

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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Yisroel Reisman

"Chinuch"—The Training of Children: Whose Responsibility Is It?

When a Child Comes

A marriage is blessed with the arrival of a child. A husband and wife become parents and the couple becomes transformed into a family.

The new father's routine expands, but the entire focus of thought and activity of the mother is shifted to her new child. Yet the mother's total involvement in her child is hardly reflected in *halacha*. In fact the Talmud states, "A man is obligated to train his son in (the observance of) *mitzvos*, (but) a woman is not obligated to train her son" (*Nazir* 29a). This is a view taken by most¹ but not all² *poskim* (halachic authorities) as law. How strange that the mother, whose talents and energies are described by *Chazal* as the mainstay of a home and who truly contributes more than anyone else to the child's physical and spiritual growth, does not bear the primary responsibility for *chinuch*!

Actually the *mitzva* of *chinuch* itself is puzzling. It is undeniably a keystone in perpetuating Jewish life and values over the generations, yet the Talmud tells us that it is only rabbinic in origin (*Chagiga* 4a). None of the *Rishonim* (early commentators—11-15 centuries) count *chinuch* as one of the 613 Biblical commandments. The teaching of Torah to one's children—in contrast to *mitzva* observance—would seem to be a clear Biblical commandment: "And you shall teach them to your children" (*Devarim* 11-19; see also *Ramban* *ibid.*). The *Rishonim*³ do not even count this as a *mitzva* per se;

instead, they view this as part of the more general *mitzva* of *Talmud Torah*.⁴

The unique ability of our people to persevere and grow throughout generations of exile certainly stems from our obsessive dedication to the *chinuch* of our children. How strange that at the Giving of the Torah at Sinai, G-d did not specifically command us to ensure the continuity of generations!

"Chinuch": Two Understandings

In attempting to attain a deeper understanding of this *mitzva*, we come across two distinct explanations of *chinuch*.

While we generally define *chinuch* as training, the Torah uses *chinuch* as a term of *has'chala*—beginning.⁵ These two definitions parallel two distinct explanations of the *mitzva* of *chinuch*, as found in *Chazal*.

Some commentators⁶ see *chinuch* as an early beginning of *mitzva* fulfillment. Although a Jew is required to perform *mitzvos* beginning at age twelve (for girls) or thirteen (for boys), *chinuch* calls for these *mitzvos* to be performed at a younger age. According to this view, parental responsibility only extends to the mechanical performance of the deed.

Others⁷ see *chinuch* as the parent's obligation to make *mitzvos* and Torah values a part of their child's life, so that he will be accustomed, from an early age, to perform Hashem's *mitzvos* regularly and eagerly. Although this view certainly acknowledges mechanical *mitzva* observance as basic, the emphasis is placed on attitudes and feelings. Accordingly, a parent who cannot afford to buy his son a kosher *esrog* might be fulfilling his *chinuch* obligation by buying his son a flawed *esrog*⁸ (providing, of course, that his son is unaware of the imperfection).

Yisroel Reisman, a member of the Kollel of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, in Brooklyn, had a piece published in *AM HATORAH*, Zeirei Agudath Israel's Torah journal. This is his first appearance in *JO*.

Although this does not fulfill the technical requirements of the *mitzva*, the father is still training his son in being accustomed to perform *mitzvos*, which is his basic obligation.

In short, we can refer to these two aspects of *chinuch* as the "Mitzva observance"—or activity facet, and the "Torah value"—or moral facet. Involving a child in the mechanics of *mitzva* observance is not necessarily a Biblical obligation. This waits until maturity. It is the Torah-value aspect that would seem to be of utmost importance. So, while a child is technically incapable of moral intent in the performance of individual *mitzvos* (and, indeed, the Torah mandates no such morality⁹), a general education in moral values is most essential to his development as a Jew. This teaching of Torah-value morality to children may, indeed, be mandated by Torah law.

Pouring Foundations For Torah

G-d created man with many natural instincts. Among them—anger, haughtiness, lust—are some that we are taught to stringently avoid. Yet, nowhere in the Torah are we specifically commanded to distance ourselves from these *midos* (character attributes). This puzzling omission was explained by Rabbi Chaim Vital:¹⁰ "Proper *midos* provide the foundation for Torah. Without them, a Torah life would be unimaginable. Their acquisition, therefore, requires no specific commandment."¹¹ This observation can easily be applied to the Torah-value aspect of *chinuch* as well. At Sinai, G-d did indeed give *Klal Yisroel* the responsibility to pass down the Torah for all generations. But precisely because this is so self-evident, it was not specifically commanded.

The Sages of later generations simply added a second phase to the *chinuch* obligation, namely the technical inclusion of minors in *mitzva* observance. But the basic *chinuch* precept existed earlier.¹² We find that *Avraham Avinu* influenced vast multitudes to accept monotheism, converting these people into truly righteous men.¹³ Why do we find no reference to their descendants anywhere in the *Mesora* (tradition)? Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, שליט"א, pointed out that notwithstanding their righteousness, these men had failed to grasp the significance of *chinuch*.¹⁴ As a result, not one of their descendants perpetuated their convictions after the passing of Avraham and Sara.¹⁵ *Chinuch*, then, is the most basic lifeline of *Mesora*, surely a Torah foundation of the type explained by Rav Chaim Vital.

Allusion to the Heart

While a mother's role in *chinuch* is not specifically defined in the Talmud, it is alluded to: "Three partners form a human being—G-d, father and mother. The

father contributes the white, from which are formed the bones, sinews, nails, brain and white of the eye. The mother contributes the red, from which are formed the skin, flesh, hair and pupil of the eye. G-d gives the soul, etc."¹⁶

In Kabbalistic teachings, we find that white is symbolic of purity of thought;¹⁷ red and the faculty of vision are symbolic of proper action.¹⁸ Reb Tzaddok *Hakohein** explains this *Gemora* in a spiritual sense.¹⁹ He describes the father's contribution towards the development of his child as the *he'lem* i.e. implanting in the hidden depths of the mind of proper ideas and plans. Proper action, however, does not necessarily result from this knowledge.

The mother's contribution includes the formation of the heart—the center of a person's drives, emotions, and desires, which motivate him to act. Her task, referred to by Reb Tzaddok as the *nigleh*, is to inspire the child to transform the *he'lem* into physical action. Or, in the words of *Maharal*: "The task of a righteous woman is to prepare her offspring to accept and then apply Torah ethics and thought."²⁰

Sacred literature likens a woman to a garden (*Pirka d'Rav Eliezer*, Ch. 21). Just as a seed is planted into the earth of a garden, where it is nurtured and fed until it blossoms into a majestic tree, so too, does man contribute the seed from which a child is formed; but it is woman that G-d has blessed with the anatomy capable of nurturing that seed and forming it into a human being.

A Spiritual Garden

This analogy is true in the spiritual sense as well. As Reb Tzaddok explained, the father's *he'lem* role is to plant seeds of *chinuch* by giving his child the basic knowledge necessary for *mitzva* fulfillment. To accomplish this, it would be sufficient to acquaint a child with the mechanical observance of *mitzvos*. The mechanical *mitzva* observance of childhood, however, will not automatically guarantee that a child will continue to perform *mitzvos* as an adult. This is only a beginning aspect of *chinuch*.

The mother's role in forming a child, spiritually as well as physically, is far more complex. Hers is the training aspect of *chinuch* that will influence the child to want to do *mitzvos* . . . to appreciate *mitzvos* and Torah values. Her task is to imbue him with the feelings that will inspire him to act upon his father's teachings. She is to provide him with the moral basis in which Torah and *mitzvos* will take root and flourish.

When *Chazal* say that women are exempted from the *mitzva* of *chinuch*, they are referring to the *mitzva* observance aspect of *chinuch*, the mechanical part. The Torah-value aspect of *chinuch*, however, falls under her jurisdiction. This is the *chinuch* role whose paramount im-

⁹16th century Kabbalist, disciple of the *Ari Zal*.

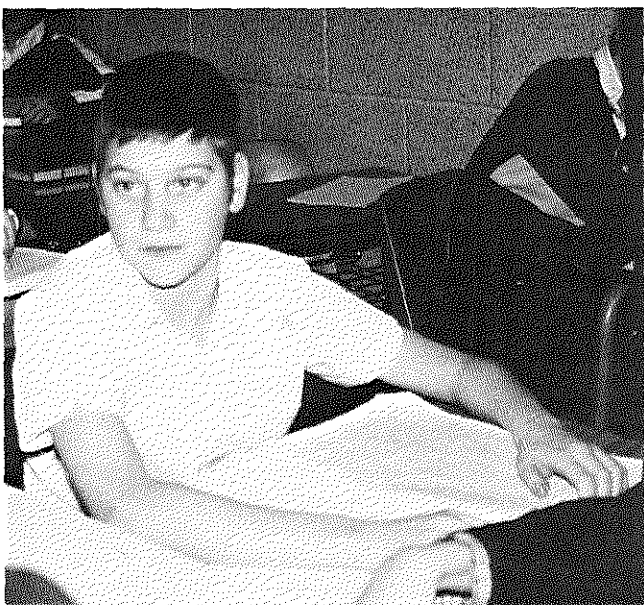
*Famed author of works on Kabbalistic themes, in 19th Century Lublin, Poland.

portance can be presumed to be such an obvious Torah foundation that it is not specifically commanded.

Just as G-d endowed woman with the anatomy necessary for the forming of a child, so too did He provide her with specific talents and abilities necessary for *chinuch habanim*. When Chazal describe women as "*dabraniyos*"²¹—more talkative—their intention is not to belittle them. The same applies for their observations that women are more shy,²² more merciful,²³ emotional,²⁴ and less physically active²⁵ than men. Although these factors may seem to handicap her, in truth they are invaluable tools necessary for her life role.

A Man's Faults, a Woman's Strengths

As Ramban²⁶ points out, a woman's tendency towards shyness is a positive attribute, not a fault. Her lack of aggressiveness and physical restlessness make her less likely to thrust herself into the competitive business world for personal fulfillment. Perhaps these very tendencies enable many a mother to ignore pressing tasks and deadlines to spend unhurried, unscheduled time with her children when they need it. "*Kol kevoda bas melech pnima*—the princess's glory is within" refers to woman's



unique ability to find her main satisfaction within the four walls of her home. This happiness is absorbed by her child, who has a keen awareness of his mother's feelings. Because she is more emotional and expresses her feelings more openly and readily, her attitudes have a profound impact upon the development of her child.

Have you ever stopped to observe a mother putter around the house with a toddler at her heels? Listen and you will hear her non-stop commentary on the work-

ings of a household and the mysteries of the grown-up world. Almost out of habit, she will describe each item she removes from the grocery bag, explaining its use as she puts it in its place. Now imagine his father unpacking the same bag of groceries. He will have the job done in half the time, but his child will be ignored during those few minutes. Our *nashim dabraniyos* have a natural quality that they use, almost subconsciously, to educate our children.

Indeed, the three basic qualities in which our nation prides itself—"*rachmanim, beishanim, v'gomlei chassadim*, being merciful, modest, and charitable"—are all attributes in which a mother excels. Her *chinuch* activities cultivate these values in the hearts of our children.

Failing To Grasp Her Significance

Today's society is seeking to obliterate the social implications of male-female differences. "Liberation" demands that women seek to overcome what they perceive as feminine handicaps. As much as we may recognize this attitude as inimicable to a Torah perspective, the values of the society around us invariably invade our own. The common perception of a housewife-mother as a maid-babysitter is diametrically opposed to Chazal's understanding of her role. A mother who stays home with her children should view herself as a full-time *mechaneches*—an educator of the young, not a simple babysitter.

A mother's failure to grasp the significance of her role can have a detrimental effect on her children. Aware of this, a mother who elects to go to work should make certain that her replacement, too, is a capable *mechaneches*. Parents who would shudder at the thought of sending their children to public schools, nevertheless allow people with hard secular values—even non-Jews—to tend their school-age children for many hours a week. Would this mother truly appreciate her child's needs and the ways in which she is constantly contributing to his development, she would select a baby sitter with much more care. This is not to say that a babysitter must be well educated—only that she have basic, simple, Torah-oriented values. And while it may not always be possible to obtain an observant babysitter, a *chinuch*-conscious mother should put every effort towards attaining this ideal.

Big Bird or "Imma"?

Because many women fail to see themselves as educators of their children, they often entrust this assignment to Sesame Street-type programs. Big Bird and Captain Kangaroo might indeed have training abilities in certain areas that are superior to those of many mothers, but those areas do not constitute *chinuch*. Children raised on the lap of their TVs often learn to

count at an early age and become conversant in many relatively worldly matters. But, experience has shown that these children are often lacking in many *midos*, notably *beishanus* (sense of shame) and *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven). While one may argue that educational programs can be beneficial as a supplement to *chinuch*, it is extremely difficult to limit such programs to a supplementary role. Children will absorb more from funny characters, bedecked in colorful costumes, than from low-keyed, one-to-one experiences in their homes. Unpacking a big of groceries can hardly seem exciting to a youngster accustomed to seeing Cookie Monsters and cartoon characters performing impossible feats. Professional educators perceive television as an impediment to *chinuch habanim*. If mothers saw themselves as educators, perhaps they too would feel that way. Again, the child is hurt by his mother's failure to appreciate her own importance.

Hakodosh Baruch Hu has blessed every child with a thirst for knowledge and a strong desire to imitate the grown-ups around him. These are his tools for building a proper foundation for his life. A parent-*mechanech* must supervise the use of these tools. This constant vigilance often causes inconveniences, but the rewards are great. As *David Hamelech* said, "Those who sow with tears shall reap with joy." Is there another harvest in life that is more important? ❏

SOURCES

¹Tosefos Yeshanim Yuma 82a; Terumas Hadeshen 94; Magen Avraham 343:1; Birkei Yosef, *ibid*; S.A. Harav, *ibid*; Kaf Hachaim, *ibid*; Matei Efraim 616:6.

²Orech Mishor, Nazir 29a; Aruch Hashulchan 343:1

³Sefer Hachinuch 419; Rambam, Asei 11; Yereim 254; Rav Sadya Gaon 14

⁴See Rabbi Yerucham Perlow's commentary to Rav Saadya Gaon Vol. 1, p. 234

⁵Bereishis 14:14; Devarim 20-25; Rashi in both places

⁶Magen Avraham 658:8; Igros Moshe Y.D. 137

⁷Rashi, Sukka 2b; Rav Meno'ach, Comm. to Rambam Shvisas Asor 2:10

⁸See Mishnah Berurah 658:28; Biyur Halacha 657

⁹Turei Even to Chagiga 6b

¹⁰Quoted in introduction to Sefer Even Shlomo

¹¹Quoted from Koveitz Mamarim, p. 34

¹²Rav Meno'ach, Comm. to Rambam, Shvisas Asor 2:10

¹³Tifferes Tzion, Lech Lecha 39:21

¹⁴M.T.J. Melave Malka Address, 1976

¹⁵Artscroll Bereishis, footnote to 12:5

¹⁶Nidda 310

¹⁷Maharal, Gevuros Hashem Ch. 28

¹⁸Alshich on Shmuel 1 Ch. 16, v. 12; Abarbanel, *ibid*.

¹⁹Dover Tzeddek 22:1

²⁰Drashos Maharal p. 28

²¹Berachos 48b

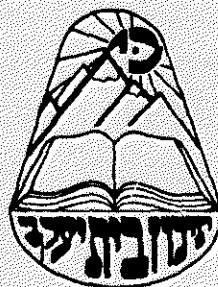
²²Kesubos 67a; Yevamos 42a

²³Megilla 14b

²⁴Lekach Tov on Esther

²⁵Yerushalmi, Pesachim 1:4

²⁶Ramban, Bereishis 3:16



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THE JEWISH OBSERVER has had frequent occasion to write about great men who succeeded in elevating themselves through living a Torah existence, and at the same time, changed the world around them. It is not often, however, that we focus on the women who were part of their lives and shared in their achievements. Such an occasion arises with the recent passing of REBBITZEN SARAH YAFFEN ^{ע"ה}, the late daughter of the famed Alter of Novarodok, Rabbi Yoseif Yoizel Horowitz ^{זצ"ל} (JO Feb. '77), who founded a network of Yeshivos in pre World War I Eastern Europe. The Alter was succeeded by his son-in-law, the late Rabbi Avrohom Yaffien ^{זצ"ל}— who headed the Novarodok Yeshivos in the 1920's and 30's and then, after World War II, brought the Novarodok tradition to America in the form of the Yeshiva Bais Yoseif, in Brooklyn—(See JO July '70). Rabbi Yaffien was succeeded by his son, Rabbi Yaakov Yaffien ^{של"ט"א}, and his recently niftar (deceased) son-in-law, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Nekritz ^{זצ"ל}.

In these pages we offer a sketch of an unusual woman whose lifetime spanned a full century and was deeply involved in the development of the Mussar Movement from Novarodok to Bialystok, from Siberia to Boro Park to Jerusalem: in many respects, the Jewish woman par excellence. The following appreciation of Rebbitzin Yaffien was penned by her granddaughter, MRS. SHOSHANA (NEKRITZ) PERR.

And Sarah Was Listening . . .



Rebbetzin Yaffien at a grandchild's wedding, with her late son-in-law Rabbi Yehuda Nekritz and her late cousin, Rabbi Chaim Schmulevitz ^{זכרונם לברכה}.

"You'll come back for Shalosh Seudos," my hostess said. This was her son's Bar Mitzva weekend, and I quickly agreed. "It's for women only and you'll speak," she added, half jokingly.

I wasn't sure of her seriousness or of my ability to prepare something relevant. I did think of an intriguing Vort from one of the speeches delivered at the Bar Mitzva. . . . Fine. I knew my topic, but something was upsetting me. How could I tell over that which had been spoken publicly? Wasn't it demeaning to assume that no one listened? Why is it a given that women rarely listen to a speech delivered at a simcha, actively enjoying conversation of their own? Is it because they never have to tell over a Vort? Is it because they're seldom asked to speak? Because they are unburdened by the expectation of having to listen? Is it a habit learned from having to strain to hear behind a separating mechtza?

Yet the Torah's presentation of woman is quite different: ושרה שמעת פתח האהל "And Sarah was listening at the opening . . ." says the Pasuk (Bereishis 18, 10)—whenever she could, wherever there was an opportunity, an opening.

The mystery and power of flowing thought is such that one idea follows another in a system of its own, not always easy to connect. And so the searching for a topic, my disturbance, the pasuk bearing Sarah's name suddenly conjured up the image of my grandmother and gave me a topic I could use without misgivings.

Bobba at the Opening

I always saw her listening at the doorway, at the table, in a crowd or one-to-one. And she was never asked to speak or to "say over," so there my theory evaporates into thin air.

It's true my Bobba always peeked behind the curtains, always managing to hear, to listen. Nothing ever stood in Bobba's way.

She listened with an avid interest, with a thirst, though never formally schooled—as she herself would often tell me. "I know nothing on my own. That which I know is only what I heard from my father, the Rosh Yeshiva (as she called her husband), *Talmidei Chachomim*,"¹ the many who frequented her home, and the *bachurim* she loved as much as her own children.

She gave the credit of all she was to the *Mussar* she had heard.² The effect of *Mussar*, even the casual conversation, the small talk, had made an uneducated woman into what she had become.³

But the key word was *שמיעה*—listening. She always listened, expecting to understand, questioning if she didn't, criticizing that which she didn't like, adding her own, enjoying fully the good Vort, the *bon mot*, the cleverness, and the depth, the originality and the message. My Bobba Yaffén, how I suddenly missed her!

Story after story, memory after memory continued with the slower speed of memory which lingers, pains,

Mrs. Perr, a frequent contributor to these pages, is Program Director of Camp Bnos in Liberty, NY, a counselor and therapist with Torah Umesorah Counterforce Program, and is currently in private practice.

when one is gone. Memory excites in its sharpness, sketching the person in indelible strokes.

The Rebbe's "Smicha"

My grandmother and the Gerrer Rebbe . . . a story I had not witnessed, but heard first hand. My grandparents moved to *Eretz Yisrael* in their later years, to 11 Slonim, in Me'ah She'arim.

Varied visitors passed through that *pesach*, that opening, each with a history and relationship of his own. Many came from the same world of Torah and *Mussar*, others from a different world with a history and tradition of their own.

The Gerrer Rebbe came to visit my grandfather, Reb Avrohom Yaffén. Bobba asked the Zaide to speak to the Rebbe on the behalf of someone needy—asking a favor. They spoke of many things. But the Zaide had his own reason for not asking the Rebbe for the favor. The Bobba, listening in the kitchen, realized that the request would not be made and came in to ask herself. The *Gabbai* tried to stop her, saying, "The Rebbe doesn't speak to women." She gently, but no less firmly, quieted the *Gabbai* and then made her request. . . . "Things were different with my father," she commented.⁴

My husband had the *zechus* of visiting privately with the *Beis Yisrael* (the Gerrer Rebbe) sometime later. The most animated part of the conversation, he told me, was when the Rebbe raised the subject of the Bobba.

"I hold her to be a real *Rosh Yeshivta*," he said with a twinkle.

The "Rosh Yeshivta"—Don't be mistaken. You had to hear my Bobba speak about *Di Menner* (the men). Her face lit up as she would say, "They're home"—from *shul*, from learning, from important meetings. Her face lit up with love and awe and expectation of their being what they ought to be, bringing home the words, the information she would love to listen to, think about, internalize, transform into her own.

"Never let your husband carry out the garbage," she taught me as a girl. "Let him help you in other ways, you'll be greater when he is greater," she said, stretching my girlish imagination.

To Receive in Order to Give

Someone asked if a *Baal Mussar* gives *Mussar* or receives it. The Bobba was adept at both.

The Zaide once referred to the long hot trips he had made between Williamsburg and the Yeshiva in Boro Park during

The way Bobba said it (in Yiddish):

- (1) איך ווײס גארנט נאר וואס איך האב געהערט פון מיין טאטן, פון דעם ראש ישיבה אין פון בני תורה.
- (2) גיב א קוק וואס די שיחת הולין פון מוסר אין.
- (3) איך בין אין עם הארציגע און איך בין און אוי.
- (4) ביי מיין טאטן האב איך נישט אוי געזעהן.

the summer months. Bobba sighed, "For the amount of work that was invested, there could have been more success."

"Sha," said the Zaide. "Against whom are you complaining?"

She was later to repeat to great-grandchildren the Zaide's critique, the Zaide's *Mussar*—the challenge of purity in *middos* (character), the challenge of *emuna* (faith).

When she gave *Mussar*, she gave it with a flourish. From our end, it was called receiving a *cheilek*, a portion.

A cousin related that, when he was a teenager learning in Eretz Yisroel, the Alter's *Yahrtzeit* was commemorated with fifteen *shmuessen* (talks) held in various *Mussar* institutions. He and a cousin, a grandchild of a different branch of the family tree, slipped out during the tenth *shmuess*. Nothing escaped the Bobba's eyes. The next day she called him in and gave him a *cheilek*:

"The Alter's *aynikul* (grandchild) missing a *shmuess*?" she chastised sharply, demanding absolute devotion.

"But Bobba," he insisted, "the cousin also left."

"He's not an *aynikul*."

The Legacy

She made us into *aynik'lach* by giving us over the legacy, by constantly demanding. Whenever questioned about the Alter, she should share her recollections in minute detail, but then add: "What's the good of telling stories if you don't learn from them?"⁵

To be an *aynikul* was to inherit an obligation, a responsibility. It was never to be used as an object of pride.

The Bobba always spoke of growth, of *shteiging*; moving, reaching, growing was the challenge.⁶ . . . Before his wedding, it was the *brocha* of *shteigen* that she bestowed upon her great-grandson.

But Bobba would explain, "One must grow—but when you grow make sure it's upwards, never in breadth, never crowd someone else's space."⁷

Someone explained at *Shiva*—using a metaphor from that week's *Perek*—that in the process of *Mesora*, all that one has received is given over. The Bobba was transmitter of the *Mesora* of the Alter . . . the Alter's in spirit, if not in form.

A noted *Rosh Yeshiva* used to say in his *shmuessen* that *bitachon* (faith) was difficult to achieve. Upon hearing this from him, Bobba said to him, "My father said that *bitachon* can be easily acquired."

Those who heard the *Rosh Yeshiva's* later *shmuessen* noticed the change: He said *bitachon* can be easily acquired.

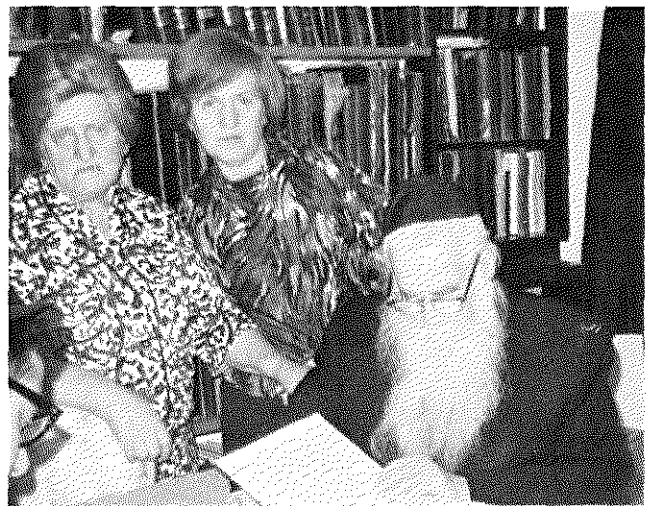
My favorite story, which she told over about her father, the Alter of *Novarodok*, was of a night they spent together when she was a child. Sitting in the dark because there was no money to buy the necessary kerosene, he comforted the family by saying, "Think how fortunate we are, how rich. If we had money we would use it to buy kerosene, but we could never buy the precious experience of not having, for all the money in the world."

With these words he captured her spirit and fired her imagination for a lifetime. Sarah listened and was to give over.

She taught me the ins and outs of the *Machzor* as I sat next to her *Yomim Noraim* on the radiator; chairs were needed for the women in the *Ezras Noshim* of Bais Yoseif. She was proud of keeping up with the *tzibbur*, adroitly turning pages in the *Machzor*. She knew which *pesukim* were repeated, which *piyutim* were deleted, when the *shatz* precedes the *tzibbur*, when the *tzibbur* precedes the *shatz*.

Shavuos night, a highlight of the year, she first prepared the food at home for those who would return to find it early in the morning. She took me along, at twelve or one in the morning to watch *di Menner* at their best, learning in the *Beis Midrash*—totally involved in the *Milchamto shel Torah*—the forays of Talmudic battle. She gazed at them with love and pride and helped me see them through her eyes.

Yet she was down to earth and practical. I'd often hear her say, "A normal person is a precious commodity."⁸



Rebbetzin Yaffan with her daughter, Rebbetzin Esther Nekritz שתיהן, and her late husband Rabbi Avrohom Yaffan זצ"ל, in their Jerusalem home.

A Matter of Will

"Nothing can stand in the way of determination,"⁹ she would always say . . . and we would see it in her will power, her own determination. It was the Bobba who published my grandfather's five *seforim* after his *petira* (passing), insisting: "The man is the book and the book is the man."¹⁰

She demonstrated will power even as it applied to life itself. "I cannot" didn't exist in her vocabulary.¹¹ She recognized the failure to do as a failure of will.

(5) אבער וואס איז די פעולה אז מען לערענט זיך נישט אפ?

(6) נישטא בלויבען אויפן זעלבן ארט.

(7) וואקסען אין דער הייך נישט אין דעם ברייט—נישט שמופין יענעם.

(8) א נארמאלער מענטש איז א יקר המציאת.

(9) אין דבר עומד בפני הרצון.

(10) דער ספר איז דער טאטע, דער טאטע איז דער ספר.

You had to see the Bobba cross a busy intersection. "Wait for the light," I would shout after her, glued to the corner, holding my breath." Bobba forged ahead, sure of her purpose. "They'll wait for me," she would retort. They always did.

Gilding the Mitzva

She took pride in a well-set table, not to impress, but to invite, to say "We cared that you came, we value your presence."

She was a lady that always dressed with care and taste. To Bobba it was more than just the innate feminine desire to look presentable. It was a part of *Kiddush Shem Shomayim* of *Kavod haTorah*.

"I always sought *di shenste un di beste*—the best *shidduchim* for the *talmidim* of the yeshiva," she told us with pride, "so that everyone would recognize their value, the esteem and honor they deserve."

My *cheilek* came in young adulthood. I complained to the Bobba about the arduous and draining ordeal of *shidduchim*.

"You don't appreciate the singular opportunity of speaking with a *talmid Chacham*, one immersed in Torah study?"¹² she demanded. She was telling me to listen once again. She changed my attitude to dating completely. The next young *talmid chacham* who called encountered a most receptive audience, someone who listened with rapt attention to the words of a potential *gadol*.

She groomed me for the hardships that are part of public life. "To be a leader," her father had taught her, "one must be capable of swallowing nails"—swallowing, injustice, insults and jealousies. She would repeat his words: "A person must be able to get along even with the Devil or risk the possibility of becoming a devil himself."

When Rabbi Yechezkel Sarna, the late Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron, would visit my grandfather, he would say, "I came to see Reb Yoizel," referring to my Bobba. My grandfather would smile with pleasure—and Bobba would protest. "The Mumme" (aunt) was Bobba's title in the Mir Yeshiva family—she was the Mumme of the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Chaim Shmulewitz. Her sister was Rabbi Chaim Shmulewitz's mother.

Matzah Without Tears

My grandfather, זצ"ל was *niftar* Erev Pesach 1970. My brother, who was learning in *Eretz Yisroel* at the time, told me that when lighting the candles, Bobba cried, but then she pulled herself together and with a strength reminiscent of her father, the Alter of Novarodok, she bid the grandchildren to proceed with the *seder*, to sing all the songs without deletions. She never left the table till the very end. From upstairs, where other relatives lived, my brother heard weeping, but downstairs where the Bobba sat, a *seder* was celebrated, as every other year.

After her husband's *petira*, it was her *kollel* behind her house that gave her *chiyus*. She listened to the sounds of Torah, *tefilla*, *Tehillim*, and *Mussar* around the clock.

She had helped her father. She had helped her husband. But now she felt that she alone bore the primary obligation to continue the heritage of Novarodok. She assumed the responsibility of supporting the *Kollel* of Torah and *Mussar* with all her ingenuity and all her strength.



Recent photograph of Rebbeztzin Yaffan.

"Listen to the sound of *Mussar* being learned!" she'd say with pride to visiting guests. She served a *kiddush*, she made the *cholent*, taking pleasure in giving out little sweets to the children of the *Bnei Torah* in the *Kollel*.

"She never missed a *tefilla*, three times a day," wrote a grandchild in a letter. "Even in the end, when she could no longer see and we davened with her, if it chanced that someone missed a word, she would correct us."

My father spoke of her as his mother, remembering how she gave him money for a tailored suit when he was a *chassan*, though there was no money to make a dress for her to wear at the occasion.

In the hospital they called her the *Chachoma*, the *Pikchit*—she charmed the nurses. Yet we were moved by her *emuna peshuta*, her simple faith.

A group of seminary girls who kept the Bobba company during their free time and had become attached to her, came in to wish Bobba a good year on Erev Rosh Hashana. They wished her nachas from her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

"Wish me nachas from all *Bnei Torah*," she corrected them. "All *Bnei Torah* are my children."

(11) נישטא איך קען נישט—סיאז דא איך וויל ניט.
(12) עס פאסט דיר נישט צו פארברענגען מיט א תלמיד חכם?

She Taught Us ...

My sister thought that Bobba would surely live to greet *Moshiach*, taking us along with her.

"What can we learn from Bobba?" my sister asked the children gathered round about her in a circle. "What can't we learn from Bobba?" said one great-grandchild in a comeback reminiscent of the Bobba.

Someone seeking to comfort the mourning family said soothingly, "The Bobba will be a *Malitz Yosher* for her children, for *Klal Yisroel*. She'll beseech, she'll beg to *Hashem Yisborach* to grant them what they need."

"Not the Bobba," said another grandchild. "She won't beseech, she won't beg—she'll demand, as she did on earth."

"She didn't demand returning to yesterday—to live in the past," said a great-grandchild. "She lived in the present, and was interested in every detail of the current yeshiva world; growth, problems, successes, rising stars. The world of today was her world."

"*Bas kuf k'bas kof*—at 100 years like at 20," a grandson eulogized. "She lived such a meaningful life. *Bas kof k'bas zayin*—at 20 like a seven year old—combining a maturing strength of will with the freshness of youth that always seeks to know. . . ."

Indeed, her mind stayed clear up to the end, as is written about *talmidei chachomim*: Their mind stays clear, their thoughts unconfused, their convictions strengthened through life's experiences, even when advancing in age.

• • •

Overflowing with subject matter, charged with emotion, I arrived late for the *Shalosh Seudos* Celebration of the Bar Mitzva.

"The guest speaker has arrived," I said with a smile.

"I would never do that to you, Shonnie," my friend said reassuringly.

Late that night I felt grateful to my friend because it was the energy and power of the unspoken words that produced this memoir. ד

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Time For Personal Growth

Every woman requires some time for herself to help her discover the spiritual core in the midst of material pursuits.

"From the Diary of Mrs. M..."

(The Seventeenth of Iyar)

"I'm trying to find the time to hear myself think. Instead, a constant stream of actions seems to play itself out in front of me. . . . Looking back, the characters seem almost stage-like. I grasped this moment to stop and think why I perform these steps in a robot-like ballet. . . . When will the constant present be fused with the eternal goals we set for ourselves? Will I ever see a connection between the two almost-completely-diverse worlds?"

Values in Collision

There is a connection between the spiritual and physical realms, not to be fully understood until *Moshiach's* time. Yet everyone strives to see how the two are interrelated, to recognize the ever-present redeeming spirituality in the material. This is a particularly difficult challenge for a woman. She's more deeply involved in the material-physical world. Her goal, of course, is to elevate her sphere of activity in the material world yet many women do not actualize their potential to do so. The values of the contemporary secular world, which emphasize that a woman's place is definitely *not* in the home, may well be a major complicating factor in this dilemma. But regardless of where the cause may lie, this dilemma does exist and many women do attempt to cope with this problem.

Dealing with two sets of value systems—the secular and non-secular, which are often diametrically opposed to each other—can indeed cause tension, especially when a woman feels torn by the desire to cater to both worlds. There is no shortage of such conflicts: the desire to be strikingly fashion-wise or "sensible" . . . the denigration of a woman working in and with her home as opposed to outside activity. . . . Even the "super-baal habosta" syndrome, though it has its roots in a positive

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Jewish value, can also cause tension, for "nothing is ever clean enough." The crucial concern of the sanctity of family life becomes overshadowed by anxiety over the mess that children make. The disorder brings anguish to the mother, who often directs her resentments against her children. . . . When any single value is unduly stressed, desirable Jewish goals become de-emphasized as a result. Even the pre-occupation with the technicalities of child-rearing and housekeeping can eclipse a woman's creativity.

Time For Reflection

One way to deal with these conflicts and the tensions they produce is to follow a long-standing practice. Just as a man, by requirement, sets aside regular times for Torah study and contemplation every day, so should a woman create an island of time for herself, even on a busy day. This tranquil period in the midst of daily turbulence is a "*Shabbos*" of sorts, which can elevate the rest of the day, as *Shabbos* elevates the six week days of material involvement. It offers a woman a chance to reflect on her life more objectively, and help improve her sense of a deeper self. When the great *Mussar* teachers and Chassidic mentors call for *hisbonenus*, *hisbodedus*, or *cheshbon hanefesh*—various forms of introspection—their words speak to all humankind, women as well as men.

To carve out time for such purposes on a daily basis calls for great discipline. But, then again, no masterpiece was ever created without discipline and diligence—how much more so when the masterpiece is one's own *neshama*. Moreover, the emotional calm gained from truly hearing oneself and attaining some objectivity is a desired end unto itself.

A woman's exemption from performing time-bound *mitzvos* gives her the opportunity to use her time in a more unlimited, flexible sense. She should nonetheless structure this time and set up her daily schedule to comfortably fit in a period for herself and her spiritual concerns. Without disciplining one's hours, the days and years become an endless merry-go-round. Once a year, with the arrival of *Yomim Noraim* and the New Year, one

looks at the completed year in retrospect, and one month seems to melt into the other, only distinguished by *Yomim Tovim* and children's illnesses.

Enhancing Everyday Activities: Personal Spirituality . . .

This "time for myself" can be used in various ways, not the least of them *tefilla* (prayer) and Torah study. The significance of woman's *davening* and learning is not to be underestimated. At the outset, these activities may be difficult and unrewarding, but if one views involvement in spiritual endeavors as being compared to exercising a muscle, one's attitude can change. Once it becomes a regular experience, daily immersion in thought and prayer will become much easier. And when one eventually finds sufficient time to *daven* with depth, the experience will be realized much more easily, especially after having made recitation of the *Shemoneh Esrei** a daily practice.

Studying the Torah also has very strong ramifications in one's daily life. As Ben Bag-Bag said: "Learn it and learn it (the Torah), for everything is in it; look deeply into it . . . for there is nothing more edifying for you than it" (*Avos* 5, 25). Women are required to fulfill the *mitzvos* of loving G-d and fearing Him and studying those aspects of Torah that promote feelings of love and awe are surely in order. The Chofetz Chaim said that a woman is permitted to study those areas of Torah that inspire her to greater love of G-d, and she is to be commended for such learning.

Women's groups all convene the weeks before Pesach to review the festival's countless laws. But there are other *mitzvos*. How much more meaningful are the *mitzvos* of *Shabbos* and *kashrus* with a more in-depth knowledge of their laws. Studying the *halachos* not only guides a woman in faithful performance of halachic obligations, it also highlights the importance of significant details that might otherwise seem trivial. Only through study can one appreciate how meaningful every factor in *mitzva* observance truly is. This involvement in Torah cannot help but bring benefit to the entire family, since Torah is the essence of goodness.

Creating Goals

One may complain that this idea sounds desirable in theory, but is difficult to carry out practically. This need not be so, since the scheduling and selection of a mode of study is really up to every individual. Besides the obvious *shiur* at night, one mother at home can team up

with another mother in a similar circumstance to study together on the telephone or in person when the children are in school, when the baby usually naps, or when the respective fathers are able to take over at night. . . . Or a woman can make time when she knows that she cannot do housework, and would otherwise read the paper or a novel for a short break. The frequency of such sessions would of course depend on each person's particular schedule.

Learning that is geared toward a goal usually brings the most satisfaction. Starting a *sefer* with hopes of finishing it, is usually a formula for frustration. It is much more realistic to concentrate on selected chapters of a *sefer* that you both find of interest, on certain commentaries on the *Chumash*, or the appropriate *Megillah* with *Rashi* before a *Yom Tov*, making sure to allow ample time to finish in a certain time period. Limited goals usually bring the best results because they are achievable, and with each completion comes an exhilarating sense of satisfaction and a better sense of self, adding positive reinforcement to future learning efforts.

Working With Creativity

So many women possess gifts of creative expression—be they musical, artistic, literary, or in other realms. But once they marry and involve themselves completely with their families, they seem to neglect developing these talents. A woman need not exclude this vital aspect of herself, but should rather channel it in a disciplined manner along the lines described previously in regard to other positive endeavors. Besides providing a sense of catharsis and offering a format for venting the frustrations of the day, being able to create is a special feature of a woman's makeup, and she can derive spiritual strength from creative activity. These talents can be used to bring joy to the entire family and invigorate an otherwise mundane day for children as well. Even though creativity tends to follow some internal stimulus, time structure and specific reachable goals can make the activity more meaningful.

"Chessed"—Even Without Organizations

Life's more conventional areas should also be explored for enhancement. When one mentions *chesed*, for instance, one usually thinks of intricate organizations with time-consuming activities, often involving work outside of the home, so one often abstains from them, no matter how worthy or important they may be. Whether or not this reaction is justified, there are some immediate forms of *chesed* that we all engage in that are so close that we tend to ignore them completely. One need not live in a Third World country to find opportu-

*This is keeping with the *Rambam's* view that women should say at least one *Shemoneh Esrei* daily.

ities to help others. Every individual has areas that need *chizuk*—encouragement, help, or comfort. Servicing them begins with looking at the other person and thinking: "What can I do to help him/her?" Thought soon finds oral expression, and when one's speech reflects such concerns, replacing mere small talk spoken to fill empty gaps of time, that is truly an achievement . . . How many hours a day do we find ourselves speaking "eloquent soliloquies" whose basic purpose is meaningless?

How does one begin? Won't the intrusion be resented? A person with sensitivity does not have to wait to be asked. Not only is this emotional reach-out a vehicle for *kiruv rechokim*—extending oneself to help fellow Jews alienated from *Yiddishkeit*—it can be a vital help to those closest to us. As a matter of halachic precedent, the needy of your family take top priority, while the poor of your city take precedence over those of other communities. This giving of ourselves to others is important enough for every one of us to spare some time and talent to pursue. In addition, on a personal level of growth, cultivation of this intimate type of *chessed* elevates daily physical endeavors, and gives more purpose to our temporal lives. (This is the כח הנתינה power of giving, that Rabbi Dessler so often stressed.)

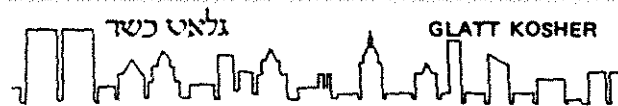
The Real Agenda

Growth, self-actualization, fulfillment of potential, development of innate talents—these are within the reach of every woman. These pursuits can enhance a woman in her role as *akeres habayis*—the mainstay of the home, in a truly Jewish sense. When a woman—any person, for that matter—feels better about herself emotionally and spiritually, her attitude toward life becomes completely transformed. The employment world offers workers a coffee break. We too need the respite during our daily chores to be more productive in the work schedule that follows. How many women, after a day of being super *baal-haboste* or fashion plate, and after having thought and spoken for hours of things that were truly of no consequence (sometimes *lashon hora* besides), feel a deep emptiness within them? They then look at their children as being a mere appendage to the house; or they lie down to read a novel or watch television, because their minds had been too empty all day to really sense their ultimate purpose or worth, and feel no need to crown the day with some elevating activity. Why does the beauty of her role with her family escape her? Are perhaps the fleeting moments of this true satisfaction so evasive because of her unending ride on a merry-go-around of *hevel* (hollow pursuits)? If someone feels that she did all the "right things" but still finds that something is lacking, that lack is a sense of purpose. The material needs were fed, but not the *neshama*. Even children are not appreciated and enjoyed, for being in the way of "what we have to do."

The Keys

The keys to a meaningful existence, then, are goal-setting and structure. On the most practical level, being organized helps give purpose to daily activity. By being a "program planner," you can derive a great sense of satisfaction when schedules are met: Moments of your life are not merely passing unimportant time slots, but are parts of an organized whole, when you take charge. The special moments reserved for "positive outlets" inspire an awareness of fleeting moments of time. With this, a woman can re-awaken herself to periodically examine her individual life and see where improvements can be made. This not only promotes an advance in a spiritual sense, but constitutes a leap forward for the emotional self. Each person needs to search herself and see where she can best utilize a "positive outlet." This search will result in an elevation of each of us in our individual lives.

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Fraida Blau

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Housewife ... Mother ... Secretary ... Administrator ... Storekeeper ... Saleslady ... Think for a moment. When was the last time you opened a *sefer*? Was it yesterday? Last week? Or was it perhaps years ago—when you last studied for your final exams?

Unfortunately, many girls view their Bais Yaakov diplomas as a formal farewell to serious Torah study. After all, they assume, women have no obligation to learn Torah, and therefore are exempt from this, our greatest *mitzva*.

Torah is the life force of Judaism that forms us into a unique and holy people, and is meant to be studied by women, too. Every word, every letter is filled with *kedusha* and has a profound influence on the *neschama* of anyone who engages in its study. Women are not without this need.

A Share in the Merit

In fact, the *Gemora* in *Brachos* asks, "What merit do women possess [to be revived at *techiyas hameisim*—when the dead will be resurrected]?" The *Gemora* replies: "They permit their husbands to study Torah and await their homecoming, and they accompany their children to *cheder*."

Mrs. Blau, a Monsey housewife, is indebted to her husband, Rabbi Nosson Binyomin Blau, for the sources on which this article is based.

Asks the *Tashbatz*, "Why not credit them with the merit for the many *mitzvos* that are unique to them?"—and then explains: "While it is true that women do perform many *mitzvos*, the Torah is so vital for eternal life that we must find a *mitzva*-activity directly connected to Torah-study as a prime source of merit for them."

In the time of the *Gemora*, women apparently gained sufficient knowledge and inspiration from their environment and non-structured activity to lead a Torah life without resorting to formal study, but they still required Torah study as a vital source of merit, and for this they relied on their indirect involvement. Today, such a level of involvement may not be sufficient.

This is not as radical as it may sound, for in truth, women have been actively involved in some form of Torah study for millennia. They were included in the *mitzva* of *Hakheil*, when every seven years, men, women, and children gathered in Jerusalem to hear the king read *Mishna Torah* (*Sefer Devarim*). The men came to learn, we are told, while the women were expected to listen—a term that implies comprehension, not just hearing. The impact of the knowledge and inspiration of that gathering was strong enough to last seven years.

The *Sefer Chassidim* points out that some women made Torah study a more frequent experience. When the Shunamite woman told her husband that she was going to see the Prophet Elisha, he questioned her: "Is today

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then *Rosh Chodesh* or *Shabbos* that you are going to hear a Torah lecture?" Apparently, it was her practice to attend Torah lectures regularly.

There are other indications throughout Jewish literature of women's involvement in study, such as the reference to the cannisters that served as "traffic dividers," to prevent the mingling of men and women—during Torah lectures, according to some commentaries. Obviously, the women of Talmudic times attended Torah classes in sufficient number and frequently enough to warrant such safeguards. (*Kiddushin* 81)

Beyond the Exemption

There is plenty of evidence in historical sources that Jewish women were always literate, for they were tutored by their mothers, aunts, or grandmothers. Only formal classroom education did not exist in earlier millennia.

Today, too, Torah study should be part of a woman's routine. Every morning, both men and women are required to recite the *bracha* "la'asok B'divrei Torah—to be occupied with the words of Torah." Not focused on merely listening to Torah, the *bracha* emphasizes being actively engaged in Torah study. True, the *Siddur* provides everyone, man and woman, with minimum Torah passages to follow the *bracha*, but there is certainly more for every person to study as is required for most men, and as is recommended for most women.

This may seem to be in direct contradiction to the classic *drash* on the *pasuk*, "You should teach your sons (*Devarim* 6:7)—but not your daughters." This limitation, however, refers to the Oral Law, which women are not obligated to study in the same manner as men are. But women are obligated to study those matters that pertain to them, says the *Bais Yosef*. In fact, *Sefer Chassidim* maintains that a father is *required* to teach his daughter *halacha*, and rather than limit himself to those areas that pertain exclusively to women, he should guide her to mastery of all *halachos* that apply to her. As verification, the author cites the description of the high level of Torah scholarship during the time of *Chizkiyahu*: Everybody, including women and children, knew the laws of

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THE CHOFETZ CHAIM ON WOMEN'S TORAH STUDY

It would seem to me that this (limitation on women's study of Torah) only pertains to those times when everyone lived in the same place that his ancestors lived, and the ancestral tradition was very strong for each individual. This motivated him/her to conduct his/her life in the ways of his forefathers. Nowadays, however, when the tradition of forefathers has weakened and many people do not live close to their parents, and especially in view of the many who have had a secular education, it is necessary to teach them the entire Bible, Mussar, Avos, Menoras Hamaor (ethical writings of our sages), and so on, so they will be strong in the principles of our holy faith. Otherwise, G-d forbid, they may totally abandon the path of G-d, and violate all the mitzvos (Likutei Halachos, Sotah 20a).

Taharos (ritual cleanliness) and of *Korbanos* (Temple sacrifices), which are of universal application. This level is often cited as the ideal every Jewish society should strive to achieve.

"The More Things Change ..."

The categories of what women should study have not changed over the years, but as the Chofetz Chaim explained [see box], the amounts have. This should not be taken to mean that the *halacha* has changed. Rather, women always have been obligated to acquire both sufficient knowledge and enough inspiration to dedicate themselves to live in accordance with Torah. Many years ago, they could rely on our strong, viable tradition for their needs, and there was no necessity to teach women Torah in today's broader and more formal format. They never studied the Oral Law, and only approached the Written Law when it was deemed essential for them. (See *Rambam in Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*).

In his day, the Chofetz Chaim recognized that women had need to increase their Torah study—in *halacha* for practical guidance and in Scripture and *Mussar* for inspiration. Today, when we are constantly being bombarded by influences that do violence to Torah values, women certainly should make a greater effort to study Torah than ever before, but in the same prescribed areas. The goals, and the areas to be studied to reach these goals, do not vary. Only what and how much should be covered does.

The Chofetz Chaim was not alone in his contention that the strongest weapon to combat alien influences is *limud HaTorah*. Six hundred years earlier, the *Rambam* stated: "Lewd and illicit thoughts only enter a heart that is void of Torah." There are no vacuums in life. Space

will be filled, and if it is not filled with Torah, it will be taken by thoughts that are contrary to Torah. This is a concern that should touch everyone.

"A Little Knowledge ..."

Just one word of warning: In the last paragraph of *Shmoneh Esrei*, we pray to Hashem: "My soul should be as dust to all, open my heart to your Torah." According to one interpretation of this passage, only if we see ourselves as dust, as nothing, can we become proper utensils for Torah. Humility is a basic prerequisite for the successful acquisition of Torah. Unfortunately, some women who have learned "some" Torah become arrogant, and their Torah knowledge serves to corrupt their character. Such women are definitely misusing their knowledge, for the purpose of Torah learning is to improve character, to make a person more humble and sincere.

Priorities

The approaches may undergo change from generation to generation, but they still lead to the same goals. A Torah-study frame of reference can bring fresh meaning to a woman's seemingly endless mundane chores, and certainly can give her the spiritual uplift she so desperately needs for her most sacred task—the *chinuch* of her children. Indeed, the fruits of Torah study may well provide her with the necessary element to help transform her home atmosphere into one of *kedusha* and *Yiras Shomayim*—sanctity and fear of G-d.

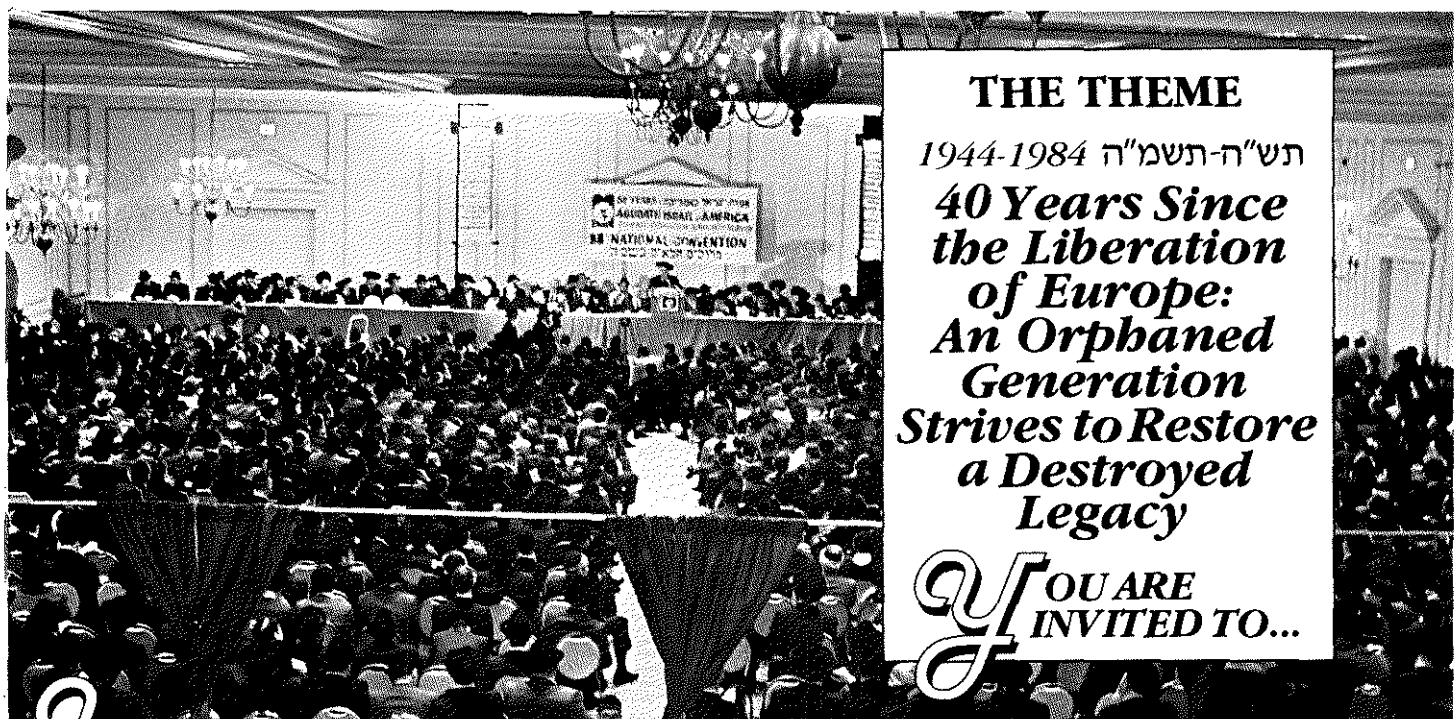
So it is time for all good women to grab a rag, wipe off that thick layer of dust from their old *seforim* and renew their Torah study. Not only will they be enriched personally from this great experience, they will also enrich the lives of all those dearest to them. ✠

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Some Unorthodox Reflections on Feminism and Torah

—a portrait in Blu



Photograph from Tradition by Mel Wertheim

Simply Refutable

Mrs. Blu Greenberg calls herself an unorthodox Orthodox Jew. To the modern mind that sounds like a heady breath of fresh air—a traditional Jew who is unafraid to search, explore, and castigate when she deems it necessary. And Mrs. Greenberg has deemed it necessary. Despite great distress—almost, it would seem from her book, heartbreak—she has decided that she can no longer live with a tradition that is insensitive to women at best and completely sexist at its worst.

The book is no longer new. Its impact has had time to settle and perhaps that is where it should be viewed from. It had made a tremendous impression on many thinking and believing Jews—and therefore it cannot be ignored by what is commonly called right-wing Jewry. The impression that it has made on so many Jews is the aspect of the book that I find most frightening. The appeal it has had on so many heretofore closet feminists is rampant and alarming. Why? Not because of her petty arguments on halachic detail, which she dispenses with casually and cavalierly. That has happened in Orthodoxy—mostly modern Orthodoxy—before, and can usually be refuted by a simple perusal of *Shulchan Aruch*. An individual who decides to dispose of a *mitzva* knows that what he is doing has no halachic backing and will not stand up to any sustained argument.

Mrs. Tropper, a mother of six, lives in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn. This is her first appearance in these pages.

What Blu Greenberg is attempting is something quite different. She is not satisfied with the Modern Orthodox argument that we must make a rigid Orthodoxy more compatible with life's realities. We know that women have been gaining equality at breathtaking speed during the last decade and she is not simply attempting to curtail some of the restrictions placed upon women by *halacha*. Rather what she is attempting to do is to insert a new philosophy, and breathe a new life into, halachic and Sinaitic views of women. She does not like the way *halacha* treats women—it is wrong and unjust, she claims—and relegates them to second-class status throughout their lives.

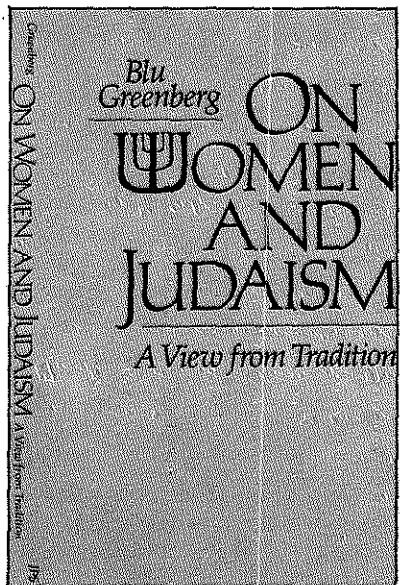
Without touching upon the validity of her arguments, she cannot even consider herself an "unorthodox Orthodox Jew." Halachic authority is Divine—despite her assertion to the contrary—else we stand on a foundation of sand. Her assertion that it is merely because a group of male-oriented rabbis decreed women's status to be inferior that it is so—smacks of heresy. Her implication that cowardice is behind the lack of Rabbinic will to flex their halachic muscle to ameliorate women's role denies the Torah view of women.

Woman in the Torah View

The Torah has very definite views of women. Some of them are honestly confining and anachronistic to the modern mind. To put it bluntly and without the finesse

of those trying to soften this seemingly untractable position—A woman is a bearer of children and sustainer of her family. A role that leaves her without an “I”—an unattached me that can find an identity separate from spouse and child. And yet in a seeming contradiction, G-d also created woman with a mind as fine as man’s—with the same ability to search for truth, and with the same insatiable curiosity about the worlds—both inner and outer. A duller mind might be more suitable to raising children and cleaning homes, especially if we come to view women’s role as Mrs. Greenberg does. Without the outlet of public Torah reading—and in general, of a public display of religiosity—a woman is not a man’s equal.

To her credit, Mrs. Greenberg does not scoff at the incredible grandeur that is involved in raising a family. And here is where I think she makes another crucial mistake. First-generation feminists have noted that a subtle tyranny is involved in raising a family. They claim that men have perfected a system whereby women will not only do all the work, but also be reasonably content doing it. It has taken the women’s movement to recognize and isolate this tyranny and, with a great deal of hardship, to reject it. Mrs. Greenberg is more in line with second- or third-generation feminists who recognize the joys of a family, but know that there is much more to life.



Of Morals and Statistics

The problems with this are both moral and statistical. I once remember asking a teacher why, if a woman possessed a mind on par with a man, could she not become as absorbed in Torah as the greatest *talmid chacham*? She answered that theoretically she could—but Torah is a jealous possessor—and to be really great, one had to be totally absorbed; that it had to be one’s pri-

mary essence—not an avocation, but a totally engrossing enterprise. I think that *HaShem* created an equally absorbing task for women. Not something that they can pick up and leave off at will, but rather something that absorbs them totally. To imagine that the future of *Klal Yisroel* is any less important is to belittle our whole nation—past, present, and future. We can learn, we can dream—and if for some reason the fancy strikes us, we can work in an office—but we cannot imagine that what the Torah means as the “I” of our existence is anything less than keeper and sustainer of *Klal Yisroel*.

The second problem with a woman who must find her identities elsewhere is simpler. We are dependent on a small population to keep us alive. Whether it hurts or not, a woman who is a lawyer or a doctor or a “rabbi” will not have enough children to sustain us. Since most people do not conduct their lives on broad sociological demographics, this argument is probably meaningless to the individual. But to Mrs. Greenberg, who is concerned with the continuation of a Jewish nation, this should at least give pause. Perhaps the Torah meant for women to be somewhat suppressed, in the knowledge that that is the only way that *Klal Yisroel* is going to be sustained.

An Ultimate Solution For Every Problem?

I am deliberately leaving little room for Mrs. Greenberg’s halachic meanderings. Anyway, others have already demonstrated how outrageously faulty they are, both in methodology and proposed conclusions. The one that I must comment on, one I found most objectionable, was her essay on abortion. She writes, “I tense at the thought of getting caught up in the controversy over abortion. Emotionally, theologically, as a Jew, and most of all as a mother who is nurtured daily by the sights and sounds of children, I am opposed to abortion. And yet . . .”, she continues that there are pressing needs. From rape of a married woman, she quickly proceeds to the need to support oneself through school—and the need to stabilize a marriage. Are we still talking here about an unorthodox *Orthodox Jew*? *Halacha* has never made light of the plight of a poor family or of an unstable marriage, and we are liable to aid and assist as much as possible, but does that mean we must condone the destruction of a life? Does every problem demand the ultimate solution, or are there times that we must say—till here—we will broach no further on the mysteries that we don’t understand. Are we such fools that we must tread where angels fear to go? The world had condoned abortion—are we merely twenty years behind—unable or unwilling to hold on to timeless law for a modern expediency? Or are we sure that all this is not merely a law of fallible humans—but of Divine Will that has been with us for thousands of years and will keep us going forever? ✠

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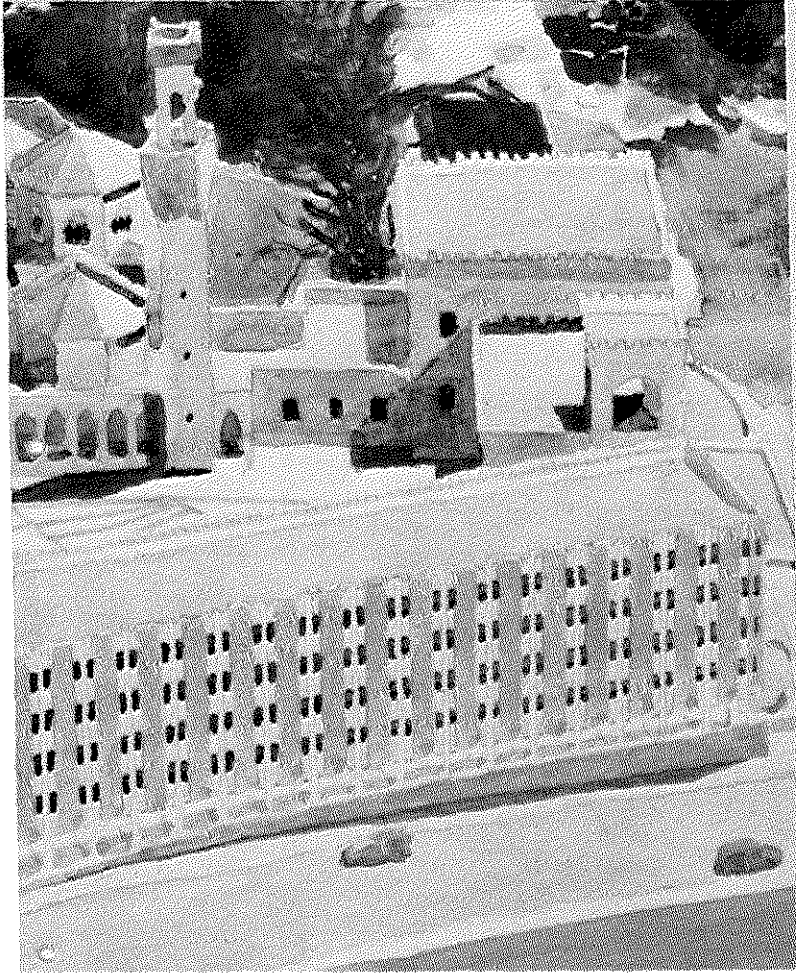
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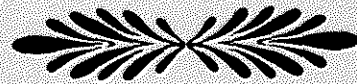


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Asking Questions When I Know The Answers

Recently, in a *Shabbos* table discussion with Rabbi Mordecai Twerski of Denver, I remarked somewhat self-righteously that when I hear stories, albeit beautiful ones, about Chassidim visiting their Rebbe for *Yom Tov*, I can't help thinking about their wives who stayed home. "And what kind of *Yom Tov* did they have?" I demanded.

He reminded me of a fact that I already knew. I ask this question often, always receiving the same answer: "Nama, don't judge their time by imposing our social limitations. Their mothers and aunts and grandmothers lived upstairs, next door and downstairs. A *Yom Tov* in a *shtetl* offered dimensions and a variety of experience we can barely imagine. They might find our life unbearable living as we do isolated in our little families, far from everyone, worried about privacy."

Of course, he was right. So why do I keep asking this question? I'd say that I find myself worrying about the isolation of other women because I feel isolated in what I do as a woman. In spite of the hours spent on the telephone, the meetings, the *tzedakka* work, taking the kids places together, and even the unique intimacy generated in a bungalow colony, I still cannot feel that I share in the lives of other women. I'm not really talking about loneliness. I have friends, thank G-d. What I miss, ironically, is the sense of family-community my *shtetl* sister had when her husband went away for *Yom Tov*. I feel as though my *avoda*—service to G-d—as a Jew depends on finding it.

My *Rebbe*, Rabbi B.C. Shloime Twerski זצ"ל often said, "Geniuses are created before the age of six." He usually went on to explain that the important qualities a person possesses—curiosity, determination, trust and *Yiras Shomayim* (fear of G-d)—are learned at home. He refused to be defensive about the so-called "woman's role" in creating a home, saying that maybe we've never really tried to figure out what the Torah thinks, but simply imposed our private agendas. One thing he was sure of, though, was that most women possesses a special capacity for creating and changing the "emotional environ-

Nama Frenkel is an independent filmmaker whose film JEWISH MOTHERS was an attempt to show the non-verbal and environmental qualities of Jewish homes.

ment" that they exist in. It was this "feel" for the subliminal that gives them an edge in creating a home where it "feels" Jewish. It was the talent for bringing the ideas of Torah into every nuance of everyday life, and into the inner workings of the personality that was referred to in the fundamental phrase, "*Kol kavoda bas melech prima*—The princess's glory is within."

Practically speaking, a greater use of our human potential ought to be possible when we learn with the joy and curiosity fostered in a balanced emotional environment. Our academic learning of Torah could be backed up with an ability to concentrate our total selves. Our resistance to subliminal influences from billboards and stores—even people—ought to be higher. We ought to be able to encounter both success and failure with a greater sense that we're not alone. All because we have a "Jewish Home."

"Feeling Inadequate and a Little Frightened . . ."

I'm supposed to be responsible for all that! Frankly I feel inadequate and a little frightened because, from the day I left seminary where we talked about these things, I've had very little chance to "brush up" on just how that environment is created. I may have innate ability as a woman, but I need colleagues to go beyond *seforim*, as valuable as they are, and into the laboratory of human example, where I can learn with all my senses for a job that requires all my senses.

I'm looking for a way to draw on the experiences of others. Many of the questions I would ask other women, if we could really talk, are matters I could learn better subliminally. *How do other mothers discipline their children, how do they teach them? More importantly, how do they settle arguments with their husbands, how do they face tragedies, what do they daven for and when do they find the time? Some of us are lucky enough to have mothers who are in themselves the answers to those questions. I hope they can be the same for their daughters.*

I didn't learn those answers from my mother, I don't know whether she knew them, but I would like to teach them to my daughters. My real question, it seems, ought to be: *What can we do to build Jewish womanhood, so we can produce more geniuses, more excited, creative children filled with the wonder of the Ribbono-shel-olam's world?*

stack of *Shabbos* dishes or clean the floor. It reminds not just my kids, but me, that all this means something; keeping a Jewish home clean has a purpose far beyond "keeping up with the Rosens."

I have to admit I sat down and cried when I heard *Ashira*. I've been told my reaction was not uncommon. It was relief I felt. Someone is speaking about my life, my questions, my joys. Things only a woman would think of. And always tied to Torah. I listened to it day and night and bought copies for all my friends, who felt exactly as I did.

The songs deal with things only women would wonder about! Like how did the Jews manage to get packed to leave Egypt on such short notice, and how did Miriam manage to remember her tambourine?

*How did she know that on this journey
There would be cause to sing?*

*Take the baby Sara
and wrap him up real tight
Leah get the baskets
we're leaving here tonight
Avi bring my tambourine
And take your father's hand
We are going from this land
far across the desert sand.*

English lyrics and music: © 1983, Ashira

I personally have two favorites, "Two People," a song about marriage, and "Letters and Spaces," which talks about the fact that G-d's presence is hidden within His Torah. Both rely heavily on very haunting lyrics and marvelous music to communicate what I, with my description, cannot. Many of her pieces will have a surprisingly universal appeal among Jewish women of all backgrounds. Others that are directed to the searching woman from Western society are in a contemporary idiom, and might prove jarring to some ears. I find them all of a refreshing immediacy.

A Tenuous Breakthrough

The record represents a breakthrough for Jewish women because it is by and for the principles that rule our lives. It is recorded under a pen name, so that if a man would hear it, he would not know who he was hearing and thus further reduce the *kol isha* factor. "*Kol isha*"—the prohibition for a man to listen to a woman singing—does not apply to a recorded voice, according to many authorities. While *Ashira* is acting under halachic guidance, some may find this recording an imprudent breakthrough in making a woman's singing available on a mass-marketed basis. I suppose that just as some irreligious Jews will ignore the caveat "Do not play on the Sabbath and Festivals" that appears on many records of "religious music," others will ignore *Ashira's* intention of making this record exclusively "By and For

Jewish Women." My comments are on my personal reaction to discovering this record.

The concerts that *Ashira* gives are even more exciting. First, consider what doesn't happen. No men are allowed. Not the janitor, not even the Prime Minister. "Don't you know what you're giving up? Do you know how many groups would be *honored* to be asked to play at the President's reception?" she has been asked. . . .

Ashira is a Jewish woman first, a performer second.

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She's not the only one. Women have gotten together to play and sing in huge women-only concerts several times in New York and in Jerusalem, in the past few years.

To me her concerts are special. I hear that ladies with *sheitels* sit next to girls in blue jeans, in Moshe's Cafe in Jerusalem, on Monday nights, women's night. Moshe doesn't come.

The girl in blue jeans may have never been in any group that's exclusively women. She's never met a lady with a *sheitel*. She's on vacation in Jerusalem, from Kansas or California, maybe even Brooklyn. Some vague inkling brought her.

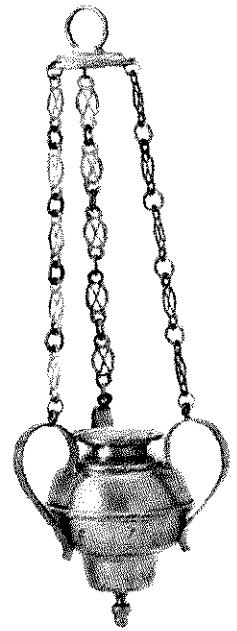
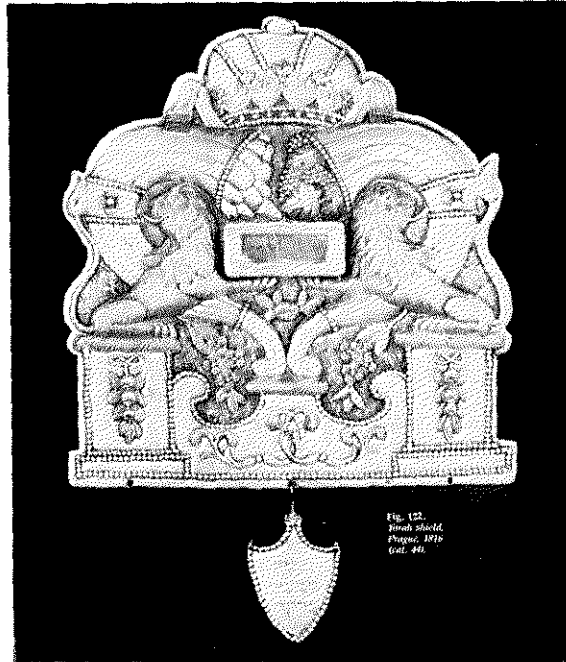
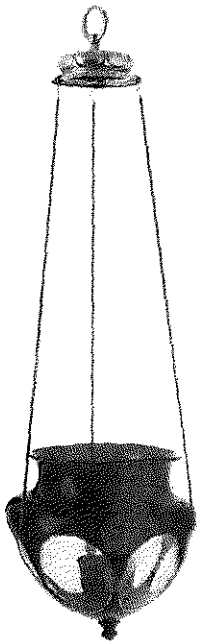
The lady with the *sheitel*, on the other hand, very seldom gets a chance to go somewhere for entertainment that she really feels is Kosher. She hates to take her husband away from learning, but what can she do that's relaxing that isn't for couples? When she talks to the girl in blue jeans during the break, she's surprised to find she has wisdom to share; and that for once this college girl who intended to have no children at all, is willing to listen.

At a women's concert, all Jewish women are sisters and aunts and nieces, grandmothers and granddaughters to one another, brought together in a setting that really opens the way for talking about the things we somehow never get a chance to discuss.

I am not suggesting Ashira or any singer or musician will replace asking advice from a Rebbetzin, G-d forbid, or saying *Tehillim* or learning. Ashira herself seeks out all these things, as should every Jewish woman. She also manages to put the feeling and struggle of doing those and other *mitzvos* into a form that reaches us beyond the limits of our intellect. She touches us on the level we have to operate on as women, if we want to give our full power to the words of Torah we have learned. She calls us to take our goals seriously and gives us tools to do so.

If we think about the fact that G-d reveals Himself through history, we can find some significance here. After the destruction of European Jewry, it is not enough to rebuild yeshivos, school, and *mikvaos*—as vital as those things are. We need to build the sense of community, the sense of family. This is up to women. If a spirit or a movement sweeps the world that says "women should take responsibility for their lives," let us consider the revelation that is in it, not the many distortions. Within our community, we can show the world that Jewish women understand what it means to take *real* responsibility for the world and its future. Maybe by creating our own music, and getting together to share our lives as sisters while we listen to it, we'll be able to hear and use the messages our mothers have passed down since Sara, and our husbands will be able to fulfill "*Shma b'kolah*—harken to her voice" (See *Bereishis* 21:12).

Preserving the Legacy



The Precious Legacy is the title of an emotion-evoking, spectacular exhibit that brings to the American audience the Jews' experience in one of their many stations in the exile, the Jewish community of Prague. The treasures, which are from the State Museum of Prague, are representative of the over 120,000 objects housed in the Czechoslovakian State Repository, and were selected and organized by the Smithsonian Institute in cooperation with several Czech State agencies, under the sponsorship of Philip Morris Inc. The exhibit,

which is touring a number of major American cities—recently in the Jewish Museum in New York—provides a fascinating experience worthy of comment.

Growth of the Museum

Museums are generally established to preserve objects representative of what was once and is no more. You cannot find the latest model Olds or Boeing 727 in the Smithsonian. Nor does the New York Historical Society display floor plans of contemporary Hebrew Day Schools or matza bakeries. This gives us valuable insights into the Prague Museum and what it represents.

Rabbi Kolodny, a musmach of Mesivta Chaim Berlin, is chief archivist of the Orthodox Jewish Archives, maintained by Agudath Israel of America.



In 1906, the Jews of Prague established a museum to enshrine their Jewish culture. It was a sure omen that the cultural life of Prague Jewry was much different from what it previously had been. As Rabbi Meir Shapiro wrote in an essay, "A Tale of Two Cities—Prague and Pressburg," in 1924: "Prague has a museum. In fact, all of Prague is like a museum. No *minyan* functions there mid-week. By contrast, in Pressburg, where the influence of the Chasam Sofer is still felt, Jewish culture is alive and vibrant. A museum is not built for that which is present and relevant."

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The further growth of this museum developed with the same idea in mind, but in a very bizzare and tragic way: When the Nazis occupied Czechoslovakia from 1942 through 1945, they deported the entire Jewish population of the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" to concentration camps. A decree was issued that truly reflected German mentality. All Jewish possessions of artistic and historical value were to be confiscated and shipped to Prague. There a museum was to be created—a museum to an extinct race. A small staff of Jewish curators was to be spared to sort and catalog those historic times. The Nazis intended it to be a propaganda institute that would justify to the world the Final Solution.



Fig. 153.
Burial Society pitcher
Mikulov, Moravia,
1836 (cat. 363).

By Divine Providence, Prague was spared from destruction, as was the collection of Judaica. By the war's end, the collection filled eight Jewish historic sites and more than fifty warehouses scattered throughout Prague. Of all the captive Jews working on this project, only one curator survived to tell the story.

After the war all these treasures came under the auspices of the State Jewish Museum of Prague. The museum houses over 140,000 treasures, spanning centuries of Jewish creativity, and they exhibit the love and high esteem in which the Jewish faith was held by the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. In fact, the whole Jewish quarter of Prague is as it was 200 years ago. The synagogues are preserved as museums, including the *Shul* of the *Noda BeYehuda* (Rabbi Yechezkel Halevi Landau, the greatest rabbinic authority of his generation) and the Sanctuary of Rabbi Yehuda Leib Lowé, the *Maharal*—whose gravesite is listed on the itinerary of all tourist guides.

According to a recent visitor, in one synagogue, a *Sefer Torah* was displayed under glass. The caption read: "Torah, Jews used to read from these scrolls." The view of the present guardians of our Precious Legacy, then, is that all of Judaism is a beautiful relic from the past, and nothing more.



Legacy on Tour

From these thousands of artifacts of history and culture, some 700 representative items were selected to be shown to the American public. The selection encompasses the whole cycle of Jewish religious daily and cultural life.

Ceremonial religious articles relating to birth, *bris*, marriage and death are beautifully displayed—ranging from a hand-carved wooden *sandek* chair, for the person holding the baby during his *bris*, to a silver fingernail pick used for cleansing a body before burial. All harmonize with one another, underscoring how religious life is the focal point of Jewish existence. The few token artifacts representing Prague's enlightened Jewry pale

among the rest of the exhibit. Perhaps even the Nazis sensed that these did not really represent an integral part of this "Jewish race."

Majesty in Mitzva Observance

Some ceremonial objects are truly striking. The display includes artistically designed Torah valances 15 feet long, Torah mantles, *Rimonim*, beautiful Torah shields of sterling silver. . . . The love for *mitzvos* is breathtakingly portrayed in a highly ornate silver laver and basin used for washing the hands of the *Kohanim* before ascending the *bima* to bless the people. The basin (about 2 feet in diameter) and laver were fashioned by the Prague master silversmith Johann Lux in 1702. Exquisite table settings for the *Shabbos* and all the major *Yomim Tovim* reflected the fine taste and appreciation of

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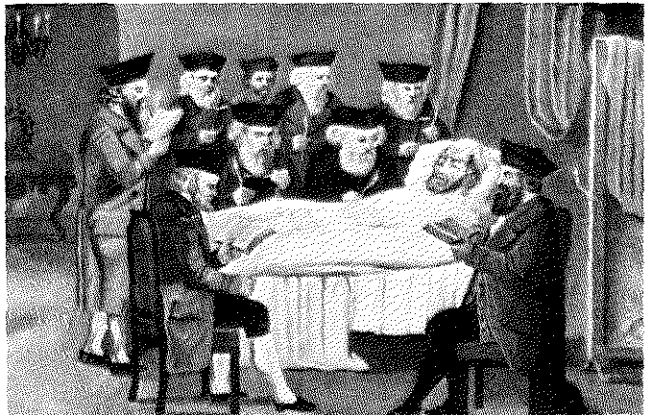
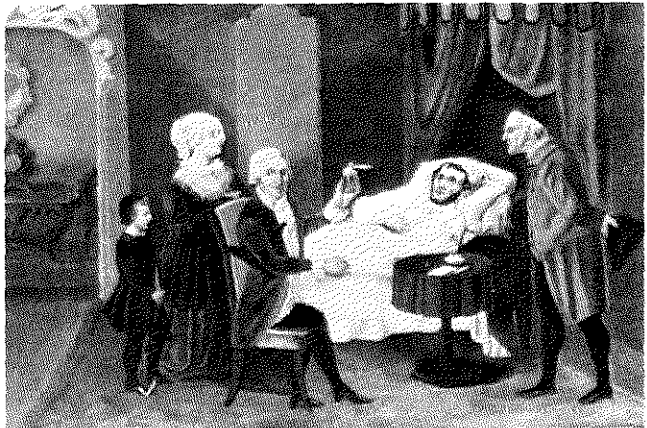
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beauty, truly rivaling the majesty of White House table settings in expressing deference for visiting royalty—in this case, the *Shabbos Queen*.

A most unusual example of the Prague community's regard for *mitzvos* is the display revolving around the *Chevra Kaddisha* (burial society of Prague). An artist was commissioned to paint 15 large oil portraits of the *Chevra* members in their activities, showing the step-by-step procedures of the society, starting with visiting the mortally sick, on to the procession to the cemetery, burial, eulogy and returning to the mourner's home. The por-



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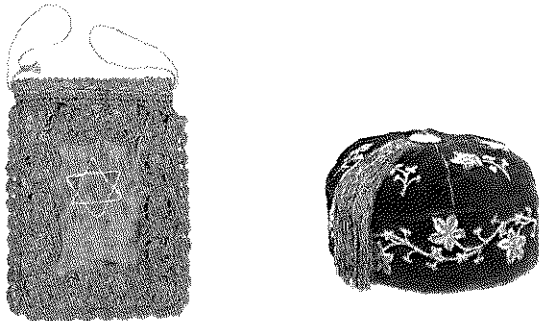
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traits are graphic in detail, complete with wrinkled kerchiefs grasped by the grieving members of the family, all bedecked in what we would describe as "Colonial clothing." Burial was carried out as it is today, a vibrant link in a chain of tradition that is still with us. The elaborately ornamented dishes, beakers, and cutlery used for the annual banquets of the society are all intact, and could be used today with pride. The importance attached to this *mitzva of chessed shel emes* (true kindness—that is, without possible reciprocation from the recipient) by the Jews of Prague is a tribute to this ancient community.

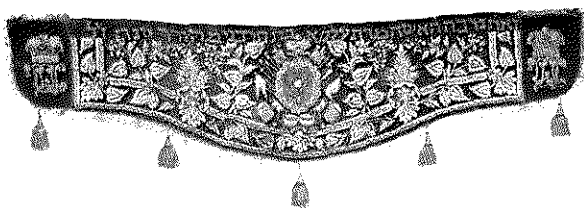


The Life Force of the Legacy

The Prague community was served by some of Jewry's greatest Torah luminaries, among them the famous *Maharal* of Prague, and in more recent times, the *Noda BeYehuda* whose responsa are classics in rabbinical literature.

It is difficult to put into writing the strong emotions that were triggered upon seeing the *Noda BeYehuda's* original writing book, in his own clear, artistic script, open to the second *perek* of *Tractate Beitzah*; it was almost like witnessing the *Noda BeYehuda* composing his classic work on the Talmud, *Tsiyon Lenefesh Chaya*. Here, on these folios, are the essence of our precious legacy.

All the other treasures shown only came into being because of the influence of luminaries such as the *Noda BeYehuda*. These words of Torah novellae, clarifying the depths of talmudic thought, are the force that makes this a living legacy.



The Haunting Undertow

One cannot view the exhibit without being haunted by the origins of the objects on display. Any time a repository accedes historic material, it seeks to establish the provenance of the document or artifact, i.e. the office or origin from which the material was generated. This is always important because questionable provenance may cause legal problems. In addition, the material cannot be properly evaluated if its relationship with other documents or objects is not known. The provenance of the collection of the State Museum provides visitors with the nagging awareness that the origins of the items are the blood-stained history of the Jewish community of Bohemia and Moravia. The acquisitions were not made from voluntary donors. And the attempt by Communist-controlled Czechoslovakia to claim custody of the heritage of the Jewish people is merely another subtle attempt to relegate the living Jewish nation and its Torah to the status of an extinct civilization—to be studied and to serve as a source of monetary profit.

Not just a comment on the past, this stifling attitude limits the potential use of many items in the holdings of the State Museum of Czechoslovakia. Among them are

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 ואלה אבותינו ויטעו את קולנו
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virtual spiritual jewels, including unpublished manuscripts of Rabbi Yehonossan Eibishutz, the *Noda BeYehuda*, and other Torah giants. But of course, the custodians of these priceless materials are not interested in making these works public, and access to them is difficult. These priceless documents are being preserved in repositories

and museums, and their custodians would wish to keep it that way . . . as the caption on the *Sefer Torah* of the Prague synagogue read: "Scrolls Jews used to read from." When viewing the exhibit from this perspective, we smart from the bitter edge to this incredibly sweet display. . . .

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second looks at the jewish scene



Elections in Israel

Ezriël Toshavi

At this writing, the full implications of Israel's July 23rd national elections are yet to be determined. Yet even in the midst of this stage of non-resolution, comment is in order.

All elections have within them the power to unite and divide at the same time, especially so in Israel. In offering the voter an opportunity to express his opinion, the act of voting forces him to opt for an identity under one of Israel's many political banners. While this unites him with those within his specific group, it can be divisive in regard to the larger populace at the same time. The recent elections are no exception.

The Shifting Sands of Frustration

Even as the larger parties are scrambling for control of enough

Ezriël Toshavi observes the Israeli scene for readers of THE JEWISH OBSERVER.

Knesset votes to give them the requisite 61-seat majority to form a government, or go through the motions of seeking to create a national unity coalition, one can take note of some decisive changes—notably the shifting of voters from party to party.

Some have pointed with pride to a 50% increase in votes for parties that subscribe to *daas Torah*, commonly known as *Chareidim*. Whereas Agudath Israel had four delegates in the previous Knesset, in the recent election it earned six together with "Shas," a newly organized group of Torah-observant Sephardim. Shas is under the direct guidance of a Sephardi rabbinical council headed by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, with consultation with leading Ashkenazi *Roshei HaYeshivos*. It has not yet demonstrated to what degree it will adhere to Agudath Israel's approach of totally following the guidance of *Gedolei Torah* on specific policy matters,

under the grueling give and take of coalition negotiation. Nonetheless, it has publicly stated its intention to follow *daas Torah*.

Shas's strong showing at the polls—4 MK's resulting from over 63,000 votes—certainly testifies to the emergence of the leadership role of the Sephardi *Ben Torah*, who has benefited from the intensive Torah education Agudath Israel provided his community these last thirty years, from *Gannim* and *Chinuch Atzmai* Schools ... from *chadorim* and *Metivot*, through *Yeshivos Gedolos*

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and *Kollelim*—some Sephardi-directed, some not. In fact, all four MK's from Shas have travelled much of this traditional educational route (through Chevron, Mir, and Ponevezh), identical in the path pursued by children from Ashkenazi homes, with additional years under Sephardi tutelage (such as Shas leader Rabbi Yitzchak Peretz, who studied under Rabbi Ovadia Yosef).

Branching Off The Mainstream

In spite of these positive implications, there is of course the overwhelming awareness that most of the 99,000-plus votes for Shas and Agudath Israel could have been Agudath Israel's votes. The 63,000 Shas votes—which included both break-away Sephardim and Ashkenazim who had previously voted for Agudath Israel—testify to a deep discontent with Agudath Israel's political machinery: the tens of thousands of Sephardi *Bnei Torah* who have gained so much from the Torah institutions supported by Agudath Israel's efforts should be in the forefront of Agudath Israel supporters—except that they have had enough patronizing from the Ashkenazi leadership. After a generation of having others take care of their needs, they feel that they are ready to take their rightful places in

the leadership, to join in the decision-making process. Frustrated from unrealized hopes and expectations, impatient with unfulfilled commitments, they have struck out on their own, leaving a fragmented Agudath Israel in their wake. Many disgruntled Ashkenazi Agudah members joined them in voting for Shas because of their dismay over internecine squabbles.

A Call for Reassessment

If nothing else, this fragmentation of the Torah community's vote should be understood as a call for Agudath Israel in *Eretz Yisroel* to return to its ideological core: that Torah as the very essence of *Klal Yisroel* and its sole uniting force, should serve to pull together Torah Jews of every community and tradi-

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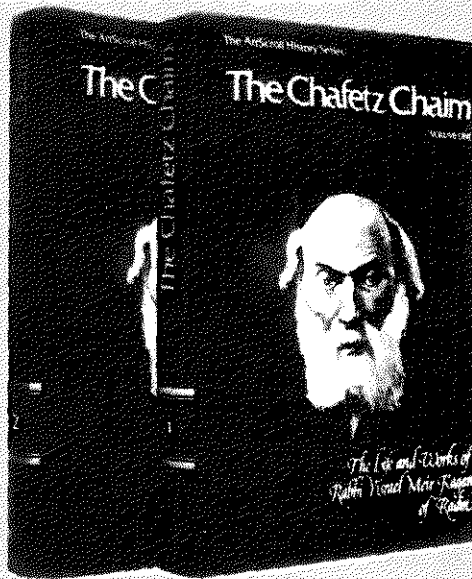
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tion. This was dramatically demonstrated by the ability—more, the recognized imperative—of such divergent groups as Torah Jews from Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Germany, America, and yes, Sephardi communities, to unite under the guidance of a Torah leadership to form the Agudath Israel World Movement over seventy years ago.

Unity means more than managing to talk together and work together. Being together—that is, identifying as one—is the touchstone of Agudath Israel . . . with each group preserving its own integrity, while respecting the integrity of others. Differences in background and nuances in divergent ideological outlooks are what enrich the texture of the multi-dimensional Torah coalition that Agudath Israel was, and should be.

If fidelity to a sacred ideology has not held this coalition together thus far, perhaps now the political necessity of working together will enlarge the collective awareness of how the Agudath Israel vision can be a reality. The events of the coming months should be understood as an opportunity for all concerned to make a *cheshbon hanefesh* (a time for introspection)—to assess the bitter fruits of fragmentation, which neither Agudath Israel in Eretz Yisrael nor the sacred issues it speaks for can afford. From all this must emerge a better organized and more effective coalition than before. **17**

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Letters to the Editor.



Where is Shebabo?

To the Editor:

I was fascinated by Moshe Englander's report on Tzefas and the wonderful activities of Mordechai Shebabo. Is there any way in which one can contact Mr. Shebabo directly? Perhaps other readers are also interested.

ELIEZER SHOOP
Montreal, Quebec

In response to a number of inquiries, Mordechai Shebabo can be reached at: 335/26 Kiryat Ma'or Chaim, P.O.B. 119, Safed, Israel.

"Summer Glory" or Neglect in the Heat?

To the Editor:

JO celebrated "Torah in its Summer Glory" (May '84) in the mountains, but what happened in New York City? Every year as Shavuos approaches, a slight shiver of dread invades my thoughts: "What will we do about the summer?" Not only do we pay tuition for the two summer months that the yeshivos are closed (rightfully so, as the Rabbeim and the Morohs also have to survive in the summer), but we also must search for ways to keep our children occupied in a Yiddishe way. Monsey, Cleveland, Lakewood and Eretz Yisroel have solved the problem by keeping the yeshivos open until the end of Tammuz and reopen at the beginning of Ellul. What has happened to New York?

Why must a family that *ב"ה* has at least several children going to yeshiva have an extra burden upon its shoulders to pay for camps and day camps? Why must children, whose families find it difficult to afford

these expenditures for this summer necessity, remain idle for two months without learning and without school supervision? Camps are usually more expensive than monthly tuition, as they consider themselves a luxury rather than a necessity. But, this is not so. Why do New York and other cities (except for those previously mentioned) feel it necessary to follow the public schools and close their doors for the entire summer? Why do most city yeshivos deem June 20th closing date for school and Labor Day the time for reopening, and not the traditional Rosh Chodesh Elul that has always initiated the new *zman*? Perhaps the past practice can be changed, and a new trend of open doors might begin. Then, Torah can and will have its *full* Summer Glory.

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ERUV INSPECTORS VISIT CATSKILL'S BUNGALOW COLONIES

In the hustle and bustle of the Catskill Mountain vacation season, residents of bungalow colonies have been surprised this summer to witness a new phenomenon appear on the scene: Eruv Inspectors. A newly formed Eruvin Committee of Zeirei Agudath Israel of America has been visiting bungalow colonies to check the Kashrus of their Eruv, a requisite for carrying on the grounds on Shabbos.

Because of the intricacies of the Eruv, a

special training seminar was given by Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, a Rosh Yeshiva at Mesivta Torah Vodaath, to the twelve member inspection committee before the summer. Under the leadership of Rabbi Shimon Eider of Lakewood, New Jersey, and Rabbi Belsky, the committee spent an average of two to three hours in eight separate locations tracing the respective "eruv" along the entire parameter of the colony and corrected those areas which were deemed not valid.

EXCITING NEWS For The Summer

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AGUDATH ISRAEL ASSAILS HOUSE VOTE FOR STUDENT PRAYER MEETINGS

The adoption by the House of Representatives of legislation designed to permit public high school students to form religious groups on school premises before or after school hours was described as "ill-conceived and dangerous" by David Zwiebel, Esq., Director of Government Affairs of Agudath Israel of America.

The bill adopted by the House, identical to one that passed the Senate several weeks earlier, would make it unlawful for public high schools receiving federal financial assistance to discriminate against student-sponsored meetings on the basis of "the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings." In a letter to Congressman Carl Perkins, the chief proponent of this "equal access" bill, Mr. Zwiebel observed that "a law prohibiting public schools from exercising control over student-sponsored meetings could turn the schools into a foray for missionary activities, indoctrination into cultism, inculcation of deviant anti-social behavior and dissemination of anti-American propaganda."

Noting that "high school students are not adults," the Agudath Israel spokesman stated that "impressionable teenagers, compelled by state law to attend school and thus a captive audience while on school grounds, will be highly susceptible to the types of pressures that inevitably will result when their peers—often fronting for outside agitators—utilize school premises to advance agendas totally unrelated to the educational objectives that provide the rationale for a state's power to compel school attendance in the first place."

Agudath Israel made a special point of emphasizing the distinction between its opposition to the Equal Access Act and its support of legislative "school prayer would indeed be non-denominational in form and character." Mr. Zwiebel reiterated Agudath Israel's view that "structured non-denominational prayer in the public schools" can contribute to a strengthening of religious values in American society. In contrast, he declared, the dangers inherent in equal access legislation are particularly acute for Jewish public high school students who are likely to be prime targets of missionary and anti-religious groups.

According to the Agudath Israel attorney, the law adopted by Congress is to some extent preferable to a version of equal access legislation that was defeated in the House earlier this year. The initial House bill included sanctions against school districts that violated the provisions of the law. Those sanctions were deleted in the bill that now awaits the President's signature.

RESPONSE TO CALL FOR TISHA B'AV MOURNING FOR HOLOCAUST VICTIMS

A nationwide outpouring of deep appreciation met the call of distinguished Torah scholars for the inclusion of a *Kinah*/Lamentation on Tisha B'Av to mark the tragic losses suffered by the Jewish people during World War II. The call was issued in various forms, including a proclamation from the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* (Council of Torah Sages) of Agudath Israel of America, which includes Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, Rabbi Yisroel Spira (Bluzhever Rav), Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman, Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, and letters from Rabbi Sholomo Halberstam (Bobover Rebbe), Rabbi Chaim Meisels (Sorvasher Rav), Rabbi Moshe Stern (Debriciner Rav), Rabbi Yochanan Sofer (Erlauer Rav) and Rabbi Shmuel Wosner (Rav, Zichron Meir—Bnei Brak).

The proclamations were compiled by the Committee to Perpetuate the Memory of the Martyrs of European Jewry, of which Mr. Pinchos Herzka is the chairman. The rabbinical scholars, each in his own manner, explained in their communications that during these forty years since the destruction of European Jewry, a new generation has grown up without any awareness of the splendor of pre-War European Jewry and the torture of the Holocaust—leaving the younger people with no means of appreciating the glory that was consumed in the fires of the crematoria,

and the attendant tragedy of the loss. Out of deep concern that neither the greatness of European Jewry nor the tragedy of its loss be forgotten, the rabbis issued their statements with a special sense of urgency that our people continue to mourn "this... tragedy without equal in the 1900 years since the destruction of the Second *Beis Hamikdash* and the subsequent dispersal of our people" (quotation from the proclamation of the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah*).

In calling for a widespread adoption of the additional *Kinah*, the proclamations left it to the rabbi of each *shul* and community to select an appropriate text. A number of communities are already reciting such *Kinos* to mourn the losses suffered in World War II. The texts used include *Kinos* composed by the late Rabbi Michael Ber Weismandl זצ"ל of Nitra, Rabbi Elchonon Heilpern of London, Rabbi Raphael Blum of Kashui, and Rabbi Shimon Schwab of Khal Adath Jeshurun, New York. The Committee to Perpetuate the Memory of the Martyrs of European Jewry published a brochure which includes the full text of the various statements issued by the Torah scholars and also includes sample *Kinos* composed for this purpose over the past several years. The brochure has been mailed to rabbis throughout the country to alert them to the call issued by the revered Torah scholars.

PROCLAMATION OF THE MOETZES GEDOLEI HATORAH

Together with our fellow Jews, we share the enormous sense of loss from the fate of the six million martyrs who perished at the hands of the Nazis *ו'ס'* forty years ago. This is a tragedy without equal in the 1900 years since the destruction of the Second *Beis Hamikdash* and the subsequent dispersal of our people. While beyond doubt G-d will never forget the innocent blood so ruthlessly shed, there is always the danger that the pain in our hearts may tend to subside with the passage of time, eventually bringing us to totally forget the tragedy that our people suffered. In addition, a new generation is gradually replacing the generation of survivors that knew first-hand the splendor of Pre-War European Jewry and the torture of the Holocaust—leaving the younger people with no means of appreciating the glory that was consumed in the fires of the crematoria, and the attendant tragedy of the loss. On what basis will they mourn the pride of our people that was lost? What can inspire them to shed a tear for that which is no more?

Thus, in concurrence with a number of Torah leaders, we are setting aside Tisha B'Av—the day designated by

Providence as a time of weeping—as the day for us to shed tears as well for the martyrs of European Jewry, to remember and to mourn the six million that perished at the hands of the cursed Nazis. It would surely be appropriate for every congregation and *kehilla*, with the guidance of its rabbinical leadership, to add a special *Kinah* (Lamentation) to be recited before "Ely Tzion," the last of the traditional *Kinos*. For this tragic epoch, several *Kinos* have been composed by outstanding rabbis and leaders. Every *kehilla* should select the *Kinah* that most closely expresses its own agony to lament the loss and inspire tears for the memory of our martyred people.

May it be G-d's will that we thus be drawn to a complete *teshuvah* (return) to our Father, invoke Heavenly mercy on behalf of our broken people, and merit the comforting of Zion and Jerusalem and advent of Moshiach.

7 Teves, 5744 —Moshe Feinstein
—Yaakov Kamenetzky
—Yisroel Spira (Bluzhever Rebbe)
—Yaakov Yitzchok Halevi Ruderman
—Mordechai Gifter

HUD SECRETARY PIERCE OPENS AGUDATH ISRAEL PROJECT FOR ELDERLY

Samuel R. Pierce, Secretary of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and top presidential assistant Douglas A. Riggs joined local and government officials, community leaders and residents of Boro Park to celebrate the opening of the first housing complex for older adults ever to be built in Boro Park. Sponsored by the Southern Brooklyn Community Organization (SBCO), a project of Agudath Israel of America, this development will provide decent and affordable housing for 74 low income elderly families and is helping to revitalize the entire Boro Park West area.

The grand opening of West End Gardens took place on Monday, June 25, at the West End Gardens auditorium on 10th Avenue and 44th Street with the participation of the new tenants and hundreds of senior citizens from the neighborhood.

Secretary Pierce was introduced as a "father of the success of SBCO" by Rabbi Moshe Sherer, President of Agudath Israel of America. HUD extended SBCO a \$4.4 million direct loan to loan to build the project, according to SBCO Executive Director Rabbi Shmuel Lefkowitz.



Rabbi Chaim Twerski, Chief Chaplain of Maimonides Medical Center is joined by SBCO President Louis Glueck as he affixes mezuzah on main entrance of West End Gardens.

without your initiative. I commend you for your resourcefulness, energy and determination that played a constructive role in your community. The success of Agudath Israel and SBCO testify to the potential of America's uniquely diverse, numerous and capable voluntary institutions. Their strength is one of the blessings of our nation."

The day's events began with the affixing of mezuzos on the main entrances to West End Gardens by rabbis of neighboring congregations: Rabbi Chaim Twersky and Rabbi Abraham Bick. They were assisted by SBCO officers Louis Glueck, Henry Hirsch, Max Berg, David Singer, Menachem Shayovich and Eugene Fixler.

City Housing Commissioner Anthony Gliedman joined Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Warrenbrand and family of G & Sons Department Store in dedicating the main lobby of West End Gardens in memory of Mrs. Warrenbrand's parents, the late Pauline and Hyman Grabelsky.

A touching highlight of the event was when one of the tenants, Mrs. Ruth Kantor, 87, in emotion-packed words described her previous living conditions and how grateful she was to live independently in a decent affordable apartment and enjoy her golden years thanks to Agudath Israel and SBCO.

West End Gardens I, which will contain a number of community rooms in addition to the apartments, will serve as a focal point for all the community's elderly. It is designed to help the elderly maintain their independence and to prevent premature institutionalization. The staff will link people to nutrition; education and recreational programs, as well as health and social services. West End Gardens II, a 40 unit building to be located across the street, will be ready for occupancy in late 1985.

"40 YEARS AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF EUROPEAN JEWRY": AGUDATH ISRAEL CONVENTION THEME

"Forty Years After the Destruction of European Jewry: An Orphaned Generation Strives To Restore A Destroyed Legacy" will be the theme of the 62nd annual convention of Agudath Israel of America, it was announced by Rabbi Shmuel Bloom, administrative director of the organization. Over 3,000 Orthodox rabbinic and lay leaders from every part of North America are expected to attend the gathering, which will be held from Thursday through Sunday, November 22-25 at the Rye Town Hilton in Port Chester, N.Y.

Rabbi Bloom pointed out that this fortieth year since the close of the war against the Nazi murderers (5705-5745) is an appropriate time for introspection by the Orthodox Jewish community.

He stated: "The surviving Jews who were liberated from the concentration camps were met with an outpouring of assistance from Jews in the free world who helped them rebuild their shattered lives. During the process, not only individuals, but entire communities, institutions and traditions were rebuilt in the Americas, Israel and Europe.

"However, we must now make an extra effort to study the past in order to attempt to reach out even further to recapture its essence and imbue Jewish communities and individuals today with the life-enhancing qualities of the Torah world the Nazis sought to destroy."

Benjamin Fishoff and Chaim A. Roth, Convention Co-Chairmen

Benjamin Fishoff, a vice president of Agudath Israel of America and a popular lay leader in the Orthodox Jewish community, was named chairman of the 62nd annual convention. Mr. Chaim Alter (Henry A.) Roth, a national officer of Agudath Israel and a leader of numerous Torah causes in this country and in Israel, was named convention co-chairman. Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of the organization, declared that Mr. Fishoff and Mr. Roth are "uniquely suited to chair this year's convention in the light of its theme, as both are survivors of the Holocaust who are playing an important role in helping revive the Torah glory that was all but extinguished and which now must be brought to bear on ever-widening circles of Klal Yisroel."

A special task force is preparing the convention's program, which will include distinguished members of the *Moetzes G'dolei HaTorah* (Council of Torah Sages) and rabbinic and lay leaders from various circles who comprise the coalition of Torah forces which the American Agudah has been building since its founding here 62 years ago.

Photo Harvey Trachtenberg



HUD Secretary Pierce Cuts The Ribbon: (L-R) Rabbi Shulem Rubin, representing Governor Cuomo; New York HUD officials Alexander Naclerio and Joseph Monicciolo; Douglas Riggs representing President Reagan; Secretary Pierce; Rabbi Sherer, President of Agudath Israel of America; Borough President Howard Golden; Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin; Congressman Stephen Solarz; and SBCO Executive Director Rabbi Shmuel Lefkowitz.

Photo by Harvey Trachtenberg

In his address, Secretary Pierce praised the work of Agudath Israel in West End Gardens and in the preservation of Boro Park:

"West End Gardens could not have succeeded, indeed it could not have been launched

P.D. ISSUES ORDER TO OFFICERS ON AUTOPSY RIGHTS OF ORTHODOX JEWS

An order was distributed by the Police Department of New York City to all officers on patrol alerting them on the role of a police officer concerning autopsies when called to the scene of a death. This order, by direction of Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward, sensitizes the officers to the rights of Orthodox Jews, as protected by a recently-enacted New York State law. The statute, signed into law in August '83 by Governor Cuomo, was drafted by COLPA; Agudath Israel of America had for many years been involved in the legislative process of protecting Orthodox Jewish rights regarding autopsies.

The Police Commissioner's order was issued a result of a meeting earlier this year between Police Chief of Operations Robert J. Johnston, Jr. and Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel of America, which covered a number of issues of concern to the Orthodox Jewish community. The Agudath Israel president lauded Police Commissioner Ward and Police Chief Johnston for "their sensitivity to safeguarding the religious rights of Orthodox Jews in the autopsy area as well as in all matters of their unique concern."

PROFESSOR AARON TWERSKI REASSUMES POST AS CHAIRMAN OF AGUDATH ISRAEL'S LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

Professor Aaron Twerski, renowned throughout the Torah world for his tireless efforts on behalf of Orthodoxy and throughout the legal community for his brilliant scholarship, has reassumed the position of Chairman of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America. In making the announcement, an Agudath Israel spokesman noted that Professor Twerski would further enhance both the reputation and the effectiveness of the Agudah Commission, which serves as a leading advocate for the Torah community's interests in legislative and civic matters.

Professor Twerski served as Chairman of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel from 1979 until 1982, when, for personal reasons, he took a leave of absence from his post. The Agudah spokesman expressed the organization's gratitude to Menachem Shayovich, a distinguished community activist and a national officer of Agudath Israel, who served with distinction as Acting Chairman of the Agudath Commission during Professor Twerski's leave. Mr. Shayovich will continue to serve as Co-chairman of the Commission.

NEW "TASTE OF TALMUD" CLASS STARTED BY "CHIZUK"

"A Taste of Talmud" an exciting lunch-time program offering "food for thought" to Jews working in neighborhood business and professional offices has been launched by Chizuk—The Torah Link, an agency of the Agudath Israel World Organization. Using basic texts of Judaism, different aspects of Judaism will be discussed, including Jewish Law, the Jewish perspective on contemporary issues, beliefs, practices, traditions, and

thought. No back ground in Jewish learning is necessary.

The "Taste of Talmud" sessions, given by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, director of Chizuk, will meet every Tuesday from 12:15-1:00 p.m. at Chizuk's Harry & Jane Fischel Drop-In-Center, 1801 Kings Highway (entrance on East 18th Street between Avenue P and Kings Highway), Brooklyn, N.Y. To participate, call (212) 791-1848.

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AGUDATH ISRAEL SUES N.Y.C. OVER "GAY RIGHT" ORDER

Agudath Israel of America has filed a lawsuit challenging the legality of Mayor Koch's Executive Order requiring private agencies doing business with New York City to sign a statement pledging they will not discriminate against homosexual job applicants. In a statement released by its president, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, it declared that as an Orthodox Jewish movement, "it would be inimical to the very nature of Agudath Israel to hire avowed homosexuals—persons who by definition openly flaunt their contempt for Torah—to fill positions which demand conformance with Jewish religious law."

The Agudath Israel statement declares that while prospective employees are not quizzed regarding their sexual inclinations, nevertheless "were a job applicant to advise the organization that he or she is engaged in a practice described by the Torah as an 'abomination', Agudath Israel would violate the religious foundations that are its very core if it were to close its eyes to that reality. For the government ever to require such action would impinge upon the hallowed principle of religious freedom."

The attorneys of Agudath Israel maintain that this position does not necessarily contravene the Mayor's Executive Order. "Just as baseball's insistence that an umpire be able to see does not constitute illegal discrimination against the blind, so too the refusal of an Orthodox Jewish organization to hire one who unabashedly parades his contempt for Torah is not illegal discrimination on the basis of sexual preference."

The Agudath Israel statement points out that the City Administration is aware of its position, and that it entered into past social service contracts with the City on that understanding. The statement concludes: "We remain confident that an understanding City Administration will never insist that religious organizations like Agudath Israel choose between remaining faithful to their religious principles and administering social service programs on behalf of the needy—for it is the needy who inevitably will suffer if push comes to shove. Agudath Israel, for one, when faced with such a choice will have no choice."

Historically, combatting the attempts by

homosexuals to have society legitimize their deviant life-styles has long been one of Agudath Israel's legislative and social priorities. Agudath Israel has been waging this battle for many years, from Rhode Island to California and from New York to Florida. Last year, for example, when a "gay rights" bill came up in the New York City Council, Agudath Israel engaged in an active letter writing and telephone campaign, vigorously presented the Orthodox Jewish community's position in personal meetings with key City Council members, and then effectively testified in the City Council against passage of the bill.

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AGUDATH ISRAEL HAILS REJECTION OF "EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT"

In what a spokesman for Agudath Israel of America hailed as "a major victory for the Orthodox Jewish community," the New York State Senate yesterday blocked passage of a proposed State "Equal Rights Amendment." The proposed constitutional amendment, which would have prohibited New York State from denying or abridging "equality of rights . . . on account of sex," was killed when the Republican majority refused to allow the bill to reach the Senate floor for a full vote.

The Agudath Israel spokesman reported that in a letter dated June 5, 1984 to the members of the State Senate, Agudath Israel had warned that the proposed E.R.A. "would pose serious problems for the hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Jews throughout New York State." The authors of the letter, Rabbi Moshe Shere (President of Agudath Israel) and David Zwiebel, Esq. (the organization's Director of Government Affairs), cautioned that a State E.R.A. likely would create a "rigid, doctrinaire sexual 'equality'" with potentially adverse consequences in a number of areas of concern to the Torah community.

NINETEEN NEW BRANCHES OF PIRCHEI AGUDATH ISRAEL

Nineteen new branches of Pirchei Agudath Israel were organized this past year, including two in Johannesburg, South Africa, according to a report just released by the national office of Pirchei Agudath Israel of America. In addition to those in South Africa, new branches were opened in Phoenix, Passaic (NJ), Pikesville (Maryland), Toronto, Los Angeles and St. Louis. The New York area

boasted eleven new chapters, including Yonkers, Staten Island, and Jamaica Estates.

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN ATTEND JEWISH SUMMER CAMPS

As the current school year came to a close, a report issued by the Jewish Education Program (JEP), the reach-out arm of Agudath Israel of America, announced an enrollment of over 75 Jewish public school children into Orthodox summer camps for this summer. These enrollments came as a direct result of JEP's release-hour programs for public school youth. This year-long effort culminated at the beginning of the summer in large assemblies for students and parents at the Queens Jewish Center in Forest Hills and at the Avenue H Agudath Israel Center in Flatbush. Over 250 children received awards for attending release-hour classes every Wednesday afternoon throughout the year.

HUNDREDS CELEBRATE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF BROOKDALE SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER

A proclamation issued by the Council of the City of New York, congratulating the Brookdale Senior Citizens Center on its 10th anniversary, was recently delivered at a festive celebration marking a full decade of service by the Agudath Israel sponsored Senior Citizens Center on behalf of the elderly of the Flatbush community. The Brookdale Senior Citizens Center, located at 817 Avenue H in Brooklyn, aids several hundred senior citizens each day with hot meals, cultural and recreational programs, arts and crafts, and more.

NEW YORK STATE PASSES BILL TO REIMBURSE YESHIVOS FOR IMMUNIZATION RECORDS

A bill which reimburses yeshivos and other nonpublic schools for the costs they incur in complying with the recording and reporting requirements of the state immunization program for school children passed both houses of the New York State Legislature last week. The bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Daniel L. Feldman and Senators Jeremy S. Weinstein and William M. Steinfeldt, is the result of years of work by the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America which formulated the legislation. According to Shmuel Prager, the general counsel of Agudath Israel, the bill amends New York State's Mandated Services Law, itself a product of Agudath Israel's joint legislative activity with others, which reimburses nonpublic schools for the amount of money they expend for state-mandated educational testing and reporting. The Mandated Services law has been upheld as constitutional by the United States Supreme Court.

Under the new legislation, nonpublic schools located in New York City, Buffalo and Rochester would receive reimbursement each year equal to the actual cost incurred, up to sixty cents per pupil, for documenting that all students have been immunized against diphtheria, polio, measles, rubella and mumps. The reimbursement will assist financially strapped yeshivos to obtain and verify the necessary health information for each child.

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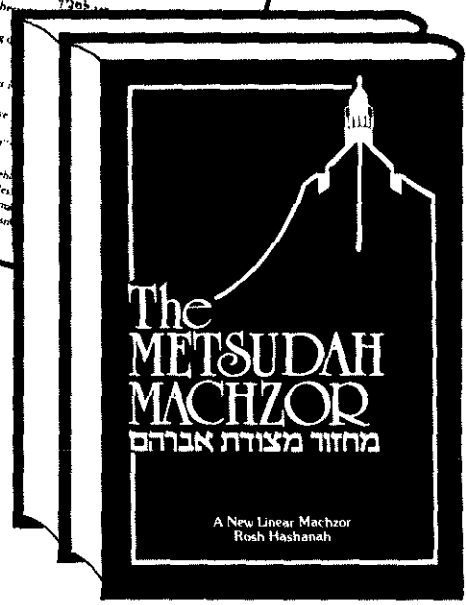
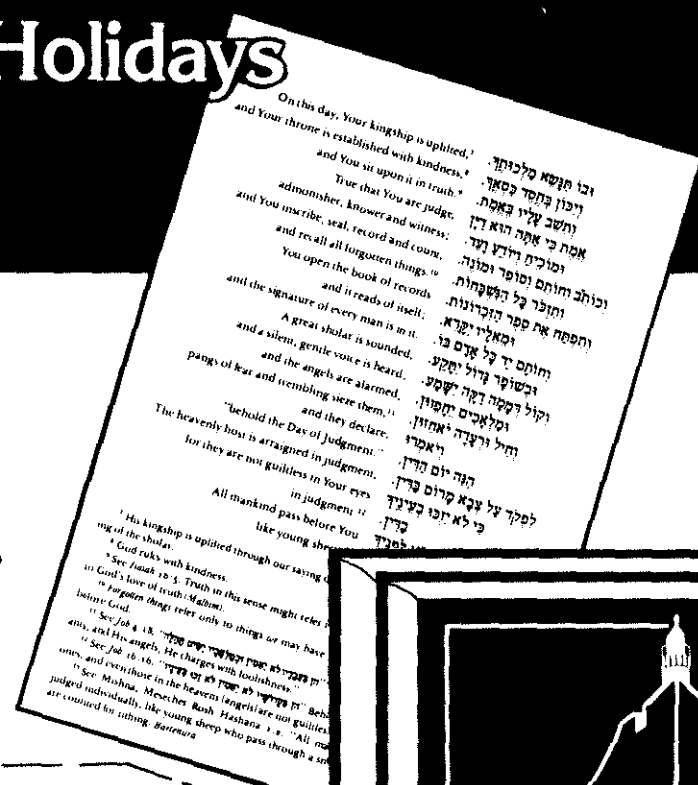
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