Stepping forth to tell her husband, "I have engaged you . . . [from Rachel] with my son's blossoms" was not a simple matter for her; it was an act of self-negation, to submit to what she perceived as G-d's will . . . as the braying donkey shoulders his burden. It was this that Yaakov found so praiseworthy, and singled out as Yissachar's strength. Yet, how ironic: the very same "And Leah stepped forth" that earned Yaakov's praise was the source of the trait that made Dena a victim of

Chamor, prince of Shechem. A most laudible attribute—the ability to step forward—has its inevitable built-in pitfalls and demands caution.

When planning a career, a young lady will undoubtedly think in terms of financial compensation, and for the best of motives. But at the same time she must not lose sight of the *vateitzei* ("and she went forth") factor. A young lady teaching little children in a yeshiva or day school is not only in a protected environment; she is functioning in one that promotes personal growth, as well. By contrast, can one say that when a girl is working in an office, her *tznius* (personal modesty) is totally unaffected or her sense of refinement is as wholesome and innocent as it was the day she left seminary? Granted, her reason for choosing office work is a good one: a case of "and Leah went forth" for a good cause—she wants to enable her husband to study, to have a "Torah home." But one cannot overlook considerations of *tznius*, which is a requisite for Torah, for the existence of the family, and for the perpetuation of the *mesorah*—an essential ingredient for ascertaining that one's children will grow up to be *bnei Torah*.

Who's Responsible For The Family?

An unprecedented burden is being placed on our young people as wives and mothers, as husbands and fathers, but there are reasons for this.

Family life in our own generation is significantly different from that of previous generations. In the past, "family" referred to the extended group of father, mother, grandparents, aunts and uncles, great-aunts and great-uncles. In those days, it was possible for both parents to be involved in a business venture and the child would receive *mesorah* directly from his grandfather—who sat and learned, went to his *rebbe*, and generally linked the child to Sinai . . . while the girl received her *mesorah* from her grandmother, who was a *tznu'a*, and wise in the facts and nuances of her tradition. But today's generation is nurtured only by parents; they—the father and the mother—must play the role of parents, grandparents, and the entire constellation of relatives to properly transmit the *mesorah*.

Parents cannot make verbal demands of their child, and rest their case on that alone. The child must see whatever his parents demand of him in their conduct. When he witnesses the *mesorah* his parents had received from their parents as a vibrant reality in their own lives, then he can accept that *mesorah* from his parents. This will make a deep and lasting impression on him, and then they can expect him to be an ideal yeshiva *bachur*, to their pleasure and satisfaction. This is in keeping with the purpose of the family—to transmit the *mesorah*. To be sure, this means that the parents have to make sacrifices for the sake of their child, involving inconvenience and even hardships so they can serve as effective role models in their daily life; but this is essential if their children are to grow up as they should.

Links in the Generation Chain

Young people must conceive of themselves as links in the chain of *mesorah*—not only as parents of the next generation, but as teachers as well. Both the women and the men must appreciate this and prepare themselves accordingly.

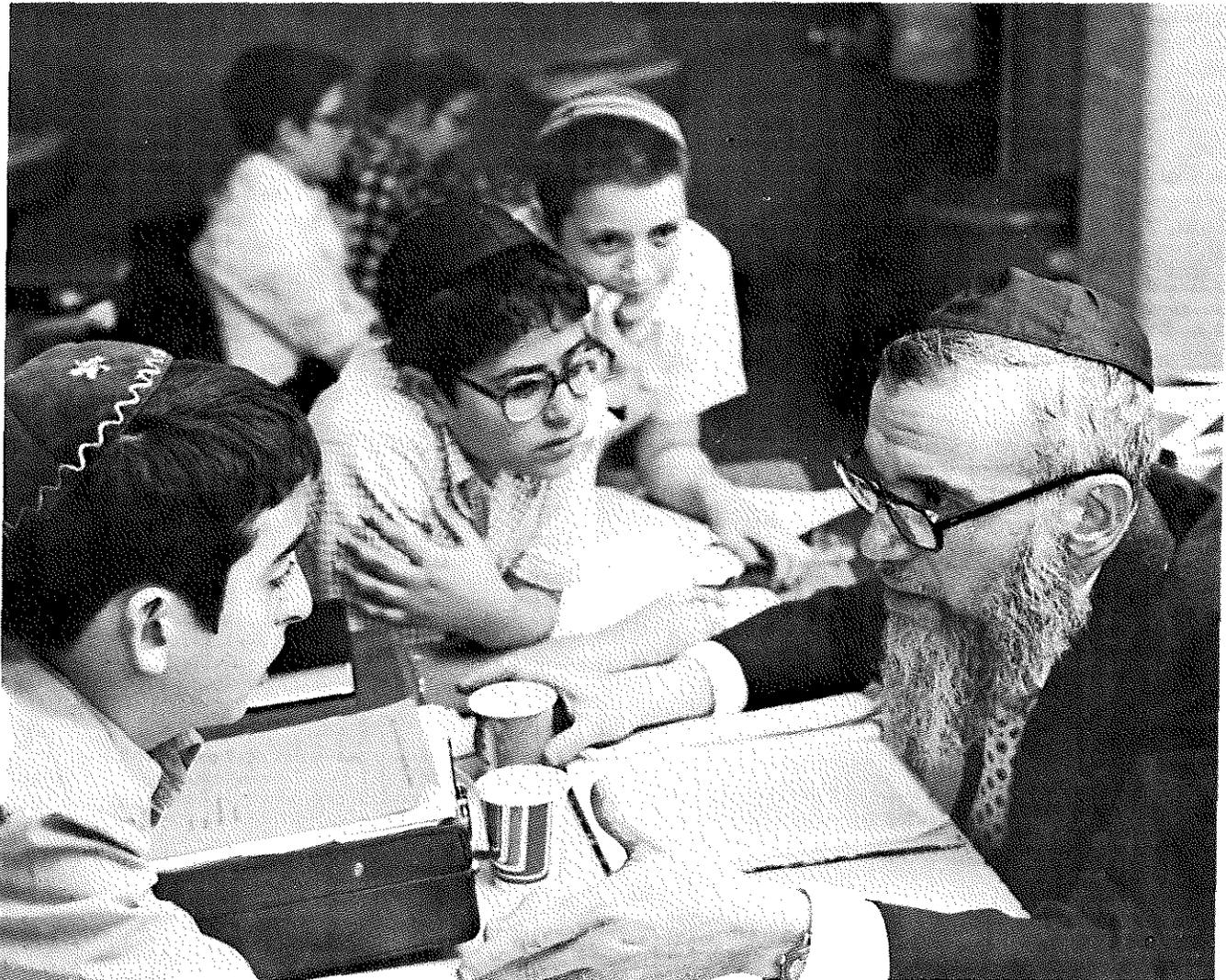
A young lady may decide that as far as she is concerned, entering the world of commerce, or computers, or whatever area, is worthwhile (in spite of the “*vateitzei* factor”) because in this manner she will be helping her husband grow into a *gadol b’Torah*. Nonetheless, she must also consider the needs of *Klal Yisroel* at large. *Mechanchim* are alarmed that the best products of the Bais Yaakov schools—those most qualified to become the teachers of the next generation—are instead seeking employment in other areas. We all must share this concern over who will train the girls of the next generation so that they too will want to marry *Bnei Torah*. This is a problem that requires careful consideration, and no

young lady should make her decision without consulting her mentors. If our best teachers—those who would be worthy of transmitting the *mesorah* that they received—seek careers in other fields, our future is bleak indeed.

The men, of course, have their share of the responsibility, too. As the *Gemora* in *Megilla* explains, *Klal Yisroel* is able to face the worst of circumstances and survive—only because of the Torah giants of each generation:

Chananya, Mishael and Azarya in Bavel . . . Mordechai and Esther in Modai (Medea) . . . Mattisyahu and his sons, and Shimon Hatzaddik in Galus Yavan (Greek domination) . . . And today? (asks the Gemora) By virtue of Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi and the contemporary giants do we manage to surmount the impossible pressures of galus.

There was no other way for *Klal Yisroel* to survive, nor is there today. Everyone capable of assuming a leadership position is truly obligated to aspire for such a role and to prepare for it. Now some argue that “A thousand enter school to study Scriptures, and one emerges as an



Photograph, courtesy of Rabbi Eli Teitelbaum

authority in *halacha*." What need is there to go beyond the traditional ratio? But so very, very few are entering our yeshivos, that we simply have no right to accept a similarly smaller number of authorities to serve as our elite leadership. Our needs demand far more than one per thousand out of the meager thousands that enter yeshivos in the first place.

It is also wrong to sidestep the issue, as many of us do, by rationalizing: "My family was always only merchants; they were never *rabbonim* or *roshei yeshiva*, and nonetheless they found time to study Torah. I'm pleased that my children are learning now, and I'll even permit my son to continue his studying a year or so after his marriage, but then he'll go into business."

Klal Yisroel simply cannot exist without the *Chachmei Torah*. If G-d grants us the gift of a talented child, one who is endowed with the capabilities and the character attributes requisite to being a *marbitz Torah* (disseminator of Torah) or a *gadol b'Torah*, or to being an *eizer kenegdo* (helpmeet), then that child should be encouraged to pursue this goal; and the parents should recognize their good fortune, that G-d had endowed them with such riches—a child worthy of serving as a key link in the chain of *mesorah*.

The Resident "Priest"

The goal of every Jewish household is implicit in the *viduy maasoros*—the so-called confessional declaration made periodically (every three years) in the time of the Beis Hamikdosh: "*Biarti hakodesh min habayis*—I have removed the sacred from the house"—to the effect that all priestly gifts and tithes have been emptied from the house and duly delivered to the appropriate individual (*Devarim* 26:13). The *Seporno* questions the use of the term "*viduy*"—confessional—to describe this declaration, for nothing improper is being confessed to here. He replies that it is a sad situation when the "*kodesh*", the sacred is removed from one's house. There was a time when every home had its own resident "priest" in the person of the *bechor*, the firstborn, and there was no necessity to remove the "*kodesh*" from the house; for initially (until the incident of the Golden Calf) the firstborn son in every household served as the *kohein*. Not having a resident *kohein* in the person of the *bechor* is a reminder of the loss from the time of that tragic incident from which *Klal Yisroel* has never fully recovered.

All is not completely lost, however, for today every household can still have resident members that devote themselves to spiritual pursuits and even have the status of belonging to the priestly tribe of Levi. This is in keeping with the *Rambam's* description of anyone who devotes himself to Torah study, dissemination of Torah, or community service, as possessing the rank of *Levi'im*. It should be the goal of every family to have its representative among the *Levi'im*; someone who has the talent and the special sense of commitment to become involved in such sacred endeavors should be encouraged, guided,

and supported in realizing his quest. And the other members of the family should feel fortunate that one of theirs will be one of the perpetuators of our heritage, for the benefit of *Klal Yisroel*. As a result, the entire family will be on a higher spiritual plain.

The strength of *Klal Yisroel* has been described as the rock of Israel—*even Yisroel* אבן ישראל. The word *even* consists of two components: *av* and *ben*—father and son (אב/בן).

The inter-relationship of father and son, both promoting goals of strengthening Torah, bring *kedusha* into the home. This inspires a similar relationship between G-d our Father, and us, His children—a transcendental Father-son relationship—fulfilling the command of "Make for me a sanctuary that I might dwell within them"—not within *it*, the sanctuary—but within *them*, the people. Our families become an *even*, the cornerstone of a revitalized *Klal Yisroel*, serving as a sanctuary for G-d's Presence. ✠



Between Parents and Sons

The Ultimate "Tachlis"

Family life—so crucial to Judaism—consists of several different aspects. The following lines will deal with one of them—the importance of a healthy relationship between father and son.

In the yeshiva, one often encounters a phenomenon that brings about a breach in family life, causes anguish to parents, and ends up perplexing the *bachur*. As with most problems, its roots begin early in life:

When a boy is born, everyone extends his blessing to the parents: "May the child grow up to be a *gadol ba Torah*," and the parents second the blessings with a hearty

earning a living and they are impatient for him to apply himself to secular studies.

Now, the young man is aware that Torah study does not fall in the purview of the requirement to honor one's parents: He could continue to devote himself fully to Torah study in spite of his parents' views. Nonetheless, he doesn't want to hurt his parents by opposing them. So he is in a quandary. It affects his learning and soon his *rebbe* becomes aware of the problem.

A father once consulted the Chofetz Chaim about this very same problem: "Shouldn't a person concern himself with tachlis? Is it wrong to be concerned about the future?" The Chofetz Chaim answered, "Of course, you must think about

A noted Rosh Yeshiva examines some of the conflicts that commonly plague homes in the Torah community and issues a plea for more understanding between generations.

"Amen!" . . . At his *Bar Mitzva*, the speakers all stress the same theme—that they hope that the young man will grow up to be a *gadol ba Torah*. . . . If the boy is gifted and progresses in his studies, he brings his parents a bounty of joy and *nachas*. . . . All is well until the boy approaches the end of high school. Then the problems being to surface: *What will be the tachlis? What kind of future lies in store for him? Then come the conflicts, the arguments, the years of controversies. The bachur is in a dilemma. He has tasted the joys of Torah study to the point that "his soul yearns for Torah."* His awe and his reverence are directed toward *gedolei Ha Torah* and he wants to follow in their footsteps. But his parents are concerned about his

*Literally: "ultimate purpose." In the vernacular, it refers to means of earning a livelihood.

Rabbi Pam is Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn. This essay is based on an address at the recent convention of Agudath Israel of America, and was prepared for publication with the assistance of Mattis Blum, who edits *Torah Lodaas*, a weekly Torah bulletin.

tachlis! What kind of a question is that? Bereishis—In the beginning G-d created . . . [the Midrash says] For the sake of the Torah, which is called 'Reishis' did G-d create the world. The world world was created for tachlis and that tachlis is Torah. Of course one must keep in mind his 'tachlis!'

On another occasion, the Chofetz Chaim said, "G-d is a provider for all. Is it possible that He will care for everyone except His most beloved children—those that are completely immersed in Torah?"

Perhaps concerned parents are really worried about luxuries. When we say "*Dorshei Hashem—The seekers of G-d will not miss the good things of life,*" it does not mean that they will have all luxuries. The meaning is that they will not miss them, because they are not really important to them—in the spirit of *Yaakov Avinu's* declaration: "*Yesh li kol—I have everything.*"

Children who are willing to forego life's luxuries, and are not concerned with their level of material achievements, whose burning desire is to lead a life of Torah—

such children are a gift from G-d. How blessed their parents should feel!

When a father complains to me that his son wants to forego a secular education to devote himself more fully to Torah study, it brings to mind the lament of the Jews in the wilderness: "We have nothing but the *manna*!" (*Bamidbar* 11:16). At this point the *pasuk* adds a description of praise, "And the *manna* is like a coleander seed, etc.," *Rashi* explains that these are G-d's words, implying: "Look at what my children are complaining about, when the *manna* is so wonderful!" (*ibid* 11:7).

Indeed, mothers since time immemorial have shown special appreciation for their sons' growth in Torah study, as the Midrash says in regard to Rivka and her

**"The Jar of Manna and
its Message: that those who are
dedicated to the Torah will
not be deprived . . ."**

love for her son Yaakov: "The more she heard his voice [engaged in Torah study] the more her love for him increased." She never found his learning excessive. We must emulate her and demonstrate our appreciation to our children for their devotion to Torah, and encourage them. How often the *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* table—the only time the family gets together—becomes converted from a setting of domestic harmony to a battleground over *tachlis*! And the poor *bachur* becomes torn between the urge to set the record straight and a reluctance to appear to be insolent to his parents.

Jewish men and women always prayed for children, as did the *Avos* and *Imahos* (patriarchs) so their families might be building-blocks in the formation of the glorious edifice of *Klal Yisroel*. More than bringing children into the world, this also entails guiding them so they might assume their places as leaders, rabbis and teachers—*gedolim*, *manhigim*, *mechanchim*. When sons and daughters aspire for a significant place in this magnificent chain of *Mesorah*, the parents should find this as cause for justifiable pride, rather than quibble over "self-deprivation and loss of career opportunities." In such cases, the children have actually selected the major "*tachlis*" of their lives, and are to be encouraged to pursue it.

The *Mechilta* on *Beshalach* states that in the future, *Eliyahu Hanavi* will return the jar of *manna* that had been hidden away at the time of *Hoshiyahu Hamelech* prior to the destruction of the first *Beis Hamikdash*. In *Tanach*, however, we see the role of *Eliyahu* as that of heralding the advent of the *Ge'ula* and uniting children with parents in *Avodas Hashem*. The message of the *manna*, however, is an eternal one: Just as it is a basic tenet of our faith to believe that Torah is *min haShomayim* (from heaven), so too is daily sustenance ordained in heaven.

Indeed, it was to demonstrate this point that *Yirmiyahu* the Prophet had displayed the *manna*. When he had reprimanded the Jewish People for not devoting more time to Torah study, they explained that they had to earn a livelihood. In response, he took out the jar of *manna*, to show how even under the most impossible conditions—during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness—G-d provided for His People. Many are the ways of G-d to provide sustenance for those who adhere to His word. The returning of the jar of *manna* is thus very relevant to the assignment of *Eliyahu Hanavi* (as expressed in *Mal'achi*) of bringing harmony in the family, between parents and children on the issue of *tachlis*, by revealing the jar of *manna* and demonstrating its message: that those who are dedicated to Torah will not be deprived of their livelihood.

Toward Tolerance, Restraint and Consideration

When discussing relationships between parents and children the focus is usually on children's obligation to honor their parents. However, parents, too, are obliged to follow the guidelines of the Torah concerning general human relationships in dealing with their children; for instance, the *issur* (negative command) of "*Lo sonu ish es amiso*"—which prohibits speaking to a person in a manner that will cause him pain and misery. This certainly applies to parents speaking to their children. Likewise the *issur* of "*Lo sisa alav chet*"—Do not bear a sin because of him"—embarrassing a person—applies to parents as well. Even a small child is susceptible to shame, and it goes without saying that the teenager is especially sensitive to it. If a child feels insulted or hurt by a word from his father or mother, it can do great damage to his personality. These are matters that affect family harmony, and all concerned must be keenly aware of their obligations—the child to his parents, and the parents to their child, to uphold the child's honor and self-respect.

Very often parents are impatient with their children for becoming excessively *frum*—exhibiting more zeal than is necessary or even desirable in *mitzva* performance. This becomes a point of contention and strains the relationship between parents and children. Sometimes it is wiser for parents to accept this in the general context of youthful exuberance and not be worried by it. It certainly does not warrant insult or mocking on the part of the parents.

Even when a child's conduct is suspect, he is entitled to respectful treatment, as Chazal say: "Honor him and suspect him." When, for instance, the parent suspects the child of not telling the truth, he should not accuse him of lying, and certainly should not label him as a liar. It is far wiser to give him the impression that you have faith in his good character. Moreover, to accuse the child of something he may not have done can inflict such a terrible hurt on him that it may drastically affect his attitude toward his parents.

If a father wants to admonish a child in order to improve his learning or behavior, he is likely to achieve better results by encouragement, rather than reproach.

The father of one of my students was an accomplished talmid chacham, and was very concerned about his sixteen year old son's progress in Torah. When the father asked about his son, I told him that he was a bright boy, but was not applying himself to his studies. He immediately called his son over, and I was sure that he would lash out against the boy. Instead he spoke in a soft friendly tone: "Your rebbe says that you're doing quite well . . . just a little bit more effort on your part is needed. Please apply that little more and it will be excellent."

The boy left feeling very pleased and began to learn much better. Eventually, he grew up to be a Rosh Yeshiva in a well-known Mesivta. . . . This is tochacha (reproof)—with honor.

My mother once told me of an incident that took place when she was eight or nine years old: She had wanted to fast on the Tenth of Teves, as grownups do. She knew her parents would not permit her to do this, so she spent the day at homes of her friends, and did not come home until nightfall, when it was time to eat. The Dayan of Shedlitz, where my grandfather was Rav, happened to be at my grandfather's house when she came, and he was aware of what had taken place. He was very angry at the child, and insisted that she deserved punishment. "She must be taught a lesson!" he demanded. "Oh, would I give it to her—the 'fasterke'!"

My grandfather remained silent. The child was given her supper, and went off to her room to sleep. My grandfather followed her to her room, took her in his arms, and said to her: "Mein kindt, you wanted to do a mitzva; you should know that if one is commanded to fast, and he fasts, it is a mitzva. But when one doesn't have to fast, it is not mitzva to fast. One should not torture the body unnecessarily. Im yirtza Hashem, when you'll be a Bas-Mitzva—twelve years old—then you will fast, and it will be a real mitzva. Now, you must be very tired, so go to sleep, and sleep tight. Good night!"

The words warmed her heart as long as she lived, beyond the age of ninety.

Let us always bear in mind that the primary purpose of the family is to bring up a Torah-loyal generation. Everything else is of minor importance. All energies should be concentrated towards achieving this end. This will promote a pleasant and wholesome climate in the entire family: among parents, between parents and their children, among the children themselves. 

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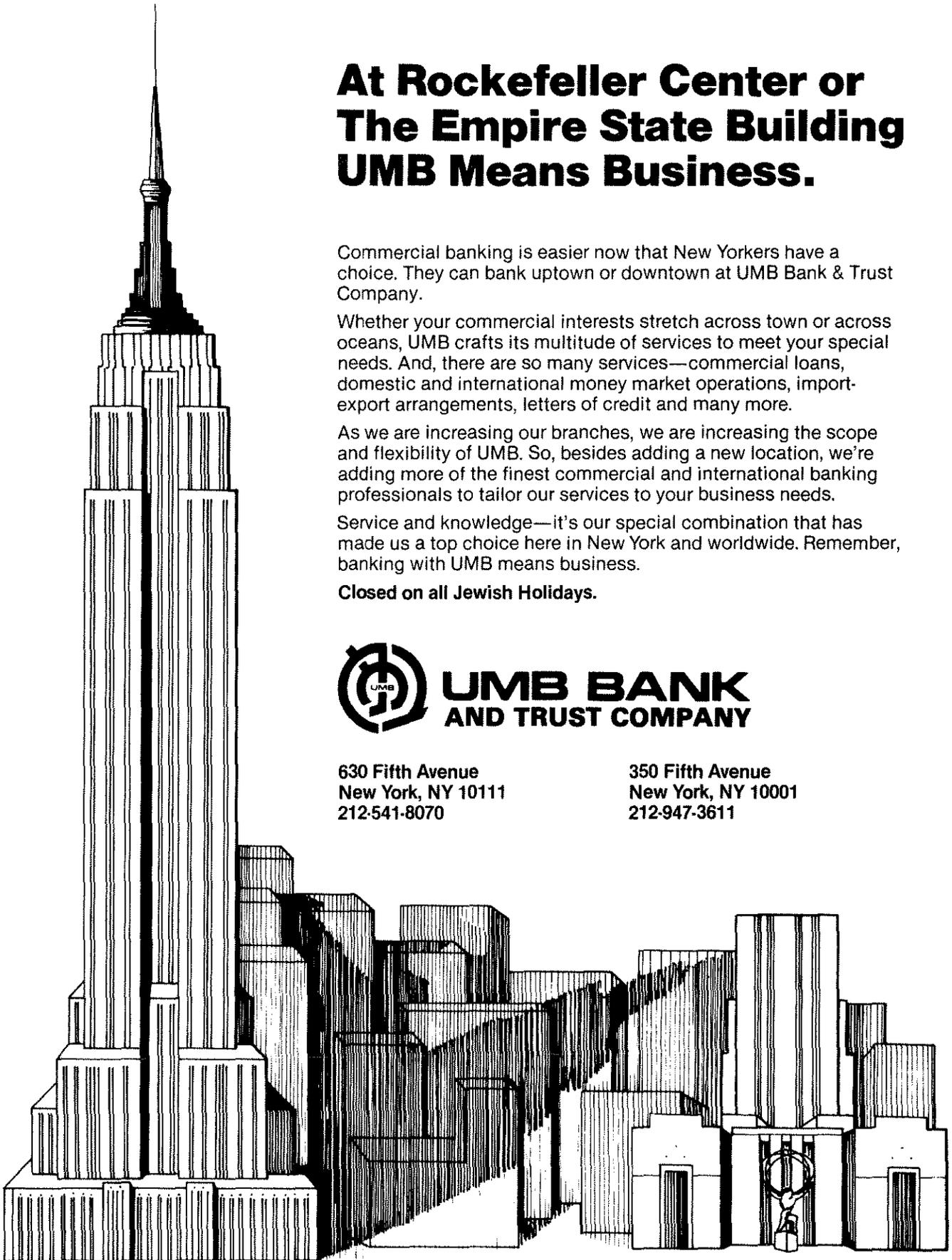
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I read your letter sympathetically and with a feeling of gratitude. I will rally to your side to champion the personal needs of our children. I will join you in your campaign to insist that the "P" of PTA have a right to participate in our children's education. As a mother of young yeshiva children I advocate the undeniable right of the mother to remind the teacher: *this child is a human being; treat him as an individual, please.*

Yet I would like to straddle the fence in this discussion—for you see, I am both a mother and a Morah of primary school children. I play the role of both the "P" and the "T." Even while I staunchly champion your concern for your

child's well-being and growth, I find myself swiveling to the other side of the desk, to the Morah's seat. I realize that just as the mother looks to Dear Morah to help her in bringing up Yisrael, Yehuda, and Aryeh, the Morah looks to Dear Mother to do her part. Not only am I unable to do my job without you, there are many things *only* you, the mother, can do.

I would like to explain, but first let me tell you why I'm here in the first place. If I had chosen to work in this field for financial reasons only, I'd be bitter by now. The monetary rewards do not, by any stretch of the imagination, compensate for hours of after-hour work related to the job. When the dismissal bell rings, the school day is over by the time clock, but I

cannot discard the title "Morah." It stays with me, it *is* me, constantly. My personal time is an extension of schooltime. How often have I been interrupted during supper at home by phonecalls from school parents? I run PTA at my cousin's Bar Mitzva and at my sister's wedding. No, the salary does not cover the time and energy put into teaching.

Obviously, I'm not teaching just for the monetary reward. I also teach for the rewarding feeling of accomplishment when a student says: "Morah, I'll pick up all the crayons from the floor for you so a new *malach* can be born." It is for the *nachas* I feel when a child apologizes for breaking his classmates' block castle and then offers to help rebuild it. It's for the feeling of pride while watching our future

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Bnei Torah say the *Shema* correctly. I also teach for the occasional appreciative note written by a mother, thanking me for my efforts, one of which I quote: "My reaction to my son's behavior these last few days is שכרה הרבה מאוד. I always am a bit envious of teachers. I know parents are teachers too, but the idea of 27 boys going to their individual homes, repeating and practicing the Torah you teach them—well, the idea just leaves me in awe. . . . I can never properly thank you, but I'm sure that your reward lies in knowing that these children think and do *al pi Torah* because you taught them so." For this rare note I teach. For this I will continue to work along with you to strengthen these *yiddishe neshamos*.

Dear Mother, I'm open to talk, . . . I'll listen to you, never turn a deaf ear to you, even when you call me at home. (So you forgot about the note sent to you in the beginning of the year that said to leave a message in the office for me, so I can return your call at my

convenience . . . I usually do.) I'll listen to you and discuss all with you willingly. You say that behind that quiet facade there is a wonderful child just waiting to be drawn out? I love a challenge! I'll happily give him extra time, a moment out for a little *shmuss* between just the two of us. I'll give him that extra smile and wink. I'll give him an extra chance to read a flash card. It's a large class and I appreciate the reminder saying: "Hey, that's my child entrusted in your care! He's my son, his Zeide's *ainekel*, his Bubby's *nachas*."

You asked me to give your child extra attention, to make him feel loved and wanted. I sincerely want to. I'll juggle my limited moments about and take time to discuss his new baby brother with him, between setting up tables and serving lunch. If you expect much of me, and set high standards for my performance, fine. I, too, demand the most of myself. I want to be goaded and guided in my role as Morah.

But, please remember. It's not

simply a matter of "getting your money's worth." It's a matter of knowing I'm doing my best for your child—our child. Shouldn't I be able to have the same expectations from you? You are surely no less dedicated to "our" little boy. Yet, how often do I clench my fists in frustration when a child excuses himself for not bringing *tzeddaka* and says, "My mother had no time to give me a penny. It was too late and the bus was coming." No time to help your child practice the *mitzva* of *tzeddaka*, which can *only* be done with parental help—or, when a student says, "Morah, I did a big *chessed* yesterday. I picked up a tissue from the floor so that my mother would not have to bend . . . I didn't bring a 'midah note' to school about it because my mother had no time to write it. She was talking on the phone and said she'd write it later." Please bear in mind, Mother: in class there is no *later*. We are working in a designated and limited time span. Our goal is to regulate our time and energies realistically.

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It's oft been said, the school is an extension of the home. I'll accept that. But by no means should the school be a *substitute* for the home. You entrusted your child to my care, to guide and educate, but—please—don't abuse my role by burdening me with yours: "Morah, can you please tell my son to listen to me when I tell him to go to bed? He always finds a reason to procrastinate." "Morah, could you please tell my son, maybe through a story, to kiss his Bubby when she visits?" So I'm Mother and Morah, doing your job and mine simultaneously. I wash *negal vasser* for half the class. I teach children their full names, phone numbers, and addresses. I teach table manners and cleanliness. These are basic concepts that the home is required to teach. I must keep tabs on hats without names, mateless mittens and unlabeled boots—even though you've received note after note almost pleading with you to put nametapes on your child's belongings. Then I receive a note: "Chaim's missing a red hat, a blue knapsack and a green scarf. Please make sure my son brings home all his belongings." I do my best to

reinforce good character traits, but it's unrealistic to expect me to initiate them. A child's education begins at home. In fact, it should begin far back, at the cradle, before there was a school or a Morah in his life.

Mothering a school-aged child is a two-way system: It's a sensitive system that should not be abused. Of course you have the right to inform the teacher—and be informed by her—about your child's status in class. Just as you wrote me in your letter. I'd like you to keep in mind, though, that as Morah—and not simply an extension of you behind the desk—I have broader responsibilities. I sit up and listen when a mother requests a front seat for her Chaim¹. She does so with concern for her son as her only priority, but I've got to think beyond Chaim: is the request being made because Chaim has a vision problem and cannot read the board from his seat? or is the change important because her Chaim¹ is "privileged"? Please don't forget—I have obligations to the rest of my students and I must try to discern the nature of her motives.

At the same time, it's worth reminding you that this two-way system is applicable to the Morah as well. I too have the right to inform and be informed. And, how I wish I would be informed! We could have avoided many an unhappy morning if the mother of my student had written a note explaining her son's irritability as being caused by his father's absence on a business trip, or his lack of sleep. Let me know about the trip to Florida, the impending move to a new home, or anything upsetting his routine. This information helps relieve anxieties and maintain the pleasant and warm environment we aim to foster.

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Mrs. Leizeron is teacher of pre 1-^a in Yeshiva Torah Temimah of Brooklyn, N.Y.

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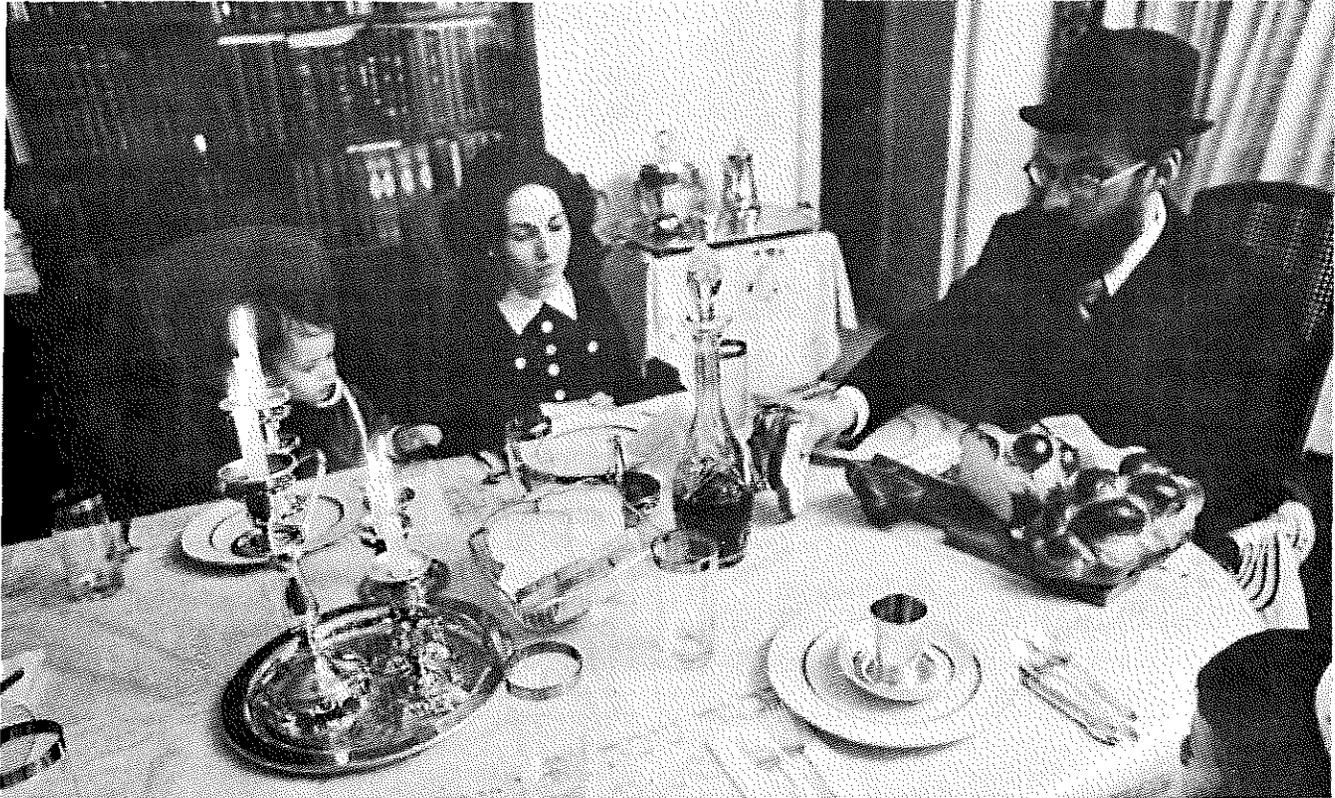
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THE SHABBOS TABLE

A Therapist's View

Most people think of wine, candles, and *challah*, when they hear the phrase *Shabbos table*. Mental pictures are drawn which include a large dining room table, spread with a clean white tablecloth and adorned with the family's finest silver and dinner ware. Places are set for all the members of the family, as well as relatives and guests who may be visiting that week.

The *Shabbos table*, of course, includes not only what is set on the table, in honor of *Shabbos*, but also what happens around the table during *Shabbos*. Much of the very observance of *Shabbos* itself takes place around the *Shabbos table*. It is there that mother lights the *Shabbos* candles, father makes *Kiddush*, and *Shabbos* meals are enjoyed.

In addition to the prescribed routine of the *Shabbos table*, there is also ample opportunity for the family

members to relate to each other in their own unique and special ways. Some families tell stories of family history at the *Shabbos table*. Other families engage in informal Torah study or say *divrei Torah*. Many families use the time to catch up with each other on the weekly goings-on of family life.

The Sense of Belonging

Because of the parent's long working hours, long days in yeshiva for the children, and all of those meetings and *shiurim* at night, many families hardly gather all together as a family except at the *Shabbos table*. When the *Shabbos table* is the only experience shared by the entire family at the same time, it becomes even more important and is looked forward to all the more by parents and children alike.

Since the experience of the *Shabbos table* is common to all Orthodox Jewish homes, it is an opportunity to reaffirm one's sense of belonging to his or her family. For

Meir Wikler, A.C.S.W., is in private practice of individual, marital and family counseling. He lives in Brooklyn, N.Y.

The author wishes to express his *hakaras hatov* to his friend and colleague, Yaakov Salomon, for numerous helpful suggestions in the preparation of this article.

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this reason, when someone is away from home and family, he feels most lonely while sitting at someone else's *Shabbos* table. Furthermore, there are those who live alone and must be invited to someone else's *Shabbos* table each week. These people often feel most alone when they are making arrangements for *Shabbos* or waiting to be invited to someone's *Shabbos* table.

Insights, Outlets, and Revelations

The *Shabbos* table, at times, not only brings out the best of family life, but it can bring out the worst, as well. Families that are disorganized and frenzied, for example, find that coordinating a full scale *Shabbos* table is as insurmountable as planning the invasion at Normandy. With so many courses and so many plates, trips to the refrigerator, and different requests all at once, unless a family has a fairly good system of cooperation and organization, the *Shabbos* table can feel like a three ring circus!

Some families with latent hostilities find that they can prevent open outbursts of anger during the week by avoiding each other and maintaining a "cold war" type of cease fire. At the *Shabbos* table, however, when the entire family is present, these dormant hostilities can emerge into a full blown argument. Considering all of the preparation that goes into a *Shabbos* table, it is most understandable that when such arguments do emerge to spoil the pleasure and tranquility of the *Shabbos* table, everyone feels deeply disappointed.

A Tool . . . and an Opportunity

I often ask the families with whom I work to describe for me what the *Shabbos* table is like at their home. I find that each family's *Shabbos* table tells the true story of what that family's life is really like.

The *Shabbos* table, of course, is much more than a diagnostic tool which can be used by a professional helping person to assess the quality of family life. The *Shabbos* table is most of all a great opportunity. As with any great opportunity, if it is exploited fully, the rewards are even greater. If, however, it is misused or abused, the despair and disappointment are equally great.

Musical Chairs

How can a family improve or enhance its own *Shabbos* table? The best way is to play musical chairs, figuratively, of course. Let each member of the family "sit," so to speak, in someone else's "chair." How does it feel now? What would the *Shabbos* table be like for the father, for example, if he had to sit in the mother's chair? What would it be like for the mother if she had to sit in one of the children's chairs? Viewing the *Shabbos* table from someone's chair can give each family member an idea as to what the *Shabbos* table means to someone else. The children, for example, may look forward to the delicious

food and happy *zemiros*. But are they aware of how hard mother works at the *Shabbos* table? Is father aware of how bored the small children can get? etc., etc.

Playing musical chairs, as described here, does not guarantee a happy, pleasurable *Shabbos* table automatically. Much time and effort will be required to make significant improvements in the quality of family life. Improvements, however, can be made. Even so, there are some families in which the conflicts are so great, the difficulties so chronic, and the disappointments so deep, that professional help is necessary to help them get back on the right track.

A Special Shabbos Table

Whenever anyone makes an effort to improve in a specific area, it certainly helps to have a clear goal in mind. More specifically, if the members of family want to improve their *Shabbos* table, they should have a clear mental picture of what a *Shabbos* table can become when its potential is fully realized.

When I try to think of an exemplary *Shabbos* table, one particular family comes to mind immediately. There is so much one can learn about the beauties of Torah life just by sitting at their *Shabbos* table. While their sense of modesty would be violated by public identification, I do not think they would mind if I presented a brief description of their *Shabbos* table.

This *Shabbos* table is set like any other. Nothing is especially fancy; in fact, much of the table setting is quite plain. Only one feature stands out: the number of

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place setting . Nobody has *that* many children! Even before the dining room fills with people you know immediately: this is a *Shabbos* table that includes many guests.

The family and guests file in together with a mixture of solemnity and anticipation. Merely from the way people gather around the table, you know that this is an experience that takes place regularly but never feels repetitious.

Father and mother are unquestionably King and Queen. No formal coronation takes place and neither one wears a crown. The royal stature of the parents is evident, however, in the *kavod* (respect) reflected in the faces of all who sit around this *Shabbos* table.

As the stirring sounds of *Shalom Aleichem* are heard, a joyous journey begins into the uncharted depths of each individual as he or she reaches for private heights of *ruchnius*.

Father recites *Kiddush*. It is the same *Kiddush* as is said in every home, and yet it is not at all identical. Father recites it alone but everyone is with him, hanging on to each word. No one makes an effort to pay attention. It is unnecessary because no one's mind has wandered.

The *zemiros* are sung with no unique musical talent. In fact, some of the men are definitely off key! No one cares. The melodies fade into the background as the words take on special meanings. The *zemiros* are not simply pleasant tunes but become more like joyfull *tefillos*.

The food is tasty, but does not set any gourmet standards. Different standards, however, are used at this *Shabbos* table. here the food is seen as an opportunity to serve *HaShem Yisborach*. Although such a concept sounds somewhat ethereal and abstract, here it become a concrete reality.

Boundaries between "family" and "guests" melt away at this *Shabbos* table: In tone and manner, words and actions, all is done to create a larger family atmosphere that makes everyone feel included.

No one can be given an abundance of attention here. There are just too many people. The quality of attention, though, more than makes up for whatever may be lacking in quantity. By the time the *becher* (wine goblet) is raised for *Birkas Hamazon* (Grace), everyone has been made to feel more than just noticed.

The *divrei Torah* spoken here are an integral part of this *Shabbos* table. They are not added on or arbitrarily imposed. Instead, they flow as smoothly as honey and

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are just as sweet. No earth shattering *chiddushim* or brilliant Torah insights are offered. Nevertheless, the *vertlach* are highly valued by all who sit around this *Shabbos* table. What is special here is the unusual way in which the *divrei Torahs* seem to speak to each individual, on his or her own level, in a most personal and intimate fashion.

Having sat at this *Shabbos* table even only once, opens up a whole new world of what *shmiras Shabbos*, in general and the *Shabbos* table, in particular, can accomplish. Like the sweetness of wine which lingers on long after being swallowed, the impact of this *Shabbos* table lingers on long after *Havdalah*. People who have had the *zechus* to sit at this *Shabbos* table take inspiration back with them to other parts of the week and even other parts of the world.

The inspiration of this *Shabbos* table is felt in many ways. Some have left to make deeper personal commitments to *limud Torah*. Others have come away motivated to *daven* with greater *kavanah*. Still others experience a recharge of their spiritual battery which permeates every aspect of the *Yiddishkeit*.

When I left this *Shabbos* table, I felt that I had gained a new insight into what it means to be part of the *Am Segulah*. In addition, I had a better grasp of what the home of *Avraham Avinu* must have been like. Finally, I came away with a burning resolve to try to emulate this experience at my own *Shabbos* table.

In the final analysis, what makes the *Shabbos* table so special is something that is so obvious that it can, at times, be overlooked. The *Shabbos* table represents a regular weekly experience in Torah living which is shared all together by the entire family. As such, each family's *Shabbos* table reflects the uniqueness of that family's *Yiddishkeit* as if it were a kind of "family signature."

Now, what do you think of when you hear the phrase, "the *Shabbos* table"?



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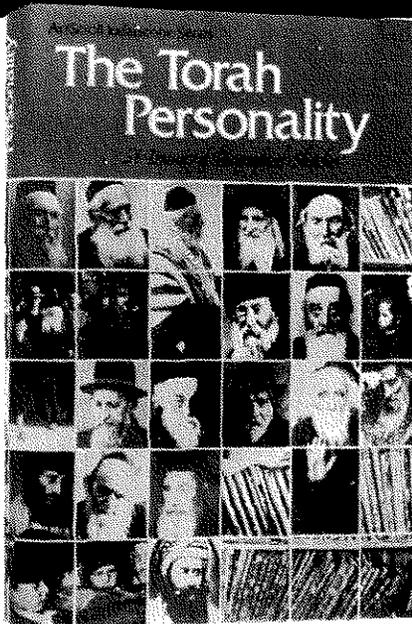
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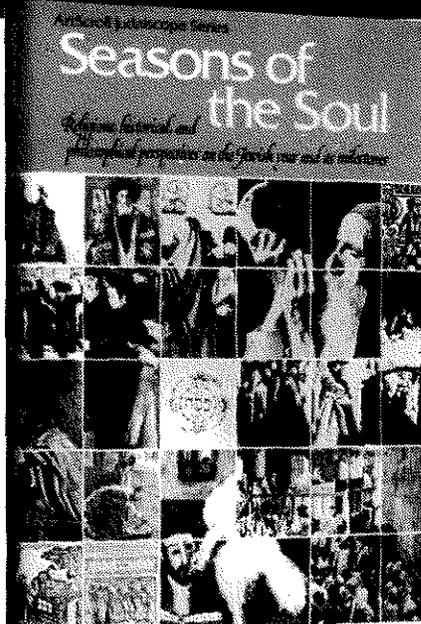
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Out of Many—One

A Purim Message

"Small people search for the petty differences that divide men. Great people seek the basic similarities that unite them."

The Mussar School of Slabodka taught that all humans share greatness, for every man is a colossus of Creation, fashioned in the image of the Almighty. A fictional encounter between the legendary multimillionaires, Rothschild and Rockefeller, serves as a parable to illustrate this truth.

The two legendary magnates were comparing their enormous fortunes. Said Rothschild: "I own 76 banks."

**The opening statement of this article was expressed as a tribute in memory of Rabbi Alexander S. Gross שליט"א in a hesped given by Rabbi B. Goldenberg at the 1980 convention of Torah U'Mesorah Principals.*

Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer is the Rav of the Ohr Chaim Congregation in Miami Beach, Florida, and is a Maggid Shiur in the Beis HaMidrash of the Rabbi Alexander S. Gross Hebrew Academy. Rabbi Feuer is the author of *Artscroll's Tehillim and Ten Commandments*.

Rockefeller thought for a moment and responded: "As a matter of fact, I also have exactly 76 banks."

And so they continued—comparing mansions, stables of racing horses, yachts, carriages, jewelry—down to servants, and pieces of clothing, remaining surprisingly equal in every item. Finally, they compared cigarettes, with thirteen each! In desperation, they resorted to matchsticks, and Rothschild laid out seven matches.

"Aha!" Rockefeller cried out triumphantly. "Eight matches! My dear Rothschild, you are a pauper, an impoverished wretch! I have one match more than you!"

The moral of this fable is self-evident: Every human being is an intellectual marvel, a work of astounding intricacy. All men share a myriad of common talents and endowments. Poor and rich, ignorant and wise, weak and strong—they are alike in countless ways. The relatively few factors that distinguish the wise man, the dollars that elevate the rich man—these are trivial

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advantages compared to the common fortunes all men share. Let the rich and powerful and wise take notice of the essential gifts all men share, and their aloofness and sense of superiority will vanish. When impressed with basic similarities, one pays no heed to the petty differences, which are as meaningless as a matchstick.

Same—Not Merely Similar

When comparing Jews, it is not sufficient to say that they share similarities. Jews are more than just similar—they are one and the same.

Rabbi Moshe Kordovero emphasizes this point in his classic, *Tomar Devorah*. The Talmud (*Shavous: 39a*) states:

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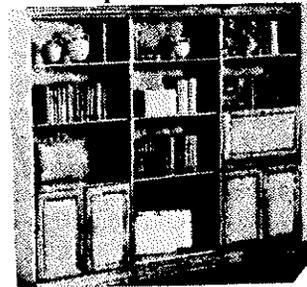
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"Kol Yisroel areivim zeh bazeh." Kordovero notes that literally *areivim* means *intermingled*, to say that "All Jews are intermingled one within the other." No Jew is the exclusive master of a private soul, for by definition a Jewish soul is a composite of many soul fragments borrowed from all other Jewish souls. A sliver of Reuven is inside Shimon, a bit of Shimon is inside Reuven. We are all *areivim*, responsible for each other because we are *areivim*, mixed together with one another. If my neighbor has failed to discharge his obligation, I share in his failure because a part of me is inside of him. Jews are not merely similar, we are the same. We are one! "Love your neighbor as yourself" (*Vayikra 19:18*) because he is literally a part of yourself.

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Diversity and Harmony

Midrash Tanchuma relates that when G-d created the world, the first letter He used was the *Beis*, in the word *Bereishis*, with which the Torah begins. The letter *Aleph* protested: "I am the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Creation should begin with me!" G-d comforted the *Aleph*: "Fear not, I will not neglect you. The holy Torah was created even before the world was formed, and when I will present the Torah to Israel I will begin my revelation with *Anochi*, a word that begins with *Aleph*."

Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlop explains this dialogue homiletically. The *Aleph* argued that because it stands for "one" and "unity," it is the most appropriate letter with which to keynote creation.

G-d had different thoughts, however. Better that the world should be created with letter *Beis*, the numerical equivalent of two. "Two" represents diversity, contrast—even conflict. This is essential to the success of G-d's plan—a world full of challenge and opposition, where man strives to bring harmony of purpose to the diverse elements of the universe. The prime agent of bringing about such harmony is the Torah and its Commandments, which begin with *Aleph*, the letter of unity and oneness.

The Jews who left Egypt were a fragmented lot, a multitude of diverse individuals. The Sinai experience merged these individuals into a solid mass, a unified nation. "And Israel encamped before the Mount" (*Shemos* 19:2)—as one man, with one heart (*Rashi*, *ibid*). At Sinai the Jew discovered his soul. He recognized within himself a reflection of the Divine that revealed itself upon the Mount. And when the Jew detected a similar Divine reflection in his fellow Jews, he knew then that all Jewish souls were one and the same, all the fragments were co-mingled and mutually responsible for each other.

Scattered and Split Apart

Time and history exacted their toll, and the impact of the Divine encounter at Sinai faded. The unity it fostered receded from sight. The Jewish nation slipped back into dissension and discord, alienated from its own self. Eventually exile and dispersion eradicated the very last vestiges of harmony that once had bound the people together. The discord was so manifest that the wicked Haman felt confident enough to slander the Jews to Achashveirosh: "There is one nation now scattered and split apart" (*Esther* 3:8).

Haman plotted genocide. He refused to recognize the Jews' right to live as human beings and sought to butcher us like animals. How could Haman fail to see them as fellow men? If Jews detach themselves from one another and accentuate their differences, others become oblivious to any common human elements that bind us. The gentiles then see only the differences that set Jews apart from all people.

Haman raged: "Their ways are different from every other people . . . therefore, it is not befitting for the king to tolerate them" (*Esther* 3:8).

Israel stands at the core of the human coalition. When Jews unite and form the inner nucleus, the nations rally around them and follow their example. But if the nucleus crumbles, then the harmony of all the nations orbiting around the nucleus disintegrates and turns to chaos. Jewish brotherhood is the adhesion that keeps the world together.

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Mordechai: The Key to Locked Hearts

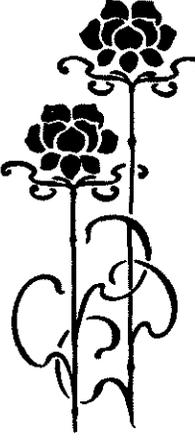
"There was Jewish man in Shushan, the capital, whose name was Mordechai, son of Yair, son of Shimi, son of Kish, a Benjaminite" (*Esther* 2:5).

It is as a descendant of Benjamin that Mordechai was instrumental in uniting the Jewish people. The seeds of dissension in Israel were sown by the brothers who were estranged from their own flesh and blood, and sold Joseph into bondage without compunction or compassion. Only Benjamin did not participate in that treacherous act and preserved his loyalty to true brotherhood.

Mordechai was known by other names, which reveal the essence of his personality. He was called "P'sachya—the key of G-d," because he solved the most puzzling mysteries (*Menachos* 65a): When, in malice, one man locked up his heart and shut out his neighbors, Mordechai possessed the sensitivity and insight to fathom the secrets of the sealed soul, and reopened it to rapprochement.

Furthermore, Mordechai was known as "Balshon", the mixer of languages (*Bail Lishni*). Every member of Sanhedrin spoke seven languages. Mordechai comprehended the essence of these languages more intimately than all others. "He mixed languages together and explained them" (*Menachos* 65a), i.e. he showed how all diverse tongues are essentially derived from one root and how they are basically co-mingled because they share similarities. Mordechai tore down the language barrier, the foreign tongue, which alienates one man from his neighbor.

The Talmud (*Chullin* 139b) asks: Where is Mordechai alluded to in the Torah? In the verse "mor d'ror—flowing myrrh", (*Shemos* 30:22), which *Targum* renders as "mira dachia" [which both in spelling and sound resembles "Mordechai"]. Myrrh is the foremost of the eleven spices that were mixed to make the *ketores*, the sacred incense of the Temple. It has been suggested that the flowing myrrh was the catalyst in the elaborate process that brought together a wide variety of distinct odors and pungent scents, and blended them into an exquisitely delicate fragrance. (See *Ramban* in *Ki Sisa* for a related thought.) Most wondrous of all was the inclusion of *chelbena* in this recipe, for this spice had a foul, repulsive odor. Nevertheless, the myrrh formula neutralized the vile scent and transformed *chelbena* into an essential ingredient, which enhanced the superb quality of the incense mixture. From this the Talmud (*Kerisus* 6b) derives a homiletic lesson: When ten Jews unite for prayer, they should include even the repulsive sinner in that prayer assembly. When Jews unite, they create an atmosphere of brotherhood, which encourages love and harmony. This atmosphere arouses the best impulses—even those hidden deep and dormant in the darkest heart—and hearts join together in a symphony of supplication. Mordechai was master of such orchestration—he was flowing myrrh.



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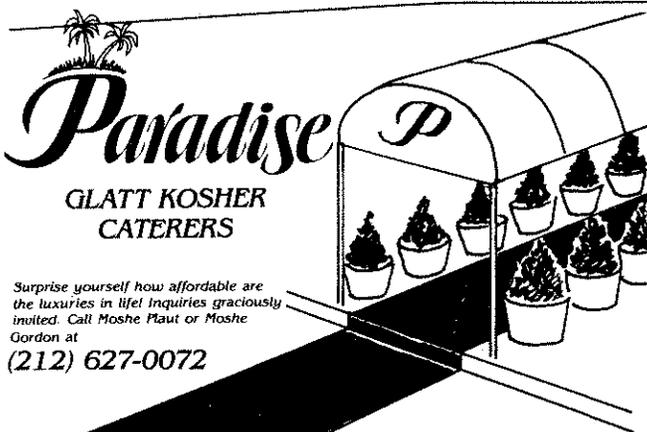
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Not surprisingly, the *Megillah* concludes with the following description of this great leader: "And Mordechai was a great man among the Jews, and popular with the multitude of his brethren; he sought the good of his people and was concerned with their welfare for all posterity" (*Esther* 10:3).

Why did Mordechai's fame spread far and wide? Because he was a man of harmony who sought nothing but harmony! (*Esther Rabbosi* 10:12)

A Return to Sinai

Mordechai's goal was to re-unite the Jews, and Esther was his accomplice. She worthy of the role.



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Esther would captivate all who saw her (*Esther* 2:15). Rabbi Yehuda said: She was like a statue upon which a thousand people gaze and all admire equally (*Midrash*). Rabbi Eleazar said: Everyone claimed that they detected traits in Esther that resembled those of his nation, and each claimed Esther for his own (*Megillah* 13a). Inspired by Mordechai, Esther proclaimed, "Go assemble all of the Jews" (*Esther* 4:16). Let us contradict Haman's slander that the Jews are scattered and split apart; let us assemble all Jews in unity and mutual determination (*Manos Levi*).

Mordechai and Esther succeeded, Haman and Amalek

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were defeated, and a new holiday of Purim was introduced into Judaism. Moreover, "The Jews confirmed and undertook upon themselves and their posterity, and upon all who might join them" (*Esther* 9:22). The Talmud (*Shabbos* 88a) comments: At Sinai they had pledged their fidelity to G-d and His Law, but that acceptance had been undermined. Now, in the days of Achashveirosh, they reconfirmed the pledge that they had undertaken long before.

Purim. A return to Sinai. A return to unity.

Separatism and Regionalism

In our times, the ideals of true brotherhood and harmony survive only as a distant dream. Selfishness and greed have spawned countless "special interest groups," which slash at the fraternal fabric of society. What remains of social unity is a tattered crazy-quilt of mismatched patches ever so loosely held together by the flimsiest thread of concern for common welfare and protection.

Rather than seeking similarities, men strive to accentuate their differences. They call it local color, regional pride. The merest speck of sand or soil is hailed as a

sovereign nation. The least strip of land secedes and proclaims itself a separate state. Sundry regions retreat into their own limited borders, and struggle passionately to break away from the motherland. The slightest variation of language, dialect, custom or temperament is deemed sufficient grounds for withdrawal from the national commonwealth. Self-esteem has been blown out of all proportion and has ballooned into an arrogant attitude of divisiveness and rift which shatters society into dangerous, dissonant splinter groups.

We are One

In times like these, the Purim message carries special significance. Rabbi Yoseif Chaim Sonnenfeld would say: On Purim we perform the *mitzva* of משלוח מנות, *sending gifts*; איש, *every man*, לרעהו, *to his friend*. The numerical value of איש is 311. The numerical value of לרעהו is 311. A Purim gift is a display of love and friendship, it cements our camaraderie, it tightens the bonds of society. It reminds us that *every man* and *his friend* are similar. No! More than just similar—equal! No, more than just equal—the same! We are one!!

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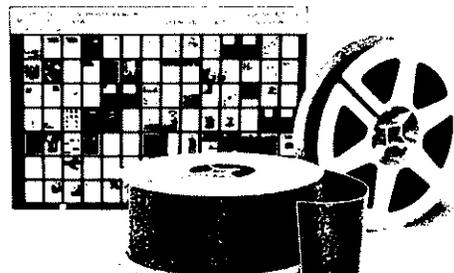
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drum-majors twirling batons in unison through the air . . . and then—one former hostage and his family in a glistening black limousine . . . cheers, screams, yellow ribbons rain down on the hero . . . Next—another motorcycle brigade, another brass band—seventy seven men in maroon, another baton-twirling corps, followed by—cheers! confetti! ribbons—another hostage with his family, in their own sleek black limousine . . . And so it continued ad infinitum, it seemed.

We sat down, and Reb Dovid reported on his activities—the Hotline (a telephone service advertised in *The Village Voice* and campus newspapers, for answering queries regarding Judaism), the *chavrusa* service (matching interested parties with a study-partner), the trials of the alumni of the Israeli *baal teshuva* yeshivos returning “home” to the States, where there is no home . . . because parents are often anti- or non-religious; former friends have pursued other paths and there is no support group waiting to take them by the hand and help them adjust to life in America . . . no one to make them feel welcome in a hostile terrain.

I recalled a Shacharis in a local shtiebel several years ago. After “Oleinu,” a jet-black bearded, mod-dressed fellow with rimless aviator glasses (that year’s campus uniform) said Kaddish: “Yitgadal veyit kadash . . .” Sephardi pronunciation, but not a Sephardi or an Israeli either, by a long shot. What’s his story? After davening I offered him “Shalom” and asked him where he’s from, who he’s saying “Kaddish” for, and so on.

He smiled and answered briefly telling me how he became attracted to Yiddishkeit just before his late father’s passing; the time he spent in Boston at the Rebbe’s; and then—hesitating a moment—he put his hand on my arm: “I want to thank you for—uh—saying Hello.”

I looked at him quizzically. “You see,” he explained, “I live here for six months and you’re the first person to say anything to me.”

My face must have expressed shock because he quickly put his hand on my arm again, reassuringly, “It’s not that I don’t have friends. I do. But you’re the first stranger to say ‘Hello’ to me.”

Out of the window, the fourth of the twenty-one heroes was getting his due on Broadway at Barclay Street. It was an unprecedented outpouring of warmth—and why not? It feels good to make someone else feel good. . . .

Reducing things to their crucial elements, however, one realizes that the 52 were only passive actors in an international melodrama. They were seized through no fault of their own, and released through no derring-do of their own. Diplomatic machinations and intrigue did their part, and after 444 dreadful days, the long-suffering hostages were released—pawns in an international power-play, moved from darkness to light by the hands of distant chess players. But never ration glory with an eye-dropper. They’re entitled to their welcome.

I picked up a folder on Goldwasser’s desk . . . notes on a Hotline phone-call pleading for help from Eureka, California: “It was so meaningful in Dvar Yerusha-

layim, but now I'm alone, so full of questions. . . ."—A "how do you kosher a kitchen?" call from Plainview, N.J. . . . "What's a get? and do I really need one if I re-marry?"—from the Washington, D.C. area. . . . Hos-tages of a hedonistic, pleasure-bent society, who sense that life is not meant to be a dungeon of self indulgence, or a life-sentence on a prison-ship aimlessly adrift on chartless seas.

And they've sprung themselves loose! They've set themselves free! They made it to a class, a lecture, and then on to a yeshiva. . . . Hostages no longer! Don't these people each deserve his and her own sleek black

limousine, proceeded by his/her own brass band, baton-twirling platoon, followed by a special police escort? Don't they each deserve cheers, and streamers of every color of the rainbow—to reflect the multi-faceted temptations they've had to overcome to reach the truth of Torah? Aren't they entitled to the key to the city, to our homes, to our time, our patience, our guidance, our hearts? Not just for two hours, once in a lifetime, but again and again and again?—or at least to a simple Hello?

We must not neglect *our* heroes—especially since they are such authentic heroes. ✡

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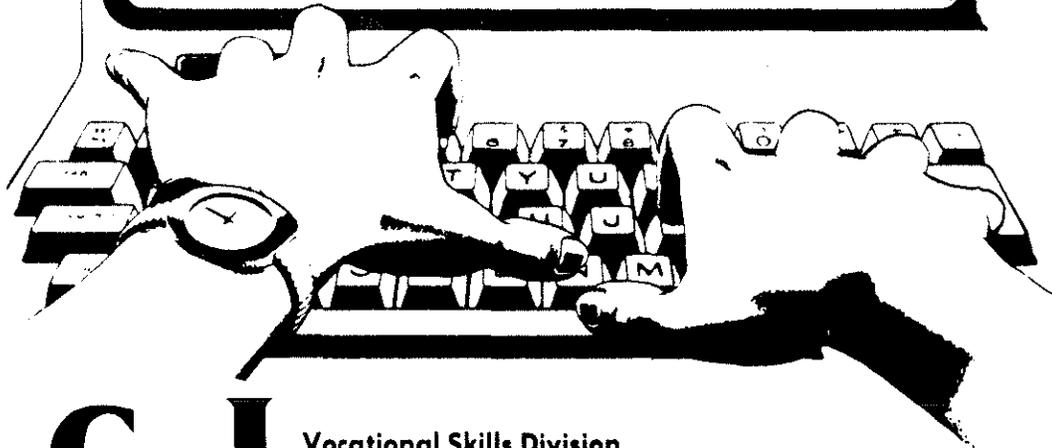
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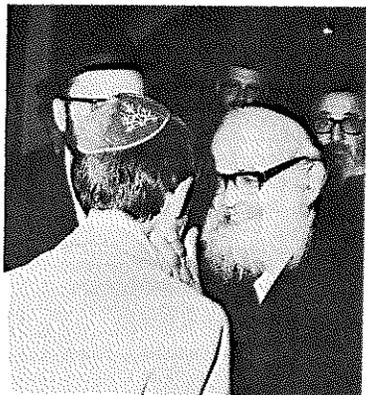
We have commented on previous occasions upon the writings of *Rabbi Shimon Eider*, which have set a most enviable standard of perfection worthy of emulation by others. The latest of his publications is the fifth pamphlet in the series of **Halachos of Pesach** (Lakewood, 1981, \$2.50). It is devoted specifically to the laws of *Erev Pesach* that falls on *Shabbos*, as this year, and follows the general pattern of the author's works: very clear and systematic presentations; recommended course of action, together with a mention of divergent views where indicated; elaborate footnotes in Hebrew in which the source and reason for all halachic statements is given so that the interested (and qualified) reader can delve into

the original sources. Completeness, clarity and practicality are the marks of this work.

The exigencies of calendar have also brought about the publication of **Bircas HaChammah**, an ArtScroll Mesorah Series volume by *Rabbi J. David Bleich*, with overviews by *Rabbi Nosson Scherman* (New York, 1980, hard cover: \$8.95; paper back: \$5.95). This book is devoted to all aspects of this blessing of the sun, which is pronounced once every 28 years, this year on April 8. The overviews and the first chapter deal with the ideas underlying the ritual; the prayers, and their sources are discussed in full; and there is a lucid exposition of the Jewish calendar. Thus, this book is not merely a halachic guide; however, the presentation of the laws of **Bircas HaChammah** occupies a central place in it—they are given in concise form, and elaborate footnotes provide the background in the codes and responsa literature. The usefulness of the volume is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of time charts for different locations, and according to the different views when the blessing is to be recited.

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Also of particular interest at this time, but very different in nature, is the *Mitzva Encyclopedia, Laws and Customs of Passover Matzos, Volume I and II* by Rabbi Yehuda Gross (Brooklyn, 1981 \$7.95). In this work the author has gathered extracts from a wide range of rabbinic literature, and in particular from Chassidic works, to show the importance of performing the *mitzva* of *matza* in the most perfect manner. In the first volume he discusses the need for special stringency in all matters pertaining to food on Pesach, and emphasizes that everyone should supervise the baking of his own *matzos*.

The second volume is devoted to the details of the eating of *matza*. Many incidental topics are touched on (such as the proper way for examining lettuce and the halachic problems of medications). With the exception of the question of halachic measurements, where the author brings all major opinions, his halachic approach is based on Chassidic practice (i.e. prohibition of machine *matzos* and of "soaking" *matzos*); however, the *mussar* extracts and the stories of how great *tzaddikim* observed the *mitzvos* of Pesach will be of interest and an inspiration to all readers.

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A Purim Passing

the "tzeddaka gabbai" who could not miss the holiday of giving

Jerusalem—city of many charities, and the best of *gabboim* (collectors, treasurers). The City once had, not very long ago, a major architect. He erected palaces and skyscrapers out of *chessed*, sculpted out of *tzeddaka*. Reb Yoseif Binyomin Rubin was perhaps the greatest *gabbai tzeddaka*

Hanoch Teller, an American studying in Jerusalem, is a frequent contributor to these pages.

Jerusalem has known in recent time.

One cannot transcend overnight. His capacity for charity was partly indigenous, and partly cultivated. The result was an oak so towering and mighty that he became a legend in his very own time. From the time that he was a child he seemed to have an inner drive to give *tzeddaka*, a drive which would not afford him rest.

Directly after his wedding, during the week of *Sheva Brachos*, adorned in a *shtreimel* and *bekashe* and accompanied by a *shomer* (guard), he stood on the street corner collecting *tzeddaka*.

"Do the poor people have to suffer just because I have a *simcha*?"

* * *

He revolutionized giving *tzeddaka*

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by introducing radical concepts into the art of giving. He contended that one must give according to the poor people's need and not according to the giver's means. He borrowed terms from the inflation-plagued Israeli economy in order to assist the indigent: Poor people must also have a wage elevation, a price increase, value added supplements etc., he reasoned.

To cover his budget, he borrowed staggering sums of money from a free-loan society every month. He borrowed because he felt that he had a debt which had to be paid. He was not doing the poor a favor, he was carrying out an obligation. He assumed a quarter of the debts of many a new marriage, living up to his namesake: "Yoseif Hu HaMashbir . . . is the provider."

Poor people are all the same. Sephardi, Ashkenazi, Chassid, Misnaggid, whatever; all have the same needs for life's necessities and for dignity. Rabbi Rubin's greatest joy,

however, was to provide for a *talmid chacham*.

An impoverished talmid chacham did not even have a jacket to wear. Reb Yoseif purchased a wardrobe for him, and could not help boasting: "I just bought a cover for a Sefer Torah."

He was an undercover detective of the highest order. No matter what the camouflage—Reb Yoseif saw through it. He had an uncanny nose for detecting who was truly in need. When he found a worthy recipient, nothing stood in his path. Some way or another the needy received, usually never realizing how, when, or where from.

One day he noticed that a member of his Kollel was extremely perturbed. Reb Yoseif was convinced that the man's anger emanated from a deficit of funds. Rabbi Rubin went home, gathered some money, and ended up rescuing this fellow's family life in the very nick of time.

Providing for the needy, more than 300 families on a weekly basis, represented a half a million Israeli

pounds* expenditure for just *Pesach* alone!

* * *

His day began at two in the morning. He *davened* at sunrise and then went about collecting, until nine in the morning. At 9:00 the second part of his day commenced. He began to study Torah with all of the diligence of a person who was just beginning his day. Every day he travelled to a different *Shul*—Wednesday for instance was "Bayit Vegan day"—and he travelled at his own expense. Every *Lag B'Omer* he would journey to Meron, and stand for 14 hours on his feet collecting *tzeddaka*: "Yidden Gibb tzeddaka" was his motto; *Bracha, hatzlacha vechol tuv*, his ancillary blessing; these familiar words always evoked a positive response. Everyone had so much faith in him that there was never a question of trust. On a hot day he used to

*Three years ago, when the pound was worth four times as much.

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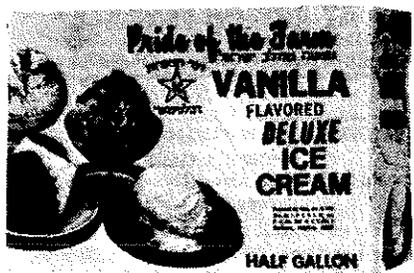
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buy a soda and with a grin, "Let everyone's doubt of my veracity be invested in this soda."

* * *

Jerusalemites will never forget Purim three years ago. It was a *Purim Meshulash*—three consecutive days of celebration, bedecked with snow. Early in the evening the snow began to fall. Late into the night it still had not stopped, and there was an eerie feeling that this was a sorrow-clouded harbinger. In the Rubin house everyone was still awake. Reb Yoseif was ill, but threatened to go out the next day collecting for the poor.

"But you're not well!"

"What?! It's Purim, the holiday of *Aniyim* (the poor)!"

"No!" they insisted, "you are not allowed to leave your bed."

But as his family knew only too well, fighting Reb Yoseif's heart, his concern for fellow Jews, was a Herculean task.

Early the next morning Reb Yoseif was out celebrating Purim by collecting for the poor, trudging through the snow, fighting his illness, fighting the weather. He felt weak and was rushed to the hospital for emergency treatment. Experts were consulted to help him regain consciousness. Nothing. Not a move, not a twitch. His family gathered around the bedside day and night. Specialists from all over tried every possible method to return him to consciousness. Nothing. His wife went over to the bedside and whispered, "Yosel, it's time for *Kimcha DePischa*."*** His eyes opened and he began to cry.

Two weeks after Purim, Reb Yoseif was buried. On his gravestone were engraved the words that he had willed:

"נבאי צדקה שלא על מנת לקבל פרס"

**Pesach help for the needy; customarily collections begin thirty days in advance of the holiday, the day after Purim.

A Gabbai tzeddaka, without salary.

Jerusalem was in shock. Sephardi women came over to the family and asked, "Aifo Yoseif?" They could not accept that he had died. "How can we make a *Chag* without him?" He died with a debt of IL 250,000 (\$25,000, at the time) to a free loan society, but Jerusalem was bereaved with a far greater debt. The only consolation is that he is not dead in the hearts that he left behind; or put more succinctly, *Od Yoseif chai*, Yoseif lives yet.***

This is adapted from an article that appeared in *Jewish Woman's Outlook*, a magazine that is published in Jerusalem.

***His son-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Rubin, is carrying on his work, from his home in Brooklyn.

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TIME . . .

by devorah gershon

On normal days,
I rarely remember
the Divine

(except perhaps
for perfunctory prayers
and with little reverence).

For there's no time
and I'm
so very
busy.

But when trouble, stress or despair
come knocking
uninvited
at my door
and fear
comes flooding in,
then do I lift mine eyes up high
and remember
my G-d.
Then prayer
wells up
in my trembling heart
and words overflow,
finding their way
to my lips.

Perhaps this is why
G-d sends suffering
to the world.

For in times of peace and plenty,
we rarely remember
the Divine.

We have no time.
We are always
so very
busy.

*Devorah Gershon is an American poet who lives
in Bayit Vegan, Jerusalem.*

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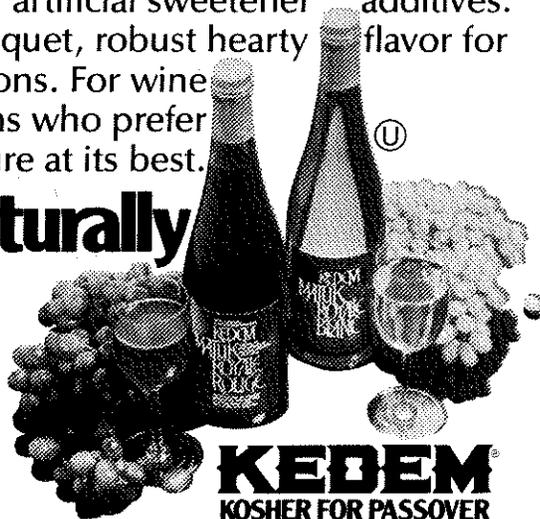
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Letters to the Editor

"Dear Morah"—in Yiddish

To the Editor:

I feel compelled to express my appreciation to you for sharing with us, your subscribers and readers, the very inspiring article "Dear Morah" (JO Dec. '80).

I consider this message to be of such profound importance to both parents and *mechanchim*, that I took pains to translate its entire contents verbatim into Yiddish so as to convey this to even those on our staff whose command of English is limited. I must add that it left a very significant impact.

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Reaching For . . . Stardust

To the Editor:

I was surprised and moved to find the inspiring, unpaid-for advertisement defining teaching as "reaching for the stars" in your latest issue. (Jan., page 26). Moral support of this kind is all too rare. Your ad mirrored my own feelings about teaching, which I have been doing for over a quarter of a century. But more important, it was a call to our youth who unfortunately tend to view teaching as a thankless, underpaid and statusless endeavor.

It is of interest to note that both the little boy in the picture and the beaming teacher behind him point to the tallest letter in the *Aleph Bais*, which command "*Lamed*"—"Teach!"

Perhaps it would be easier to fulfill the *Lamed's* imperative if the Jewish community would become aware of another letter in the *Aleph Bais*—"Pay."

MRS. SHOSHANA PERR
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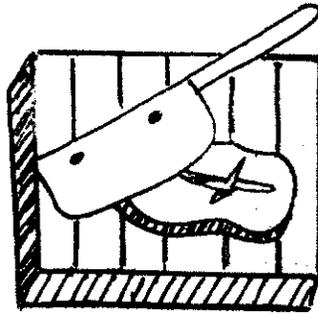
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In an effort to broaden its constituency, Agudath Israel of America had launched a major membership drive, it was announced.

According to Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld, chairman of the membership campaign, a major effort will be made to reach those who directly benefit from Agudah's services but have not as yet joined its membership.

"There are very few people in our community who have not been served by Agudath Israel, either directly or indirectly," said Rabbi Schonfeld. "Whether it's been the community at large through SBCO's community preservation program, Project COPE's helping individuals with employment, or yeshivos with legal help, the Agudah has always 'been there.' And yet many of those serviced have not thought about becoming a part of this movement."

In order to assure its effectiveness, Agudath Israel depends on a large membership which is the goal of this campaign. Those interested in joining Agudath Israel or in assisting in this campaign are urged to contact Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld at (212) 587-9246.

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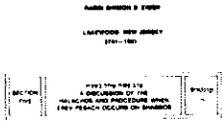
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AGUDATH ISRAEL TUITION TAX CREDIT CAMPAIGN IN HIGH GEAR

Senators Daniel P. Moynihan (D-N.Y.) and Robert Packwood (R-Oregon) introduced their tuition tax credit bill (S.550) in the U.S. Senate. Agudath Israel of America stepped up its nationwide campaign to push for the passage of the measure in the 97th Congress. The "Campaign to Relieve Independent Education," Agudath Israel's special structure for this effort, is organized in 30 states through a network of local coordinators and committees. The bill would grant a tax credit of 50% up to \$500 of tuition paid per child to private schools.

In New York, the campaign was officially kicked off with a major regional conference on Sunday, March 8th. U.S. Senator (R-N.Y.) Alfonse D'Amato, Brooklyn Republican Leader George L. Clark, Jr., and Agudath Israel president Rabbi Moshe Sherer addressed the conference. Prof. Aaron Twerski, chairman of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America, presided. The chairman of the New York campaign is Tuvia Obermeister, a prominent leader of the Yeshiva and Mesivta Chaim Berlin. The national chairman is Prof. Laurence Katz, dean of the University of Baltimore Law School.

An Agudath Israel task force headed by Rabbi Menachem Lubinsky, director of Government and Public Affairs of Agudath Israel of America, and assisted by attorney Shmuel Prager, executive secretary of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America, continued to meet with senators and congressmen on this topic. Special campaign kits were distributed to state coordinators and yeshivos throughout the country.

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AGUDATH ISRAEL AGENCY INTENSIFIES YESHIVA ENROLLMENT

Encouraged by its successful yeshiva placement program in recent years as a result of its multi-faceted reach out activities, the Jewish Education Program (JEP) of Zeirei Agudath Israel of America announced that it will step up its campaign in coming months. According to Rabbi Mutti Katz, director, and Rabbi Yosef Chaim Golding, the executive director, JEP hopes to emphasize its citywide release hour program in which at least 300 children in dozens of public schools and junior high schools participate in weekly sessions of exposure to basic Jewish education.

JEP's successful visitation program reached a high point during the Chanukah season when some 5,000 children participated in special programs in all areas of the Metropolitan area, in Kingston and Middletown, New York; various Long Island communities; and Philadelphia. Nearly 200 volunteers working on the various activities of JEP participated in this special program.

A chavrusah program, which teams up JEP youngsters with volunteers, involves such major New York yeshivos as Mir, Torah Vodaath and Chaim Berlin. 60 children from a Washington, D.C. day school recently visited New York in JEP's Shabbaton program. Similarly, 30 children from Edison, New Jersey, and 20 from Newburgh, New York, were also visitors as part of the large ongoing Shabbaton program of the JEP program.

JEP's successes are particularly apparent in some of the case histories released by the Zeirei Agudath Israel agency.

• For Abraham, a 14 year old boy from Teheran, JEP meant becoming acquainted with Yiddishkeit through the release hour program. His father, a former government

employee in Teheran, enrolled his son in the Ditmas Junior High School. After joining the release hour program, Abraham became more interested in authentic Judaism, and with the blessing of his father is now enrolled in one of the large yeshivos in Brooklyn.

• Irving's encounter with JEP began four years ago when, as a 13 year old Talmud Torah student in suburban New Jersey, he joined the JEP pen pal program with his Shabbaton host in Boro Park. The JEP leader, then 18, visited Irving's home with films of an Orthodox camp to convince his parents to send Irving there for the summer. After a summer in camp, Irving enrolled in a Yeshiva Gedola in Brooklyn and is now in a major yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel.

• During a recent visit by JEP volunteers to Philadelphia, Jeffrey won a raffle which entitled him to a free summer at an Orthodox camp. To the delight of the JEP volunteers, his parents consented to send their son to the camp. The result: Jeffrey is now enrolled in a Manhattan yeshiva.

JEP has also recently undertaken several projects which are designed to reach the broader Jewish public. Two *seforim*, *Lilmod Ulelamed* and *Lehovin Ulehaskil*, are being warmly received by the Jewish community. JEP plans to publish a third volume *Lishmor V'laasos*, which is also expected to be widely disseminated. In addition to the new publications, JEP continues to sponsor a successful series of phonograph records which have become valuable educational tools for both parents and educators. The most recent disc, *Uncle Moishe*, has become a premier selling item, according to record outlets.

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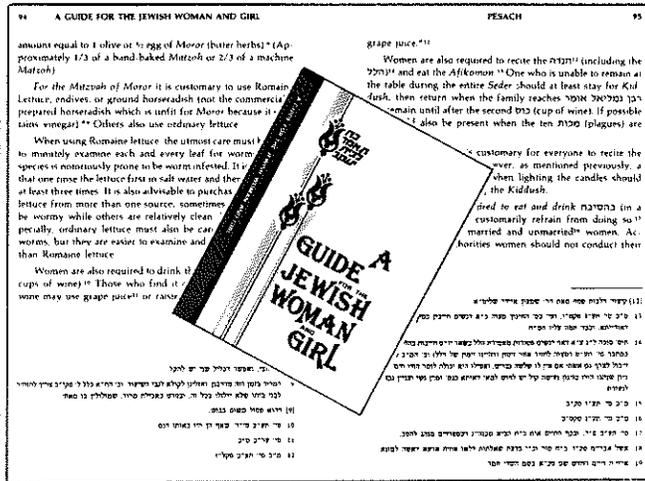
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AGUDATH ISRAEL AGENCY HELPS WOMEN IN NEED

More than 2,000 widowed, divorced or separated women have applied for assistance to a special agency established by Agudath Israel of America to help displaced homemakers. The Fresh Start Training Program, located in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, aims to help such women through an intensive series of workshops, counseling, job awareness groups, skills training and placement.

According to Risa Schmoockler, director of Agudath Israel's Fresh Start Training Program, more than 500 women were involved in the intensive counseling aspect of the program, and 400 participated in workshops, which helped them overcome feelings of helplessness and assisted them in transition toward a career. Many of these women, who suddenly found themselves forced to provide for a family and new responsibilities, required counseling and job training. A professional staff guided them in making emotional adjustments after the drastic changes in their lives.

To stress the acceptance of the program in the community, Miss Schmoockler cited several case histories:

- Fifty-two year old Shirley had been widowed for 12 years and raised two teenage daughters during that period. Of European

background, she lacked confidence in her abilities and was particularly distressed about her poor knowledge of English. Her only previous work experience was in private babysitting. The counselors at the agency concluded that Shirley was a candidate for the job awareness group so that she could improve her self-image and overcome her fears of meeting new people and new situations. As a result of this effort, she was enrolled in a bookkeeping course at COPE Vocational Institute and recently landed a job as a bookkeeper.

- Thirty year old Rachel's divorce two years ago drastically changed her life. Forced to subsist on welfare, her problems were compounded by a feeling of isolation and loneliness. Caring for her 3 year old daughter also became difficult under those circumstances. Her counselors assisted her in establishing benchmarks for her life, including attending to the needs of her daughter and ultimately toward a career decision. Today she is functioning much better.

Rachel and Shirley represent a growing number of women in the Orthodox Jewish community who are faced with similar problems. The Fresh Start Training Program has provided them with a place where they could understand themselves, with the confidence

that the person behind the desk is interested in their welfare. The Agudath Israel program has been widely acclaimed in the community as having come to grips with an enormous need. To date, Fresh Start has placed nearly 300 women in jobs, and 200 are enrolled in skills training programs.

In analyzing the success of the agency, Miss Schmoockler stresses that "the fact that women are able to relate to our counselors because they are of similar background is important. The empathy and the commitment toward confidentiality are other factors that have contributed to the enormous confidence that women have in this program. The fact that it is an Agudath Israel agency that is providing this service is yet an additional caveat toward instilling confidence in women, who might otherwise not seek any assistance."

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AGUDATH ISRAEL WARNS MOTORISTS ON ORGAN DONORSHIP

Orthodox Jews were warned against checking off a new item on 1981 New York State drivers licenses on organ donation pledges, in a statement by Professor Aaron Twerski, chairman of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America. The New York State Department of Motor Vehicles has announced that it will include such an option on New York State licenses beginning in 1981 as a result of a New York State law, passed in 1975, and subsequent court orders. While the State delayed the implementation and instead issued a separate card, the Department of Motor Vehicles has now agreed to proceed with this new provision.

The statement by the head of the Agudath Israel Commission stressed that the law on organ donorship was intended to make it easier for drivers to will their organs in a tragic eventuality, but in no way was this law "mandatory." It recognizes that there are religious and ethical objections to posthumous removal of any organ. Motorists were warned to read their new drivers license carefully so that they do not accidentally check off the provision on organ donorship.

Agudath Israel had also taken up this issue at the highest level in Washington when the White House had considered putting its weight behind this effort to influence Americans to sign pledges on organ donorship. During this effort, the revered Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, chairman of the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* (Council of Torah Sages) of Agudath Israel, released a halachic missive against blanket organ donorship pledges. In a similar development, Agudath Israel continues its vigilance against efforts to define a time of death which is not in accordance with *halacha*.

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1,000 IN PIRCHEI AGUDATH ISRAEL TORAH PROJECT

A Torah project which involved more than 1000 youngsters as well as large numbers of parents and teachers throughout the United States ended this month with a huge celebration in the Agudath Israel Center of 14th Avenue in Boro Park. The event, sponsored by Pirchei Agudath Israel of America, was labeled a "Four-in-One" party to highlight the four unique Torah projects which were being celebrated at the festivities. 250 children from Lakewood, Elizabeth, Adelpia, North Bergen, Orange, Monsey, Philadelphia and all sections of New York City, marked the culmination of the nationwide Torah contest on *Kedushas Shabbos*, *Mishnayos Bifnim*, and *Hasmodoh* contests, in addition to award ceremonies to five outstanding Torah educators.

- In the *Kedushas Shabbos* contest, youngsters were encouraged to spend the long Shabbos afternoon during the Spring months (1980) studying Torah on their own. The results: yeshiva children learned between 10 and 150 hours each during the 8 week contest period. Some 60 youngsters topped the 50 hour mark.

- The results of the *Hasmodoh* contest, which gives recognition to independent study during the *Yomim Tovim*, were some 10,000

hours of independent Torah study accumulated by youngsters throughout the country. Pirchei Agudath Israel's *Mishnayos Bifnim* (from the text rather than by heart) saw the youngsters range between 500 and 2,200 *Mishnayos* each.

Rabbi Moshe Newmann, the Menahel of Bais Yaakov of Queens, and Mr. David Scheinfeld, the sponsor of the contest and the special awards for Torah educators, spoke at the New York celebrations, as did Rabbi Joshua Silbermintz, national director of Pirchei Agudath Israel. Similar festivities took place in Toronto and Baltimore.

- Pirchei Agudath Israel also honored five *rabbeim* (Torah educators) for their outstanding efforts in teaching Torah to youngsters. The program, which is sponsored by attorney David Scheinfeld, has now bestowed such honors on 22 Torah teachers, each of whom received a plaque and \$500 in cash awards. Nominations for the awards were solicited through principals, Roshei Yeshivos, and the administration of yeshivos. The *rabbeim* were judged for methodology and involvement with their students. This year's awardees were Rabbis Shimon Goldstein, Z. Quinn, Yisroel Gelbwachs, Zalman Dachs, and Mordechai Feder.

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RABBI SHACH TO FRENCH
 ORTHODOXY: UNITE BEHIND
 AGUDATH ISRAEL

PARIS. A strong appeal to the Orthodox Jewish community in France to unite behind the Agudath Israel movement was made by the revered head of the Ponovez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Rabbi Eliezer Shach. In a letter to the rabbinic and lay leadership of the French Orthodox community, the leader of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of Agudath Israel urges the community to unite behind Agudath Israel as a means of strengthening Torah in the European country.

In his letter, the famed international Torah scholar writes: "Experience has shown that in each place where Agudath Israel was established Judaism flourished and it also resulted in the growth of yeshivos and Beth Jacob institutions which succeeded in planting generations of G-d fearing Jews."

Rabbi Shach also alluded to the new efforts by the Agudath Israel World Organization under its chairman, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, to establish new Agudath Israel branches throughout Europe. He adds: "Since Agudath Israel resolved to expand its network of branches throughout the world, I urge you to join in this effort for the honor of Torah. Everyone for whom the fear of G-d is close to his heart has the obligation to join and to unite under the flag of Agudath Israel which was established by the Torah giants of the past generation."

A similar appeal was made by Rabbi Leib Gurewitz, Rosh Yeshiva of Gateshead and European member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah, who added: "The establishment of Agudath Israel is important since it keeps a constant vigil over the interests of Torah Jews."

The effort in France was stepped up by the European office of Agudath Israel in Zurich, headed by Rabbi Boruch Miller, following a successful whirlwind tour of France by Rabbi Sherer.

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AGUDATH ISRAEL CHIZUK PROGRAM HELPS RETURNING BAALEI TESHUVA

A growing number of *baalei teshuva*, educated in special yeshivos in Israel, are receiving assistance in readjusting to American life through Chizuk (The Torah Link), an agency of the recently reorganized New York Office of the Agudath Israel World Organization. The decision to create such an agency was adopted at last year's Sixth Knessia Gedolah, World Congress of Agudath Israel, which took place in Jerusalem. Chizuk's program includes providing adult Torah education on all levels of Jewish study, individual counseling, "chavrusahs," home hospitality, social services and a host of other important services.

According to Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, project director of Chizuk, the agency has (as of February 15) followed up on 25 such *baalei teshuva* since it was launched on October 13th. In addition, it is in the midst of assisting some 35 Jews who wish to become *baalei teshuva*. It has received more than 100 inquiries as a result of a series of ads which appeared in New York dailies inviting Jews to inquire about Jewish education programs or other questions pertaining to Judaism. One of the ads read, "A hotline to Judaism. Would you like some honest answers to questions about Judaism? Are you searching for a place to continue your Jewish studies on your own level? Would you like to participate in a unique Sabbath experience in a beautiful rural area less than one hour from New York City?" The response to this Jewish hotline was enormous and Chizuk is now following up on these inquiries.

The Chizuk program has particularly had an impact on many young college aged Jews. To Arnold, a 26 year old Columbia University student, Chizuk has become a place to become acquainted with his Jewish heritage. Arnold's previous experience in Jewish education was limited to a three year stint at a Talmud Torah prior to his bar mitzva. His mother is Jewish and while his father is not, Arnold is seeking to become closer to his heritage. He has spent numerous hours in discussion with the Chizuk staff.

For Jack, a 23 year old Queens College photo journalist student from Great Neck, the Chizuk encounter was by accident. Jack was preparing an article on the Teshuva movement without anticipating that as part of his assignment he would interview the Chizuk staff. Jack found himself asking questions about Judaism that had more relevance to himself than to the article. After spending a *Shabbos* in an Orthodox Jewish community, Jack is now considering enrolling in a yeshiva.

Jerold, also a Queens College student, visited Chizuk at the prodding of his girl friend Helen. He had become a "Messianic

Jew" and was convinced that he found the "true" form of Judaism. After coming with a stack of books in hope of persuading the Chizuk staff that his way of life was correct, Jerold is now a client of Chizuk and well on his way toward becoming a *baal teshuva*.

Despite Chizuk's involvement with many Jews who seek to become *baalei teshuva*, its primary function is to assist returning *baalei teshuva*. In a recent letter, Michael from California points out, "Although readjusting to American life was at times difficult, I will always regard my days in the yeshiva in Israel as the 'golden era' of my life, and I will always feel gratitude towards my *morim* at the yeshiva and all who made that experience possible." Michael goes on to plead with Chizuk to establish *shiurim* for him in the remote town in Middle America that he is presently living in.

Chizuk even received a frantic letter from a parent who learned about the Agudath Israel World Organization's project. She writes, "I am crying out for your help. Jack returned from Israel after spending almost two years there. He returned ultra-religious. We are not, nor do we care to be. He is trying to shove religion down our throats. The friction in this house is unbearable. I want to relocate my 21 year old Jack to New York immediately, if not sooner."

Chizuk Convenes Heads of Israeli and U.S. Baal Teshuva Yeshivos

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States, were mapped out at a conference of representatives of the leading Baal Teshuva yeshivos in Israel and the United States, held in New York under the auspices of Chizuk.

The meeting was attended by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach (Ohr Someach, Jerusalem), Rabbi Aryeh Carmel (D'var Yerushalayim, Jerusalem), Rabbi Yisroel Rokowsky and Rabbi Leib Tropper (Ohr Someach, Monsey), Rabbi Menachem Kessen and Rabbi Chaim Friedman (D'var Yerushalayim, New York), Rabbi Shmuel Brazil, Rabbi Adonia Kramer and Rabbi Yehoshua Kurland (Sh'or Yaa-shuv, New York), and members of the American committee of Chizuk.

As a result of this conference, the working arrangement between Chizuk and the Baal Teshuva yeshivos was strengthened and new opportunities will now be opened towards helping larger numbers of young Jewish adults return to their roots through reach out services and Torah study groups.



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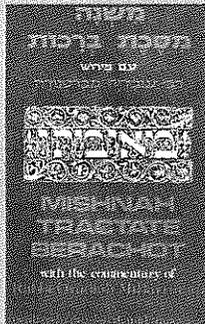
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