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THE UNBRIDGEABLE GAP:
A Torah Look at the American
Reality

**THE CONTINUING CRISIS
IN ISRAEL:**
State and Religion on a Collision
Course

THREE SEFIRAH PIECES

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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The Continuing Crisis in Israel

State and Religion on a Collision Course

In many respects, the relationship between religion and state in Israel is based on delusions. Each member of the uneasy partnership pretends that the attitude of the other is something it isn't. And for reasons of self-interest, each hopes to perpetuate the delusion. But with increasing frequency, both the government and the religious community are forced to divert their glance from the mirrors of distortion and look their partner square in the eye. And – all too often – a crisis results.

Although many of the religious leaders at the time – notably Rabbis Yoseif Chaim Sonnenfeld and Yeruchem Diskin, of blessed memory – disapproved of the creation of the office of the Chief Rabbinate, it has since become part of the *modus vivendi* of Israel. Today the state-wide network of rabbis who serve the length and breadth of the land, their exclusive jurisdiction over laws of marriage and divorce, and their control over kashrus, have by and large become associated with the official State-support Rabbinate. A couple cannot contemplate marriage without taking into account the suitability of their match by halachic criteria vis-a-vis Kahanic restrictions, dissolution of previous marriage, authenticity of conversion, and so on. Generally, Kosher foods dominate the grocery shelves in the land. Shabbosos and Yomim Tovim are official days of rest. All of this exists by virtue of the official status quo, much of which has its roots in the pre-Mandate Turkish law that vested control over matters relating to personal status with the rabbinate. An Israel without the ubiquitous rabbinical presence might weaken some of

those facets of life that bind the vast multitudes with their religion, and the religious community is understandably reluctant to consider the possibility.

Similarly, all except the most bitterly secular Jews are comfortable as part of a greater Israel that includes an official clergy which takes care of the religious concerns of the community, as well as a body of *bnei yeshiva* who keeps alive the tradition of Torah scholarship. It's nice to be part of an Israel that includes an Abba Eban (“*Even if my English is less than parliamentary*”), a Hebrew University (“*Although I personally prefer MAARIV to Marcuse*”), soldiers on the Suez (“*But a truck backfiring sends me scooting to the nearest bomb shelter*”), kibbutzniks (“*But I couldn't live without Diezengoff*”), and religious Jews (“*Even though a night with the telly and a day at the beach is the real Oneg Shabbat for me*”). Everything fits into its own predestined place in the colorful mosaic of Israel, and every individual feels richer and fuller for the presence of the others.

On a more profound level, most people in Israel recognize an active religious life as essential to the State for more than merely furnishing another facet to its cultural kaleidoscope. Religious tradition provides the validity for the Jews' claim to the land, and the religious heritage is the essence of Jewish peoplehood. Very, very few Israelis would want an Israel without this religious presence. But since so many do not adhere strictly to religious law, they are only willing to accept it and support it as long as the religion is livable and “humanitarian.”

What Price Harmony?

Every now and then, religious law will prescribe a course of action that collides with political expediency or popular sentiment. At such times, much of the general population might find religion too assertive, and political leaders find that the price for the religious presence is more than they care to pay. Actions and reactions then interplay with a ferocity that rips dangerous fissures into the smooth surface of cooperation between the different segments of the population, and the partnership becomes tenuous at best.

Recently, a spate of incidents has taken place which prompted government officials to pronounce judgment on halachic matters from political or "humanitarian" criteria. And halachah, as a framework for life, and the Rabbinat, as its guardians, cannot respond to such pressures for change or modification.

As a result, words and concepts that have been kept under wraps in polite company, and have only been used freely in Talmudic discussions or in the pristine air of a religious court, have danced out from the shadows and dominate daily headlines. "Geirut" (conversion) and "Mamzeirut" (illegitimacy) are being tossed about freely in editorial banter, parlor talk, and bus-line discussions in Israel. And — most significantly — the partnership between State and religion is being strained to the point where each member must ask: Is it really worth it?

Tales from Vienna Courts: Geirut

The conversion controversy began with rumors regarding the existence of a *geirut* factory in Vienna, providing speedy conversions for would-be *olim* on a mass scale. It seemed that it was deemed vital to the welfare of the State that everyone who intended to make his home in Israel — Jew and non-Jew alike — should be facilitated to the utmost in making full use of the Law of Return. If the *oleh*, as a non-Jew, did not qualify for the Law's leniency, that should not deter him. A quickie conversion should be arranged, by directive from the Ministry of Absorption — so went the rumor.

On one hand, the religious community demanded a stop to this flouting of halachah; for in addition to entry to the land of Israel, these people are being ushered into the People of Israel —

a privilege they neither desire nor deserve. On the other hand, the government told the religious community to withhold its objections and to stay out of the way of those who wish to emigrate. New sources of manpower are needed (political considerations). It is unfair to create new obstacles to the normalization of immigrants who have already endured years of suffering behind the Iron Curtain (humanitarian considerations) . . . Why must the Rabbis be so inflexible? (anti-clericalism)

As a result of the cloud of doubt hovering about Vienna, a delegation of highly-respected *dayanim* was dispatched by the Chief Rabbinat to Vienna and returned with tight-lipped discretion to confer with their fellow rabbis. Their report when issued stated that only fifty-four non-Jews were converted during the past year, but the halachic status of each of the fifty-four would have to be re-evaluated on the basis of each *ger's* motive to convert and his translation of motive into action. (Have you ever heard of a 100% recall by General Motors?) The unspoken message was: "*Slow down. Swelling the ranks of Klal Yisroel with converts was never welcome, and is as healthy as a plague. We are tampering with the unity of Jewry as well as the integrity of Judaism, and both must be handled with the utmost caution.*"

The spoken response of politicians was: "*We must do all in our power to hasten the orientation period for converts. No individual must be hindered in his desire to live in Israel. Reduce the year of orientation required for Israeli converts and stop looking so hard at the foreign conversions.*"

Military Mercy and the Marriage Law

The other "controversy" centers around a young man and his sister. Both had made their choice of mates, but found themselves in a dilemma without solution. The rabbinical courts refused to consecrate the marriage of each couple because the brother and sister were both born of an extramarital relationship their mother had maintained (without benefit of divorce from her first husband). The brother and sister pleaded, but were told that unfortunately they were *mamzeirim* — the progeny of an illicit relationship — and as such they would have to limit their choices in marriage to others of similar status or to *geirie tzedek*.

In desperation the brother, an army officer, and his sister, also a one-time *Zahal* member, turned to

their commander-in-chief, Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan. In spite of his unusual tolerance for the religious – General Dayan is an open proponent of perpetuating draft exemption for yeshiva students – he was horrified that these two soldiers could not marry the partners of their choice (humanitarianism). Other ministers, including Golda Meir, called for the convening of a different rabbinical court that might espouse a more liberal attitude toward the marriage of *mamzeirim* (clerical manipulation).

Controversial Creativity

General Dayan was more direct. He related the problem to Rabbi Shlomo Goren, head chaplain of the Israeli army, and asked him to do something about it. Rabbi Goren applied his usual brand of wizardry to the case by attempting to declare the mother's first marriage invalid: Her first husband is a *ger tzedek* converted to Judaism by a respected rabbinical court in Warsaw in 1920. Were he still a non-Jew, his marriage would not have been binding and his wife would have been free to marry her second partner, the father of the young man and lady in question. So why not declare his conversion invalid and retroactively free the mother from her first bonds of matrimony!

The first husband, however, has been living as a faithful, halachic Jew for the past 51 years, as attested to by the Tel Aviv Chief Rabbi, Horav Ovadia Yosef, and he did not take kindly to the suggestion that he “renounce” his half-century of Jewish living. Rabbi Goren offered to re-instate him as a Jew after his “renunciation,” but the sophistry of invalidating his conversion to Judaism for “having been insincere,” and then following this step by embracing Judaism again as a sincere convert did not make much sense to the “first husband” – nor did it seem sensible to many others. (A wag in the secular press wondered if Rabbi Goren would “sell his chometz” to this man during his intermediate status of religious limbo.) Rabbi Goren's attempts have proved abortive so far.

Rabbi Nissim expressed willingness to evaluate the case as part of a larger court, but he could not muster together the required quorum of three to convene on an issue that was already judged by a competent rabbinical court.

The unspoken threat soon followed. The term of duty of the Chief Rabbi expired last month. Both

Rabbis Unterman and Nissim are as capable as ever to serve in their posts, but the Knesset has refrained from extending their term of office for the usual five-year period, or even for a reasonable period of a year. Instead it voted a mere four-month extension to their term, as if to say; *Clear up this mamzeirim business, or you might be out of a job* (political coercion).

Pressing the Issue

Meanwhile the press is hollering about rabbinical cruelty and intransigence. (Incidentally, the hapless plight of the two young people has been candy-coated with an Enoch Arden touch by the Israeli press, employing some shifting of time element and locales. *The husband was given up for lost in the inferno of Nazi Europe. The bereaved “widow” remarried, gave birth to two children, only to find her first husband still alive . . . MAARIV* (March 15, 1971) later exposed the situation as it had truly taken place – *the first husband operating a shoe factory in Tel Aviv since 1927, his wife walking out on him one summer Friday night, etc. . . .* but the press chooses to ignore the facts for the more sentimental, bitter-sweet concoction of their imagination). Even the Anglo-Jewish press in America has picked up the criticism of the insensitive, inflexible clergy of Israel “*who on the heels of bungled rulings on conversions being performed for those of mixed marriages coming out of the Soviet Union, . . . has once again failed to rise to an occasion . . . The problem that arises from this terrible injustice done to the boy and girl, and the failure to find solid halachic grounds for curing their condition, is doubly compounded by the unwillingness of rabbinical judges to even serve on a special court to re-hear the matter unless and until the court which gave the original verdict agrees to transfer the case to their jurisdiction . . .*” (Editorial, *Boston Advocate* April 23)

A Conflict Old, Yet Different

These incidents – and there will undoubtedly be others – are part of a historical conflict with those forces that pressure the Jews to alter their spiritual institutions – a conflict that has been going on since the beginnings of our peoplehood. In modern history, this type of “philosophical” threat has been arising with ever increasing frequency;

Haskalah in Central and Eastern Europe, Neologism in Austro-Hungary, Conservatism in the U.S., liberalism in the U.K., have all in their times proclaimed to have found the right mix of tradition and relevance to answer both the current and historic needs of the Jewish people.

The pressures in Israel, however, are different in one respect. Rather than press for an abrogation of those laws that are no longer "pertinent," the secularists are demanding that all the laws (of conversion and marriage, for instance) remain in force, but that the rabbinical courts render different judgments in cases before them. *If you are competent rabbis, and your hearts are in the right place, you'll find a hetter*" for "unfortunate innocents." The onus is then placed on the rabbinical "practioners

of . . . perversions" (rather than on) "*the Jewish Law, (with) its deep sense of humanity*" (Boston Advocate).

It is unnecessary to defend Jewish Law for its humaneness. "Its ways are pleasant ways and all its paths are forthright" (*Mishlei: 3,17*). It is the violation of Torah Law that inevitably bring tragedy to its violators, and on occasion, even to their offspring. As the design for the world's creation, the Torah contains the formula for a safe, productive existence. Violation of spiritual laws must perforce carry with it catastrophic consequences, no differently from the way explosive chemical mixtures and unsound biological unions (by blood-type or congenital weakness) must result in a calamitous outcome.

The issue of government attempts at interference with religious procedures has been hotly debated on the Knesset floor. The following is an extract from the transcript of a Knesset address by the Agudath Israel representative, RABBI MENACHEM PORUSH:

On the eve of the expiration of the Chief Rabbis' term of office the Knesset voted a short extension . . . all under the cloud of demands to liberalize the laws of conversions and to permit *mamzeirim* to inter-marry. So tragic is the situation that the Minister of Religion (Zorach Wahrhafting) must publicly plead with the government not to reduce the Rabbinate to a *Rabbanut Mitam Hamedinah* ("a clergy by grace of the State") as exists in Russia! . . . How often have you heard a judge rendering a verdict, sighing, "What can I do? Neither do I understand the basis for this law of pre-Mandate vintage nor can I justify it. But it is my duty to interpret and render judgment, not legislate." If a secular judge must enforce man-made laws regardless of their humaneness, what right have we to tamper with G-d given laws, whose purpose is beyond our comprehension? . . . M.K. Ankuryon only asks that the rabbinate relax prohibitions against the marriage of a *kohain* and a divorcé. I assure you that there will be no end to requests for further relaxations . . . In the U.S. reform rabbis are agitating for the right to consecrate mixed marriages . . .

It is also difficult to accept a jurist like Mr. Ankuryon describing Torah Laws as being inflexible.

M.K. Ari Ankuryon (Mapam): I did not call the Torah inflexible. I said that the Rabbis are inflexible.

M. PORUSH: But you are wrong. *The Torah* forbids the marriage of a *mamzeir* and an ordinary Jew. *The Torah* forbids the marriage of a *kohain* and a divorcé. *The Torah* sets requirements for conversion. And it is this very Torah, which is so inflexible in its regulations, that provides us with our entire basis for our claims to this Land . . .

M.K. Arzi, you stood on this floor and demanded a relaxation of the rule for admitting converts to Judaism. Please tell me, what are the rules governing admission to one of the *kibbutzim* that you represent? You, more than any of us, are familiar with the difficulties, the intricate procedures, the trial periods until a novice is accepted into a *Shomer Hatzair* *kibbutz*. And after all the difficulties . . . the oath of allegiance that follows . . . Yet you demand that we become *less* demanding, *less* exclusive in enforcing the requisites for joining the Eternal People, whose foundation and formula for continued existence have been the protection of our national integrity . . . For indeed, we have only survived . . . the two thousand years of exile and its fiery furnaces . . . unvanquished by any foe . . . because we guarded our sacred chain of generations.

Marriage, then, is more than a legal contract and the rituals of matrimony are more than mere ceremony. The institution that joins a wedded couple is called *kidushin*, its very name intimating sanctity — *kedushah*. When a man betroths a woman, he is *mekadesh* her for all time, and this G-d created bond can only be dissolved by another of His creations — the *sefer krisus* (or *get*), the halachic bill of divorcement. All of the Laws related to this institution are of Divine origin, and serve as the framework for the sanctity of the Jewish family. And every act contrary to the strictures of *kidushin* must bear bitter fruit.

Thus the status of the *mamzeir* is not a “punishment” for his parents’ sins. Nor for that matter does he actually suffer ostracism (as one is led to believe by the legends of the “New Testament”). When both a *mamzeir* learned in Torah and a *kohain gadol* (High Priest) who is ignorant of the Law are held captive, and funds for ransoming them are limited, the *mamzeir* takes precedence (Talmud: *Chagiga*). In spite of marriage restrictions, which are as protective of the nobility of the *kohain gadol* as they serve to limit the *mamzeir* in his choice, social acceptance and integral value to the community can favor the *mamzeir*.

Nonetheless, the circumstances that bring *mamzeirim* into our midst are regrettable, and his lament must rend the heart of whoever hears it. Indeed, the rabbis who judged the case in question did so with tears streaming down their cheeks. But the sentiment involved does not alter the facts, anymore than the transference of an inherited disease to one’s offspring is “cured” by the compassion of friends.

It is most puzzling, then, to hear the denunciations of a general and prime minister who, as a matter of course, dispatch married men with families and youths with futures of promises to the battlefronts, without tempering their decisions with mercy. When a fighting man does fall, tears flow, but what choice do his superiors have when the security of an entire nation is at stake?

Marital laws must be respected, and conversion must be exclusive to those who are sincere in seeking it, even though this fidelity to the Law can result in the thwarting of the romantic dreams of the young or the political designs of their elders. Neither natural laws of the spirit, nor the unity and integrity of the nation may be compromised for the sake of the comfort of individuals. Rabbis,

must be respected as the custodians of the Law and their decisions cannot be challenged on the basis of sentiment or romance. Every good soldier understands that. And so should every responsible leader.

End to a Partnership?

The separation of religion from state in most democratic societies serves to protect the governed from domination by one particular denomination to the exclusion of all others. The association of the government with this one faith as the “official religion” would prove offensive, even ominous, to those who confess to a different belief.

While other religious groups in Israel do enjoy the privileges of free worship (often to a far greater degree than in any other lands), the State is a Jewish one, and there is no question but that the State is very firmly bound with the “official” religion—Judaism. Nonetheless, the cry for separation is being raised again and again — as much to protect the governed from their heritage as to protect the heritage from those who govern.

Now that those who occupy the most powerful seats in the government are issuing directives to the rabbis — instructing them on how to render decisions on matters touching the very definitions of our peoplehood, in an attempt at making their partnership a more livable one — the pressures for separation grow even stronger. *How one becomes a Jew, how one is to live as a Jew, how one is to die and be buried as a Jew* (even jurisdiction over the privilege of *kever Yisroel* is being snatched from the hands of the “insensitive rabbis”) — when decisions regarding these fundamentals of Judaism are being usurped by the polity from the clergy and the future only portends of more to the same, then perhaps Separation should be placed on the agenda as a viable option.

“Let a thousand like you fall by the wayside, but change not one letter in My Torah!” (*Midrash Rabba, Vayeirah*) — so said G-d to his chosen, King Solomon. It would be an unfortunate step for the thousands, but there are times when it is necessary.

□

THREE SEFIRAH PIECES

Adapted from the "Hagaddah Shem MiShmuel" of Rabbi Shmuel Borenstein,

Sochocover Rebbe ש"ס

Night Trip

IN recounting the travels of the Jewish people across the Sinai desert, the Torah states clearly that they "went by day and by night" (*Shemos*: 13,21). Since they were "borne on the wings of eagles," covering 120 *mil* in the brief span of an hour, what need was there for nocturnal travel? There was no shortage of time to reach the goals of their travels.

The trek across the desert sands was more than a geographical trip. It was also a physical enactment of the spiritual journey from the bondage of Egypt to the freedom of Sinai, each day bringing an elevation from one spiritual level to the next. This was a constant climb, and could allow for no interruption in its ascent to spiritual freedom. Night, as a period of time, is distinct from day, and would every night, as a matter of course, have been dedicated to rest, this steady climb to Sinai would have lost its continuity. And continuity is an essential element in every spiritual growth.

There is more involved, however, for not only did the traveling take place at night, it was often *initiated* at night. Night must then be considered for its deeper implications, beyond that of being the period when daylight is absent. Day is indicative of that state of mind when choices are clear, and good and evil stand out in stark contrast to one another. This clarity makes climbing from one spiritual station to the next a clearly defined task, and the ability to interpret events basks in the light of "morning," when one can truly "relate Your acts of kindness" (*Tehillim*: 92,3), using them as inspiration for personal growth.

Night refers to the muddled and unclear, when even the right choice appears fraught with hazards, and when what is wrong may appear to be unusually attractive. The wilderness journey to Sinai meant "following Me through the desert in a land not sown with seed" (*Yirmiyahu*: 2,2), with no visible

source of food and sustenance; a journey that was traveled in the "night" of confusion and insecurity. This called upon the Jews to exercise their "faith, through the night" (*Tehillim*: 92,3), as they rose to the heights of Sinai.

Whether it be day or night, whether events and choices stand out with clarity or tempt one to retreat from the uncertainty of darkness, one must still advance in his spiritual journey to Sinai. □

Barley Offering

THE Sefirah count begins on the Second Day of Pesach with the bringing of the *Omer* — a meal offering of barley — to the *Bais Hamikdash*. Every offering always expressed the theme of "a soul for a soul"; the person making the offering visualized a portion of himself that embodied the mundane and earthly being rechanneled to spiritual pursuits. This is the highest level of service — converting the mundane to the spiritual, replacing darkness with light.

This principle also applies to the meal offerings of fine wheat flour, which represents man's intelligence ("A child does not utter his first word — *Abba, Ima* — until he experiences the taste of grain" — Talmud *Berachos*, 40a). Through the medium of the meal offering, the gift of natural intelligence is elevated to the spiritual. But barley is a bovine repast, food from the barnyard, not representative of any ideal human attainment. The only other occasion of bringing a barley-offering in the Temple was the *Minchas Kena'os* that the suspected adulteress brought. "Let her who conducted herself as a beast bring the food of a beast as her offering" (Talmud *Sotah*: 12a). Yet there is an element usually associated with simple beasts that has spiritual implications.

Domesticated animals as a species possess the attribute of willing subservience. This can also be a wholesome trait in man's Divine service, for its

converse, ego-assertion, is a most troublesome characteristic, and it lies at the root of a host of human transgressions. Yet submissiveness as a character trait has its pitfalls. He who willingly bows his head is easily intimidated, and is but a breath away from despair and domination. This aspect of the trait must be avoided.

Ideally, an individual should experience a loss of ego-identity in response to the overwhelming joy and penetrating awe of serving his omnipotent Master – a joyful subservience. At the same time, he should be contemptuous of the espousing of any concept and the perpetrating of any action that is in opposition to service to G-d. This is contradictory to natural subservience. Herein lies the sublimating function of the *Omer* offering – the elevation of a natural subservience to the spiritual, channeling it so that it is used solely to express one's relationship with his Creator, still permitting one to challenge the tyranny of the G-dless.

Hence, the timing of the *Omer* offering on the Second Day of Pesach. Liberation from the yoke of Pharaoh and all that he represents thrusts the Jew into a most joyful relationship with his Redeemer. But he does not abandon the subservience imprinted upon his soul by the generations of bondage to Egypt. Instead he refines it, and devotes it completely to G-d – but only to G-d.

Pharaoh said: "In the past you were servants unto Pharaoh. Now you are servants unto G-d" (*Mechilte*).

So "Sing praise, you servants of G-d" (*Hallel*) – servants of G-d, but not of Pharaoh. □

Seven Weeks of Mourning

THE seven weeks of Sefirah are a season of mourning for the twenty-four thousand disciples of Rabbi Akiva who perished during this period. They were punished, we are told, for not having dealt respectfully with one another. It seems strange that Rabbi Akiva's disciples, whose greatness in Torah and in character is far beyond our comprehension – for we still mourn their loss full two thousand years after their death – should have suffered so severe a punishment for so mild a sin. Both the sin that earned them their death and the mourning that still follows it need some clarification.

The Jewish Observer / May, 1971

Furthermore, there is no element of coincidence in the Jewish calendar, and the commemoration of this national tragedy must somehow be bound with our Sefirah preparations for receiving the Torah.

The *Sefer Hagilgulim* associates these twenty-four thousand disciples with the twenty-four thousand followers of Zimri who died in the plague of *Baal P'or*, at the end of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. The *Zohar*, blames their downfall on their ensnarement in *kishuf* – sorcery. The attraction of sorcery, says the *Zohar*, is strongest when one is least aware of the G-dliness of every aspect of one's existence. Shutting out the Divine source of all living things endows the insignificant with the illusion of possessing imposing values and wielding awesome powers that they do not really have. Attempting to manipulate these powers is involvement in sorcery. The less one is aware of G-d, the greater the importance one assigns to his own worth, and the more he is apt to delve in *kishuf*.

The prime preparation for receiving the Law on Shavuot – both at Sinai and today – is to refine one's personal character, as well as to achieve a total sense of unity with all Jewry. Unity is based on recognizing the value of each and every other member of the group for what he can offer – in constructive action, in inspiring word, or even in helpful presence. The less importance one attaches to one's self, the more receptive he is to the importance of his fellows, and the faster the bonds of unity can hold. By contrast, inflated self-importance prevents one from appreciating his fellows and their function in complementing his own role in the totality of Israel.

This distorted assessment of one's own worth is akin to the misassignment of values that is associated with the *kishuf* of Zimri's time. And it is this same type of exaggerated self-importance that in some small way served to breed discord among Rabbi Akiva's disciples.

During the days of Sefirah, when we mourn the untimely loss of the disciples of Rabbi Akiva, we endeavor to avoid their shortcomings. Self-examination brings us closer to an understanding of our true worth, and our utter dependence upon one another – nearer to our G-d and closer to Sinai. □

The Unbridgeable Gap: the Youth Culture vs. the Establishment

A Torah Look at the American Reality

ANY ATTEMPT AT A COMPARISON between Torah values and those of contemporary society brings us face to face with a compounded dilemma: It is a truism that the values of Torah are constant, that the values of society anything but constant. Society is in such an unremitting state of flux, that it is extremely difficult to determine points of reference. Yesterday's reality is not today's, and tomorrow there will be still a different reality. Moreover, at any given time during our current period, there is no one set of values about which we can say: this is the standard of morality or successful achievement for American society against which we are comparing and contrasting Torah values. Having stated these reservations, let us nonetheless make the attempt.

The changes we are living through are not gradual; they are revolutionary, and produce great stress and tension. As Archibald MacLeish put it: "*One used to take for granted that men would act like men, that there were limits beyond which they would not go. (Today one is frightened by) . . . the sense that the floor you stand on — your human self, your human bottom — is not secure.*" Women's Lib and the Black Panthers, legalized abortion and the Peace movement, co-ed dorms and the drug scene, are all manifestations of a larger, more sweeping wave of change. Words like orgy, astrology, and anarchy which had become

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relics of the past, have come back to plague those who had been brought up to believe that Norman Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* covers represented the Real America. As a result, we have a polarization of philosophy and life styles such as American society has not seen in recent history. The polarization is represented by the caricatures of the hard hat and the hippie, the middle-aged executive and the youthful bomber of the New Left. This is not a political, racial, or class struggle in the classic sense. It is a combination of all these and much more. It is nothing less than a social and moral order approaching the outer limits of the decaying process, undergoing an upheaval which cuts across all political, economic, and social boundaries.

We are witnessing the disintegration of the Protestant Work Ethic and the tearing aside of the thin veneer of Puritan morality which had covered the pagan core of our society. When the Pilgrims came to this country they laid the so-called foundations of American society, basing them on certain standards of morality and ethics. Of central importance in their scheme of things were work, industry, accomplishment, progress. Subsequent waves of immigrants grafted their own mores onto these principles. All this is dissipating before our eyes. Our young people are pulling away from this concept of progress through industry, as well as from the old concepts of morality.

Charles Reich, in his controversial *Greening of America*, sums up the young peoples' view of the Establishment:

"The essence of the Corporate State is that it is essentially singleminded; it has only one value: the value of technology-organization-efficiency-growth-progress... No other value is allowed to interfere with this one; not amenity, not beauty, not community, not even the supreme value of life itself."

From the other pole, Steve Kelman (author of *Push Comes to Shove: The Escalation of Student Protest*) takes a very hard look at the youth culture. In a column in the *Chicago Tribune* (Nov. 20, 1970) he writes: *"The youth culture is more than music, hair, and clothes, which are its symbols. The youth culture is, above all, a set of attitudes. It represents a despairing self-pitying pessimism about life, a hostility to routinized work, an attempt to cure psychological problems through a mixture of drugs, and the mystical notion that if only everyone else would join the youth and become a drop-out freak, everything would turn out fine"*.

The youth culture and the exponents of the Protestant Work Ethic are here glaring at each other across what would appear to be the much-celebrated generation gap. (Interestingly enough, Steve Kelman is a 1970 Harvard graduate, while Reich is a middle-aged academician. Youth and age in their context seem to be states of mind.) Each group is ready to point out the selfishness of the other while steadfastly maintaining its own idealism.

On the one hand, the youth (and those who "think young") are appalled by the materialism of the Establishment and are, therefore, worthy of being called idealists. Ask any college president and he will tell you that there never lived so idealistic a generation. Its members are concerned with Peace, Love, the Brotherhood of Man, the Wholesomeness of our Environment, while the older generation, the Establishment, has idolized the dollar and dehumanized the human being.

On the other hand, the captains of industry and the working force of the country (and their sympathizers among the youth) are also men of high ideals who still believe in country and patriotism, in work and industry, in religion and morality, while the young punks on the other side are drop-outs and hippies.

Both Are Right/Both Are Wrong

FROM a Torah perspective, it would seem that both groups are right and both are wrong. The

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youth balk at the materialism of the Establishment while their true motive may be more akin to a willful rejection of responsibility and restraint. Members of the older generation are shaken by the libertinism of the youth, while their true fears are for the overthrow of the comfortable established order.

Actually, the confrontation between the Establishment and the youth is nothing more than a divergency in interpretation of the great American Dream of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The question is whether happiness lies in the amassing of material goods and the attaining of position in society, or in the more transitory pleasures of the flesh and the psyche. To a great degree, each of these groups is right in its assessment of the other. What the young people say is true. This country *has* been built upon an idolization of material progress. Money, power, scientific technology *are* the *avodah zorah* – the idolatry – of American life. It is uncontestable.

On the other hand, the people who still believe in hard work are right about those who would join the Youth Movement. The kids want instant gratification. In their naivete, they believe that world problems can be solved immediately. In their frustration, when this does not happen, they follow the violent road of revolution, the escape route of the drug culture – or both.

An Americanized Judaism?

THERE IS STILL ANOTHER GAP, and it spreads like a yawning chasm between Torah values and those of contemporary society. The problems those loyal to Torah must face in living in such a society are tremendous. Although the values of the non-Jewish world were never Torah values, there was always a certain sense of propriety, at least an outward acceptance of certain standards of morality, with which we could live. But today, restraint and self discipline are being tossed aside with such rapidity that we find it increasingly difficult to cope with the atmosphere of everyday life. We are surrounded – even engulfed – by waves of obscenity and pornography. We are told that the woman who has many children is polluting the environment while the abortionist is performing a great humanitarian service... Our sense of values has been so distorted that even Reich's "supreme value of life itself" has lost its meaning.

Are we part of this world of violence and obscenity... or must we isolate ourselves from it?

It is now a matter of history: Before the passage of the landmark New York State legislation that legalized abortion, the vote was evenly divided, which would have meant defeat for the measure. Then (it was just before Pesach) one of the legislators arose, and with tears in his eyes, in effect said: *How can I sit at the Seder with my family knowing that my vote caused this measure to be defeated?* He, therefore, in the name of all that Pesach stands for, changed his vote, which was the decisive one in the passage of the bill. In the State of New York, as of today, close to one hundred thousand human lives have been snuffed out before they had a chance to see the light of day, all in the name of Jewish liberalism.

We Torah Jews are confronted not only with the problems of a world in descent. Not only must we view the *Tzelem Elokim* – the Image of G-d – being ripped away from the face of man, but we must witness the distortion of the mission of the Jewish people. There is a plethora of leagues and congresses and committees all speaking in the name of Jews and Judaism in support of the legalization of abortions and of the relaxation of the laws which could limit pornography. At the same time they are fighting with all the facilities at their disposal against any type of public aid to Torah education – which provides our only hope for insulating our children against the devastating inroads of an amoral society.

A Judaized America

THIS WORLD OF VIOLENCE AND OBSCENITY, drug abuse, promiscuity and an unrelenting pursuit of material possessions and pleasures – are we part of this world and must we find some *modus vivendi* within it, or are we better off isolating ourselves completely? Can this gulf between Torah values and those of society at large ever be bridged? Although we may be unrealistic in think-

ing we can effectively isolate ourselves from the world about us, we should not be so naive as to think that we can bridge the gap, that the Torah's message will be heard and all of America will listen and reform. No pious pronouncements on our part, articulating Jewish concepts of peace, morality, and the rights of man, are going to make the difference. The military-industrial complex will continue its expansion, the revolutionaries will continue to revolt, and the hippies will continue to drop out. It is in regard to ourselves that we must define our attitudes and our position vis-a-vis the Gap.

The Eternal Conflict

A PRIME MESSAGE that we must learn from the history of the Jewish people is: There is an innate incompatibility between Yaakov and Eisav. The Torah conveys this in clear, unmistakable terms. When Rivkah bore the twin progenitors of Rome and Jerusalem, *ויתרוצצו הכנים בקרבנה*,

“The children struggled while still within her.” As Rashi explains it, the two children she was bearing – Yaakov and Eisav – had already begun their eternal struggle for the inheritance of two worlds – *Olam Hazeih* and *Olam Habo* – this world and the world to come.

It is a grave error to assume that Eisav was only a creature of this world for he wanted both worlds. The Midrash tells us: *Reb Yochanan said: “Each one ran to kill the other. Raish Lakish said: “Each one nullified the Mitzvah of the other.”* Reb Yochanan tells us that from the time of their conception was a physical war between the two. Each sought to destroy the other. Raish Lakish adds another dimension to this age-old strife. Yaakov has moral prerogatives, standards of conduct, and mitzvos. And Eisav sets these to naught. This is understandable. Yaakov's mitzvos prevent him from worshipping idols, from spilling blood, from acting immorally. Eisav is impelled to negate them.

But the Midrash tells us something more profound. Eisav also has mitzvos that Yaakov nullifies. Indeed, even the greatest *rasha* is an idealist. *Avodah zarah* – idolatry – is an idealism. Eisav seeks some expression for the spiritual aspects of his nature and this expression takes the form of idolatry – worship of the sun, stars, animals, plants – or worship of the state – or of man himself. Eisav is not purely materialistic. Yaakov, yet unborn, sought to leave his mother's womb as she passed the houses of Torah study, and Eisav did the same when she passed temples of idolatry.

The contemporary Eisav also has his commands, and so does he have his prohibitions. *Thou shalt shed thine inhibitions* – you commit a grievous

תקול קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו.

“The voice is the voice of Yaakov, the hands are the hands of Eisav.” Our Rabbis have explained: אין יעקב שולט אלא בקול ואין עשו שולט אלא בידים. “Yaakov rules only with the voice. Eisav rules only with the hands.” Whether in his endeavors aimed at securing his *Olam Hazeḥ* or in those aimed at gaining *Olam Habo*, the pattern of Eisav's life-style is clear. It must deal in the tangible; something one can put his hands on. By contrast, Yaakov's ascendancy can only be gained through that which is uniquely his – the voice of Torah. Not only his *Olam Habo* – but also his *Olam Hazeḥ* can be achieved in no other way than in proclaiming the word of the Living G-d. As a nation of technicians and industrialists, we run a commendable second

Can this gulf between Torah values and those of society be bridged?

crime if you do not satisfy your natural desires. *Thou shalt endeavor to amass much wealth* – if you do not, you will show a suspicious lack of ambition. *Thou shalt not refrain from relentless pursuit of “a goal” in life – even at the expense of others*, because then you will be weak-kneed. *Thou shalt not wear clothes that are out-of-style*, because then you will have committed an unpardonable sin: you will be dated – just not with it. Eisav has many commands, and it is Yaakov's mission to smash them, to nullify them, and to lay bare their emptiness.

Eisav also has his *Olam Habo* – his world in its ideal state. For the executive it is Technology and Industry – the Apollo moon shots are an apex of this idealism. For the hard hat it is security for the working man – the union-shop and social security, vacations with pay and early retirement. For the blacks it is freedom of opportunity – open housing and equal employment. For the hippie it is love – the physical kind. For the Weatherman it is peace – represented by an encircled, inverted “Y” – not to be confused with Sholom, which denotes a completeness – a perfect harmony of body and soul, of man and fellowman, of man and G-d. The common denominator of all of these worlds of idealism is their preoccupation with the material, the tangible.

to Eisav. As a nation of prophets and priests, we have led the world from darkness to light.

This is the age-old rift between Yaakov and Eisav. This gap has always been unbridgeable – and in our times it becomes more obvious from day to day.

The Impossible and the Imperative

LET US THEN FORGET about reforming Eisav and certainly about him educating us. Let us turn our attention to the problems we face as Jews and as Shomrei Torah in our forced co-existence with Eisav.

Unfortunately great numbers of our fellow-Jews have lost their bearings and have been set adrift. As a consequence of the efforts of almost two centuries of Reform and assimilation, the false image of the Jew as the completely secularized liberal has been imprinted on the face of the majority of our people. We must find ways of reaching these people, young and old, and communicating the message that Torah is not a museum relic, but very much alive. That it is not a thing of the ancient past, but the only means by which Jews can retain their identity and by which mankind can retain its humanity.

In recent years, a number of Orthodox groups have started reaching out to the alienated and the non-committed, chiefly on the college campuses. Lubavitch, Yavneh, and the NCSY have initiated programs of one sort or another. They are not, as yet, mass movements which are succeeding in bringing back our estranged youth in droves. The work is painstaking, involving individual contacts, and must be broadened.

The Dangers of Exposure

WE MUST ALSO BE AWARE that American reality has already made inroads into our intimately circumscribed camp of Torah Jews, and as a result, two very clear and present dangers relate to us. Considering how the Orthodox community finds itself in such close proximity to the world about us—even deeply involved in it—it is obvious that we cannot escape its influence and that our own standards are being lowered. Our own homes are being invaded, and our own families are being tainted by the moral deterioration which surrounds us. The infiltration route is well-trodden: from non-Jew to secular Jew, from secular Jew to religious Jew, from Orthodox Jew to *ben Torah* . . . Then, of course, there is the direct route via the higher educations we afford our children, as well as the communications media and the literature that even the most observant homes often usher in. This invasion of values is one danger.

Our values have deteriorated;... we aim lower and settle for less.

There is another subtle—but no less serious—threat: we aim lower and settle for much less. If we listen carefully to our own voices, we can detect a tendency to boast: *The world about us is "treif" but we can be proud of our Yeshiva boys and Bais Yaakov girls. Look at the non-Torah youth and compare our children to them. How bad they are! How good we are!*

There is truth in this, and it should be publicized. But there is always the attendant danger that the worse "they" get, the easier it will be for "us" to take credit for the big difference between "us" and "them," without really having accomplished

much. We will be happy that our children are married to their mates; we will be proud that our kids still believe in taking baths. The mark of a respectable Yeshiva *bachur* may soon be that he takes a haircut and that his sideburns are shorter than those of the average kid on the street. We can lull ourselves into a false sense of euphoria. But this is far from our goal.

Our motto is *מסורה אבותינו בידינו*. We bear the heritage of the *Avos* in our hands. The *Gemora* in *Berachos* tells us that when we say "*Avos*" we refer to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. — Religious Jews? — Decent folk? — Moral human beings?

These forefathers of ours were "the chariot for the *Shechinah* — the vehicle for the Divine presence in this world. It was not their task to establish a nation of religious bourgeoisie. They were the carriers of the Divine Image in man. They entered the arena of history at a time when the world was filled with idolatry, murder, and immorality. They lived in the cultural sphere of Canaan and in the Egyptian empire. They walked among the people of these cultures, and yet they achieved enviable heights of spiritual nobility.

Heirs of the Avos

WE MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT of our role in history as their heirs. Throughout the blackest periods of persecution and rejection, the Jewish people produced spiritual giants whose Torah and *tzidkus* (piety) illuminated the world. We produced — *stam yidden* — simple Jews whose life was Torah and mitzvos. Jewesses upon whose faces the *Shechinah* rested and whose sole goal in life was to raise sons who would be *talmidei chachomin* and *yorei Hashem*. Our most recent generations had a Chofetz Chaim, a Chazon Ish, a Brisker Rav. Yet today, our perspective seems to have been distorted and our values diluted. Our Orthodox Jews have become concerned Jewish parents, anxious that their children have "the best of both worlds." The secular-Jewish "my son the doctor" has its counterpart in our ranks in "my son the Orthodox scientist." We have developed our own "Jewish Work Ethic," and we are concerned that our children should not be weaned away from it. Long after the utter moral bankruptcy of the college campus has been laid open for all to see, our Orthodox Jewish parents still pay dutiful homage to this tarnished symbol of the old American myth that a good education insures happiness for life.

This is tempered by a fear of the Kolel Syndrome—whereby Junior may become too enamored with Torah and renounce goals of amassing material wealth for more spiritual pursuits. How ironic that it is precisely on the college campus that the cauldron of revolution boils most violently and it is precisely there that rejection of the awe for material attainment is being fostered!

The college awakening may be an edifying experience for others. But we must ask ourselves that ultimate question: Are we willing to risk a possible loss of material benefits, as did our Avos, so that we and our children can become greater human beings, or would we risk the *neshamos* of our dearest possessions for the sake of financial gain and social position?

A Legacy of Questions

THERE ARE OTHER QUESTIONS we must ask: Does our chosen life-style dictate our choice of friends or does our choice of friends dictate our life-style?

In our preferences of mates for our sons and daughters, do we assign priority to those qualities of mind and heart that are the true qualities of the person? Do we look for Torah scholarship and for refinement of character? Or do we seek social and financial status?

What are our choices of literature and entertainment? Do we provide the proper control and guidance in our children's selections in these areas, or do we let them turn the knobs themselves as long as they're quiet?

Where do we stand in the perennial choice between *tznius* (modesty) and ostentation? (And this is not limited to dress.) Have we not fallen prey to the American sickness of presenting everything in a bigger, more lavish fashion? (Strange that Americans should describe overly-lavish functions as being "Jewish-Wedding-Baroque"!)

All of these do not touch halachah in the narrow sense. They reflect values — values by which we live and which make all the difference in the world. A child grows up sensing what is paramount in his parents' lives. This is what, in turn, either profoundly molds his own life or causes him to revolt against that which he feels intuitively is wrong.

Where is the emphasis in our lives? Is it on the spiritual — *the voice of Jacob*? — or on the more tangible — *the hands of Eisav*? . . . Are we more worried about what we can accomplish in life or

about what we can put in the bank?

Let us formulate our goals. We must achieve for ourselves and our children a delicate balance between conformity and individualism. We must educate our children to understand what being an individual means — not to be drawn along blindly by the fads of the crowd. But we must also impart to them the responsibility of acting as a member of society, and working within the framework of an organization and a people. We must instill in our children a respect for work, but we must also teach them not to idolize work . . . We must instill in them a respect for property — their own as well as others — but not fall into the trap of educating them to worship possession of property.

But above all, our task — and it is not an easy one! — is to raise our sights above the crush of day-to-day living; to realize who we are, and to let our children understand who they are — the sons of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. We have to stop making a stir in our tea cups as if they contained the Atlantic Ocean. We must force ourselves to stand back and perceive the majestic sweep of the history of the people of Torah, throughout all its wanderings, and realize that we and our children are part of it, and that the particular society in which we find ourselves is but one of the prisms through which the light of Moshiach must filter.

In Summary

LET US FORGET ABOUT RAPPROCHEMENT with the civilization of the moment. Let us live in peace alongside the nations of the world and forget about cultural exchange. We will never close the gap.

To our people who have been led astray, let us go out and proclaim that Torah still lives, and that in Torah *only* is there life; that there is humanity in Torah and that it is all that is left to humanity.

As for ourselves — we who remain loyal to Torah — let us not shrink from an unrelenting and — if need be — painful self-evaluation . . . Let us ask ourselves: *Who are we? Where are we going? Are we ready to trade the Kingdom of G-d for the illusory and ephemeral values of possession and position?*

For the strength required for such evaluation we need the help of the Almighty, as we pray:

ומהר לבנו לעבודך באמת.

Purify our hearts to serve you with truth. □

Five... Four... Three... Two... One... BLASTOFF... An earthshaking roar. In scant seconds the sprawling complex of the space-center has disappeared from sight. Minutes later, the outline of a continent becomes an awesome view for the space voyagers.

Thus begins one of the great experiences of our time. While its practical value to contemporary society may be questioned, its imprint on our age is undeniable. As the end product of advanced and intense technological efforts, space flight is the identifying feature of an epoch.

Yet, perhaps the major significance of this development is not space travel itself, but rather the view that it provides. Well do we remember the exclamation of America's first astronaut upon beholding from afar the splendor of our planet: "What a beautiful sight!" That sight proved to be revealing as well as beautiful. It was learned, among other things, that the earth is actually shaped differently than had been previously assumed.

A basic truth had been carried to a far-out application. Man relates to an object according to his view of it; and his view depends upon his perspective. When something is viewed from a position on the object itself, the view is necessarily limited and distorted by the proximity. By contrast, an inspection from the perspective of an outside observation point is bound to be more encompassing and more comprehensive.

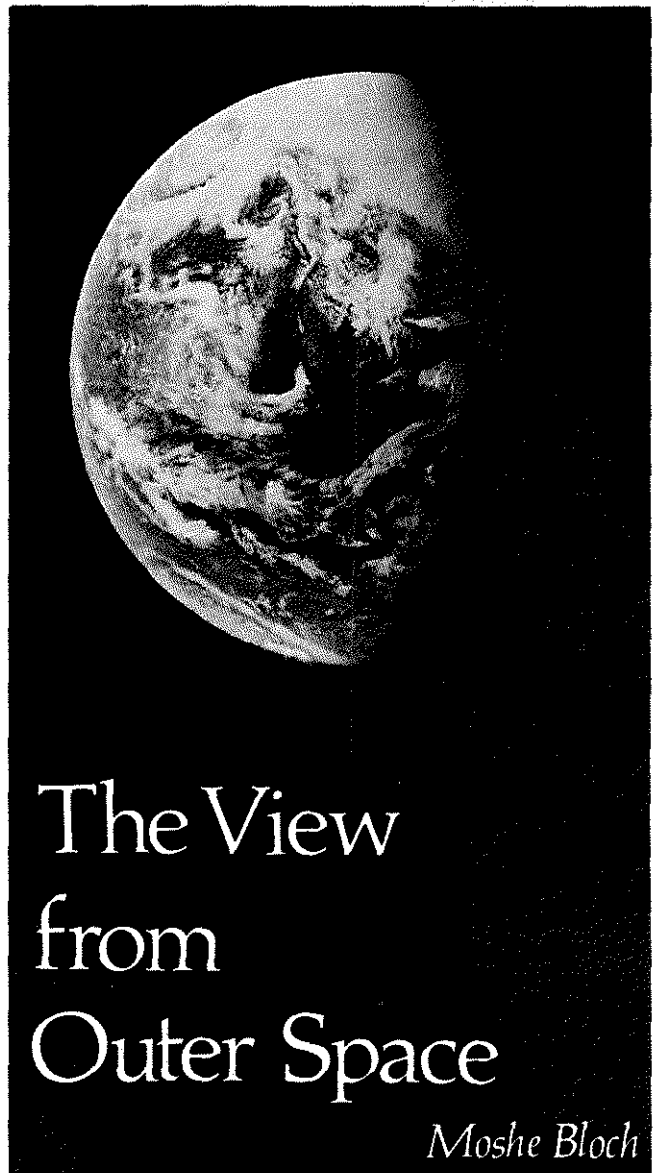
A New Perspective

As long as man was confined to earth, he lacked the perspective with which to discern the uniqueness of his world, or to fully appreciate it as an entity. On the other hand, before the astronauts, there had never been such direct human witness to earth's minuteness in the vastness of creation.

How infinitesimal are man and his works when seen from these heights! How unimaginably powerless is man, in comparison with the life-force of the universe! How wondrous must be any relationship with the source of this endlessness! How purposeless and futile seem the pursuit of worldly minutiae when reflected upon from such lofty altitudes!

These are the obvious and powerful lessons of this experience. Indeed, even in an earthbound state, great men have made use of the measuring

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rod of the firmament to expose the meagerness of their being.

"When I see Your Heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars which You have established," inevitably then . . . "What is a mortal that You should remember him? and what is the son of man that You should reckon with him?" (*Tehillim* 8). Even contemplating the moon, which has been explored in our day, should be sufficient to fill man with humility.

"The end purpose of knowledge is to recognize that one does not know" (*Rambam*). Certainly in this instance — the first exploratory steps into the infinity of the universe — the intelligent observer must be startled by the sudden

insight into man's paucity and impotence.

Privileged to observe the cosmos from the vantage point of space, man should be overwhelmed with a sense of humbleness. If, instead, space adventure has resulted in self-acclaim, in humanity extolling its own genius, it is one more sorry comment on modern civilization, and the nature of its quest for knowledge.

The lack of meaningful vision in these matters has been expressed by our sages: "Woe unto the creatures who see and do not realize what they see!" (Talmud: *Chagiga* 12b). If one's life is focused on the inconsequential, eventually his vision becomes permanently limited. Even extraordinary sights will not jar his eyes into proper focus. Thus, from the unprecedented vantage point of outer space, the gaze of man falls upon – man; minuscule man and whatever fame that he can attain.

Spiritual Myopia

This nearsightedness is by no means restricted to the secular world. It afflicts the life of every Jew. Our perspective and values reflect the level on which we live our lives. Living in a sea of materialism restricts our vision to the material.

B'doreinu anu – in the particular circumstances of our generation, how much more so is this true!

Study for a moment a very common example. We often express our admiration for the Jew who, while preoccupied with his professional or business pursuit, is a "*shomer mitzvos*, too." We are impressed with the *ben-Torah* who has left the environment of the *beis hamidrash* to seek "success," but "still learns sometimes, too." Whereas judgment of an individual's merit should be left to "the only Judge" – the values we employ to reach our assessment should be appraised. Upon examination, they indeed betray a lowly perspective. They truly reflect the earthling's point of view.

How different is the appraisal of the Ultimate Court of Judgment, where every individual is challenged: "*Ploni ben Ploni*, you were allotted a specified number of years on earth in which to serve your Creator and acquire eternal reward in proportion to the fulfillment of your mission. What have you accomplished towards this end?" A scrutiny from this lofty station offers a fearfully different perspective.

In other aspects of life, this limited type of vision is equally prominent. In our general involvement with the material, the forbidden becomes unduly enhanced and is lent an illusion of substance, thereby endangering our fidelity to Torah and its precepts.

The Mitzvah Perspective: Tzitzis and Aliyah

Fortunately the Torah, through its mitzvos, provides a perspective with which to correct our vision. "And you should see it (the blue thread of the *tzitzis*) and you will remember all My mitzvos and you will perform them. And you will not turn after your heart and your eyes" (*Bamidbar* 15:39). "The eyes and the heart are the two promoters of transgression. The eyes see and the heart desires. Then the body commits the sin" (*Rashi*). Obviously, the solution to this distortion of values must be found in its primary source – the eyes. Therefore, the Torah commands: "Look at the *t'cheiles* the blue strand of the *tzitzis* . . . *T'cheiles* is similar to the sea – the sea is similar to the sky – and the sky (reminds one of) the *kisei hakavod* – the Holy Throne of G-d" (Talmud: *Menachos* 43a). A look at the *t'cheiles* prods the Jew to view the world as it actually is – the end link in a chain of Divine brilliance. Envisioned from the pinnacle of the *kisei hakavod* how different is the tableau! And a once overpowering source of temptation is relegated to ephemeral obscurity!

"The mitzvah of *tzitzis* is equal to all the other mitzvos combined" (Talmud: *Nedarim* 25a). For by perceiving his station, suspended in the infinitude of the cosmos, a Jew is empowered through his mitzvos to live a truly creative life – his every deed having impact on the remotest heavens. Without this vision, his mitzvos are earthly, and to a great extent will only produce an earth bound effect.

We pray on Yom Tov: *na'aleh vaneiraeh* – "May we merit once again the mitzvos of *aliyas regel* – of ascending to Jerusalem on the Festivals. We have been taught that "the Bais Hamikdash is higher than all of Eretz Yisroel" (Talmud: *Sanhedrin* 87a). In addition to its literal meaning, this may be understood as a reference to the spiritual heights of Jerusalem and the Beis Hamikdash. During the Foot Festivals, the Jew is obligated to visit the Beis Hamikdash and perform the mitzvah of *R'iyah* –

viewing the *Shechinah*. He is then privileged to a panorama of the world from the sublime loftiness of the sancity of the Beis Hamikdash.

Thus do the mitzvos perfect the vision of a Jew, and teach him to see from the heights of holiness rather than from the depressions of the mundane.

The Torah — Study Perspective

The Jewish People has been Divinely favored with yet another way to enhance its mortal vision — the study of Torah. Torah knowledge — the word of the living G-d — is extra-terrestrial in its very essence. This was powerfully illustrated by the *aron hakodesh*, which housed the two tablets of the Law and the sacred Torah scroll that was written by Moshe Rabbeinu himself. This repository did not occupy any measure of space in the inner chamber of sanctity — the *kodesh hakodoshim* — where it stood (Talmud: *Yuma*, 26a). Earthly standards of measurement have no validity in the universe of Torah. So, too, our Rabbis tell us, did the *aron* “bear its bearers” (Talmud *Sotah* 35a). Gravity, the vital principle inherent to everything in the physical world, the force that pulls man earthward, was entirely irrelevant to the G-d given Torah.

In yet another facet of this basic concept, “*Adam Harishon* reached from one end of the world to the other” (Talmud: *Chagiga* 12b). The first man was the handiwork of the Creator, formed during the birth period of the world. He was not a product of the existing order of this world. Thus his perception and vision could encompass the entire world, rather than suffer the confinement of the in-world gaze of his descendants.

A “Mussar Brief”

In our era, temptation holds sway beyond any need for elaboration. The miniature sanctuaries of the *golus*, our synagogues and houses of study, enjoy many visitors, but suffer from a scarcity of *olei regel* — pilgrims who truly ascend to the highlands of sanctity. Those who have reached enviable achievements in Torah erudition — the *Gedolei Torah* of our generation — are not being consulted, and the posterity of Adam have a dimness of vision that shames their forebearer.

“Do not scorn the *mussar* — the reproof of G-d, my son” (*Mishlei* 3:11), warns the wisest of men.

Surely the space exploits of recent years are a “*mussar brief*” a letter of admonition from the Providential Hand, directed to a sorely wanting generation. We dare not disregard its message.

Hearken, then, to the clarion message that rings forth from the further reaches of outer space.:

Kinderlach! guide your lives and works with a vision from on high. Then you shall truly attain the heavens! □

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Second Trip:
Wednesday, July 21—
Tuesday, August 10 (3 weeks)
Third Trip:
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Tuesday, August 31 (3 weeks)

TWO TRIPS:

First Trip:
Wednesday, June 30—
Tuesday, July 27 (4 weeks)
Second Trip:
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second looks

SCIENTIFIC PLAYTHINGS

There is a new toy on the market. It is made in Israel, and can be bought at the better museums in the United States. A press release describes it as an "educational toy intended to give a child some elementary knowledge of archaeology. The kit includes a model of an ancient jar and instructions as to the painting of the jar in the manner of several ancient cultures. The child chooses the design he likes, paints the jar with the paint and brush provided, and then breaks the jar. He then becomes a modern archaeologist who is restoring a piece of 'ancient' pottery. Every detail is 'true to life' — down to

the ceramic glue also provided in the kit."

We might prefer to see our children at play as budding archaeologists instead of embryo soldiers or cops-and-robbers; but there is something phony about the idea of choosing a period and painting an appropriate design — then smashing the jar, and gluing it together again! Making the solution before creating the riddle is an experience in deceit, and the final of "aha!" of discovery must ring hollow . . . Supplying an experiment with a foregone conclusion is simply not scientific . . . Or is it? Perhaps we should take a second look

CASE IN POINT #1: MASADA

Archaeology is a national pastime in Israel. Soldiers on leave, statesmen on vacation, professors on sabbatical, all dig the archaeological scene. Ancient ruins and artifacts are everywhere under foot in the Holy Land. Layer after layer of archaeological strata reveal vibrant communities and the invaders who destroyed them, and make excavating uncommonly fruitful. But the diggers are after more than fragments of glories

past.

They are also trying to endow the current *yishuv* with a sense of history, grounded in the everyday existence and the inspiring valor (whenever possible) of long ago, meanwhile circumventing the two millennia of denigrating *golus* and wandering. This gives the sabra an opportunity to latch on to the heroic Bar Kochva image, and sidestep Hannah Arendt's humiliating appellation, "a nation of sheep."

the israel museum, jerusalem
youth wing

archaeological restoration game



The first Israel postage stamps did in fact bear the likeness of the Bar Kochva coins of 1900 years ago, and for a while exported brass and ceramics all had a freshly-dug green patina sprayed on — direct from the excavation site to you. As a result, 20th century Israel is only a generation away from the 1st century Commonwealth of Israel.

The Masada, explorations, commandeered by Yigal Allon, and carefully documented in his beautifully crafted book of several years ago, revealed the full scope of the heroic stand of several hundred Jews against the murderous siege of the Roman army 1900 years ago. As a defiant gesture against the invaders' plan to enslave the defenders of the Masada, the besieged people entered into a suicide pact to deny the Romans even a single slave to lead away from the stony fortress. The hot, dusty promontory overlooking the Dead Sea is a chilling setting for a time-trip to this heroism of the ancients.

— But wait! How comfortably does the idea of heroic suicide sit with a nation threatened on three sides, and unappreciated on the fourth? A nation where anything less than a fighting stance is suicide, and where suicide is hardly a heroic gesture, but a despised cop-out? Incompatible? Well, you can always re-write history. So, Yigal Allon has decided to skip over the writings of Josephus and the findings of his digs, and even to ignore his own book *Masada* — all which corroborate the suicide-pact legend — to present a new hypothesis, that “they went down fighting — to the last man, woman and child” (according to a recent

TA release).

“... The child chooses the design he likes, paints the jar... and breaks the jar. He then

becomes the modern archaeologist who is restoring a piece of ‘ancient’ pottery. Every detail is ‘true to life’...”

CASE IN POINT #2: CARBON 14

This ersatz-potsherd approach should not be too shattering to the sensibilities of the armchair scientist, since theories pieced together from archaeological fragments have never been watertight, and are only speculative at best, anyway. However, where a good, hard second look *must* be taken, and the objectivity of the scientist and his tools be subjected to a microscopic examination, is in regard to the use of carbon 14 as a dating device.

One of the tenets of modern science is that radioactive material decays at a precisely known rate. As a result, the balance of the original materials and the residue from the decay give clues to the age of the object being tested — the archaeological artifact, the dinosaur bones, or the moon rock.

With the aid of carbon 14 tests, scientists have been able to stretch the age of ancient civilizations to 10,000 years, the era of the dinosaur to 65 million-225 million years ago, and the age of the oldest moon rocks to 4.6 billion years.

Atheists and others who reject “the creation theory” as a non-binding fundamentalist doctrine nodded in agreement at the empirical evidence provided by carbon 14 counts.

When faced with this challenge to the traditionally accepted age of the world, some orthodox Jews have become spiritual schizophrenics. They switch from “scientist” to “believer” and back again, depending upon whether they are reading selections from *Life Science Library* or (*lehardil*) studying *Chumash* and *Ramban*, safely sealing off one identity from the other.

Others have felt forced to make a choice between thinking as non-religious scientists or as unscientific religious Jews — and the choice was not always made without some personal damage. For those who accepted scientific findings as the pivotal point of their thinking, the dominance of man in the cosmic scheme, the standing of Adam at the pinnacle as the lofty “creation of G-d’s own hands” who “lacked but a little from the angels” (*Tehillim*: 8,6), was shrouded in doubtful legend. The “age” of the earth and the bones it contained pointed to an evolutionary rise of man through the animal kingdom rather than a steady descent from a spiritual peak once inhabited by Adam and again by the Children of Israel at Sinai. For many a believing Jew, who simply could not accept scientific findings as the uncontested truth, there was

the gnawing feeling that his was an obscurant religion — that he must either ignore science completely or defensively find fault with science as a G-d substitute. The situation was more a truce than a coming to peace with one's self.

Some, of course, felt secure in their faith and could only marvel at the ingenious house-of-cards scientists would construct to relieve themselves of the burden of accepting the Torah's word as it is written, with all its concomitant obligations and restrictions. The drive to pursue desires and inclinations unchecked by a Supreme Being is a drive strong enough to distort one's thinking and impair one's scientific objectivity; for those who understand that, the range of "data" and theories contrary to Torah was a phenomenon, but not a threat to

emunah. Scientific achievement can reach the moon, but never explain it.

The Challenge

But what about carbon 14 dating? This is as precise and un-failing as a Swiss watch, and its evidence of aging was indisputable. In fact, it drove believing Jews into hypothesizing corners, theorizing about the radio-active flood waters of Noach, and the carbon-count of the ante-diluvian swamp lands. They could not ignore it — after all, is it not nature's time-keeper?

Then, on March 29, at a national meeting of the American Chemical Society, Dr. John L. Anderson described experimental observations with radio-active carbon 14 that, he said, "just do not fit the accepted

theory."

"The emitted radiations," he said, "differed from classical theory in that they did not occur in the same pattern or independently of what other atoms were doing."

Dr. Anderson, an independent chemical consultant in Chattanooga, said he had confirmed his findings through independent tests at Atomic Energy Commission laboratories.

"It raises questions that have to be answered," Dr. Anderson said at a news conference. He added that his evidence might not disprove in all cases the theories of radioactive decay rates, but it might show that they "are not universal" principles (N.Y. Times, March 30).

Some scientists found in Dr. Anderson's work "the opening of a real bag of worms." Others said

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it was like "finding an exception to the laws of gravity," and reserved comment.

It might catalyze some erstwhile schizophrenics to establish one permanent identity, inhabiting a G-d created world that was indeed fashioned in six days and six nights, just 5,731 years ago.

And, of course, there are others who, for reasons of their own, prefer a world that came into being by accident to one created by a Supreme Intelligence. They will go back to their jars again, *to choose a new design they like, paint the jars... break... become modern... restore... Every detail true to life...* □

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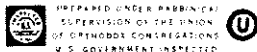
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Letters to the Editor



INCOMPLETE DEFINITION

To the Editor:

We were very surprised to note that in your recent Teves issue the Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah was described as "a council of elder Roshei Yeshivos and Chassidic Rebbes." This definition is both historically untrue and potentially damaging. The Moetzes, from its beginning up until very recent times, contained prominent rabbonim of large kehillos among its members. Since such men like Shlomo Breuer of Frankfurt, Avrohom Klein of Nuremberg, W. Feilchenfeld of Posen, and Chanoch Ehrentreu of Munich were not Roshei Yeshivos, they must have been, according to your definition, Chassidic Rebbes. This, however, was not exactly the case.

We suggest that, in the future, a more careful description of the highest policy making body of Agudas Yisroel be called for.

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Thank you for bringing this serious editorial omission to our attention.

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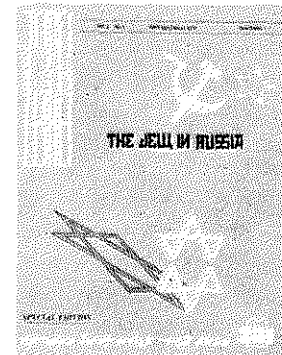
MISSING: ONE OBSERVER

To the Editor:

I have recently returned from the Telzer Yeshiva in Wickliffe, where I was an eager reader of *The Jewish Observer*. Here in Melbourne there isn't a decent Jewish paper or periodical . . . for a *ben-yeshiva* to read; I return once again to you, sending in my subscription . . . I would appreciate it if you would start right away.

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LETTERS CONTINUED

TRANSLATIONS OF THE TORAH: FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR PEOPLE

To the Editor:

There are many statements in the article, "Three Dark Days in Teves," that are contrary to what we have learned about the *Targum Hashivim*, and we would like to challenge some of them.

The article begins: "This day (the eighth of Teves), marks the completion of the first translation of the Torah into a foreign tongue, Greek."

In *Parshas Ki Savo* we learn that *Moshe Rabbeinu* commanded the Jewish People to set up great stones at the entrance to the Land of Israel, on the banks of the Jordan River: "And you shall write on these stones all the words of the Torah, explaining them well" (*Devarim* 27,8), "— in the seventy languages of the world" (*Rashi*).

If *Moshe* commanded that the Torah be translated, then we cannot say, "once a translation is attempted, changes and misconceptions must creep into its hallowed pages." *Moshe's* precedent is surely one that can be followed.

And his precedent was followed. There were many other translations of the Torah. That of *Reb Saadia Gaon* into Arabic, for example, and in our own times, that of *Rabbi Shmshon Raphael Hirsch*, into German. Can we say that *Reb Saadia Gaon* distorted the Torah in his translation?

The Source of the Distortion

Yet the fact remains that the Septuagint was distorted and evil did result from it; and since translation in itself does not mean distortion, we must look for the reasons in the cir-

cumstances surrounding this imperfect translation.

This translation was undertaken for one reason only. *Ptolemy Philadelphus* ordered it to complete his library. As the article points out, the *Megilas Taanis* tells us: "When the Torah was translated into Greek, the world was dark for three days." Your article explains this as a sign that "the heavens" were displeased. However, the commentaries on *Megilas Taanis* explain: "When the order was given for this translation the Children of Israel fasted and prayed for three days out of fear, and their faces were as dark as during the days of Haman."

This interpretation directly contradicts the article's statement that "Elazar the High Priest may have had more than the wishes of *Ptolemy* in mind when he consented to this epoch-making undertaking... (His purpose was) to make the word of G-d accessible to the vast Greek-speaking and-thinking community." Nor can we say that "he changed the Torah to fit the needs of the people." Indeed, he was so much of the opposite mind, that he fasted and prayed for three days before consenting to *Ptolemy's* command.

Even though *Moshe Rabbeinu* himself had set the precedent for translating the Torah, *Elazar* was still wary of translating it. *Moshe's* translation was written in stone at the entrance of *Eretz Yisroel*. Those who wish to study it had to travel there and study it under the watchful eyes of the Jews. The Septuagint was ordered by a non-Jew for the purpose of adding to his library. It could travel outside of Israel, out of the hands of the Jews, and thus — be beyond Jewish control and be subject to distortion. Thus, this translation was dangerous.

And in fact, this translation did "demonstrate undeniably that once a translation is attempted" for a non-Jew and not for purpose of teaching Torah to Israel "changes and misconceptions must creep into its hallowed pages." For, as has been mentioned in the article, the 72 scholars who worked on

the translation realized that the Greek mentality could not understand the Torah in its pure form and through *ruach hakodesh* (divine inspiration), each made the identical alterations in the text. But a translation undertaken for the purpose of teaching Torah to the Jews would not have to tamper with the text. True, any translation lacks the sanctity of the original text, but a faithful translation could still be very valuable.

Our three points about translating the Torah, then, are:

1. We have the greatest authority to do so — that of the Torah itself.
2. Many faithful translations have been undertaken and proved beneficial.
3. If translated for a non-Jew, distortions must creep in and evil result.

Now we come to the crux: if *Elazar HaCohen* was aware of the dangers of translating the Torah on orders from *Ptolemy*, and in fact fasted and prayed for three days before consenting to do so, why did he consent? Would *Ezra Hasofer* have done differently?

The article states: "*Ptolemy* prided himself on being *Philadelphus*, the tolerant man of brotherly love. It is possible that he would have respected *Elazar's* refusal to translate the Torah on the grounds that it was contrary to his religion." The ultimate blame for the dangerous translation lies with *Elazar* himself."

Elazar: Cautious and Correct

In dealing with this statement, we must remember two things: First, we know no bad of *Elazar*. The *Gemora* does not censure him for the Septuagint. All that we know of him is what *Josephus* tells us — that it was the same *Elazar* who, in the times of *Antioches*, refused to eat the meat of a pig sacrificed at the altar, at the cost of his life. We have no reason to believe that he was morally weak, or to cast aspersions on his character at this late date.

Second, the *Gemora* tells us of one of the alterations in the Septuagint.

The *arneves* (rabbit) was not mentioned by name in the translation, because of its similarity to the name of Ptolemy's wife. Through *ruach hakodesh* this name was left out by all 72 scholars, so that Ptolemy might not be incensed against the Jews by this slight seemingly aimed at his wife, and mount reprisals against them. So much for Ptolemy being the "tolerant man of brotherly love." Could Elazar have explained to this man, without "slighting" him, that although translations were allowed, the one the King asked for was not permitted because Ptolemy was a non-Jew?

There was still one option remaining to Elazar: he could have risked his life and refused to translate. But did he

have a right to bring such danger to the Jews for such a reason? After all, this was not a case of one of the three cardinal sins: bloodshed, adultery, or idolatry. And so Elazar fasted and prayed for guidance for three days, and in the end consented to the king's demand. We know it was with a heavy heart, for while the Jews of Alexandria — who no longer spoke Hebrew and were grateful for the translation — celebrated 8 Teves as a Yom Tov, the Jews of Israel proclaimed this day a fast day.

There is one more point to be clarified. What was the danger in this translation? Was it that — to quote your article — "translate the Torah and it becomes merely a . . . lifeless piece of

literature?"

Quite the contrary . . . The Torah, in whatever form, is too vital to ever become lifeless. And that is where the danger in the Septuagint lay. It was this distorted translation of the Torah — vibrant and compelling, even though distorted — that spread through the Greek world and became the basis for Christianity. This was the threat Elazar Cohen Gadol feared. Yet he was powerless to stop it for he was compelled to agree. We have no right to doubt the intentions of Elazar Cohen Gadol.

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Rabbi Feuer Replies

TRANSLATIONS: A DARK DEBACLE

The precedent to the translation of the Torah found in the writing of the Torah on the stones (in *Devarim* 27:8) is actually pre-dated by two earlier "translations." The first is referred to in the Talmud (*Shabbos* 88b): "Every word which G-d spoke at Sinai was split into seventy languages." The second is mentioned in *Devarim* 1:5: "Across the Jordan, in the Land of Moav, Moshe began to explain the Torah." "He explained it (*pirsho*) in seventy languages" (*Rashi*).

Why in seventy languages? Were the Jews fluent in seventy languages? Furthermore, in the second instance, the Torah states that Moshe attempted to explain (*ba'er*) the Torah. How does restating the Torah in a number of languages explain it better and deeper? It merely makes it accessible to more people.

Seventy Vehicles of Expression

The late Rabbi Yoseif Yehuda Leib Bloch of Telz, of blessed memory, in his *Shiurei Daas* (new edition, volume III, part IV, pg. 154) explains in response to these questions — that

Chazal, by virtue of their *ruach hakodesh*, analyzed the power of speech as consisting of seventy different ways of thinking and expressing the inner wisdom of the human soul. Each of the seventy mental and linguistic processes is original, unique, and untransferable. Anyone who has command of more than one language is very much aware that some ideas and feelings can only be verbalized in a particular language, and any attempt at total translation is futile. The entire spirit and zest of the expression will be lost. So, by utilizing all seventy languages, Moshe clearly communicated every nuance and subtle shade of meaning possible, and in that way he fully explained (*pirsho*) the Torah.

According to Rabbi Bloch it may not even be necessary to say that Moshe translated every word of the Torah. Namely, whenever an idea could be better expressed in a different language, he explained it (*pirsho*) in that language. In fact, according to the "*Ksav V'haKabala*" by Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (*ibid*), *Rashi* does not mean seventy languages at all — merely seventy variant meanings.

Retrieving Lost Words

Another reason for using other languages is that the Torah itself uses foreign terms. "*Totofos* — Rabbi Akiva said: *Tot* is two in Chinese (Cathay); *fos* is two in 'African.'" (*Sanhedrin* 4b). The *Shaloh Hakodosh* and the *Malbim* (*Chiddushei Shas: Magilla* 18) explain that when *Loshon Hakodesh* was corrupted into seventy jargons at the time of the Tower of Babel, many authentic and undistorted Hebrew words were "lost" and were incorporated into foreign tongues. *Totofos* is pure Hebrew and although it has been lost from common Hebrew usage, it is in current usage in Chinese and "African." (In this vein we can understand a perplexing statement in the *Gemara Menachos 65a*, that Mordechai was capable of mixing up seventy languages and expounding on them. This could mean that Mordechai was not merely fluent with all seventy tongues, as were all members of the Sanhedrin; but he could also decipher and derive the distorted Hebrew words which were mixed into other languages and explain them.)



LETTERS CONTINUED

The reference in *Devarim* 27:8 that the Torah was written "ba'er heteiv" does not refer to a translation — only an explanation, just as in *Devarim* 1:5, "biur" only means definition. No mention is made anywhere of translation. Rashi (ibid) says only two words: "beshivim lashon." Moshe instructed Israel to write a comprehensive work explaining all of the Torah, incorporating foreign expressions where necessary. (The danger we referred to arises only when one attempts to make a complete, precise translation, as we shall attempt to illustrate.)

Stones Against Translating

In truth, this incident of the engraved stones near the Jordan is a most powerful indictment AGAINST translations. The Torah says clearly that these stones were to be completely covered with plaster. According to Rabbi Yehuda (Talmud: *Sota* 35b), this means that the writing was obliterated. Rabbi Yaakov of Lisa, the renowned author of the "Nesivos Ha Mishpot" and "Chavas Daas" comments on this in his commentary on the Torah, "Nachlas Yaakov" at the end of *Parshas Vayetze*. He explains that here G-d was entering a covenant with Israel and taking them as His one and only chosen people. Writing the Torah in seventy languages and then obliterating it with plaster was a demonstration that the Torah is NOT for the seventy nations and should not be translated for them. The only way for a non-Jew to obtain Torah is by "peeling off the casing" and becoming a Jew.

Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin of blessed memory (the Lutzker Rav) also stresses the aforementioned idea in his "Oznayim LaTorah," and concludes his comments concerning the tragedy of translating the Torah by quoting *Maseches Sofrim* 1:8, that the day of

the translation of the Torah into Greek was like the day of the golden calf and darkness descended for three days.

Rav Saadiah Gaon, the Ibn Ezra and Rabbi David Kimchi are of the opinion that only a short synopsis of the Torah was written on the stone. Some suggest that only the seven Noachide laws, which are universal, were translated. The *Maharitz Chajes* points out in his glosses to the Talmud (*Sotah* 35b) that this translation was an extraordinary measure which should not be duplicated.

Dangers of Availability

"Write down the words for yourself" (*Shmos* 34). Concerning this verse, it is written in *Hoshea* 8: "Though I write most of my Torah for him (Israel), they are still considered as

strangers." When G-d told Moshe to write down the Torah, Moshe wanted to transcribe the Mishnah as well. But G-d saw that in the future the nations would translate the Torah into the Greek and read it. And then they would proclaim "We are the real Israel." G-d would then say to the nations, "You say you are my sons — I only recognize those who know my secrets (the oral law)" (*Tanchuma Shmos* 34).

We see from here the terrible consequences that can result from translating the Torah. This allowed other groups, such as the Christians, to attempt to assume the role of Chosen People. The following quote from the *rishon* R' Mordecai ben Hillel Ashkenazi, commenting on the Talmud: *Megilla* 9a, wherein the episode regarding the Septuagint is related, is most informative:

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"From this Gemara, Rabbeinu Yoel prohibited a *ger* (convert to Judaism) from copying a *chumash* from an invalid text of priests (Hoech-Deutsch, or Royal German) although the reason he wanted the copy was because he was ignorant of Hebrew and wanted a translation.

"Another proof is found in *Maseches Shabbos, Perek Kol Kisvei concerning translation. Abba Chalafta visited Rabbon Gamliel, carrying a book of Job in Targum, from which he was reading. Rabbon Gamliel commanded him to bury it (geniza). From there we see that other languages, even if written in our holy letters (ksav Ashuri), are prohibited to be read.*"

The extreme danger of translation is emphasized by Rabbeinu Yoel even when the work was done for the sake of a Jew, such as the *ger*, and even when used by the holy Tanna Abba Chalafta, who was certainly familiar with the original Hebrew text. What is so terrible about translation?

An undisputed *Tosefta (Megilla 3:21)* quoted verbatim in *Kiddushin 49a*, explains this prohibition:

"Rabbi Yehuda says: He who translates a verse literally is a fraud. And he who adds (his own explanatory notes and comments) to the translation is a disgraceful blasphemer."

Rashi emphasized that a literal translation of the text, word for word, can grossly distort the real meaning of a passage. On the other hand, if one calls his work "a faithful translation" and adds his own changes (as in the Septuagint) this is blasphemy. Then he adds an essential note: "And Onkelos, who did add his own comments, did not add them on his accord for these comments were transmitted originally at Sinai, were forgotten, and later re-discovered."

The Chasam Sofer on *Ki Savo (Devarim 27:8)* says that of the seventy translations in which the Torah was transmitted at Sinai, only Onkelos's remains intact. Any other translation of the text from one's own knowledge is fraudulent.

Other Translations

Rav Hai Gaon, in his responsa concerning the "Targum Eretz Yisroel" writes: "We do not know who composed it... if there is a tradition amongst them (in Eretz Yisroel)... it must be held in the same esteem as our Targum or else they would not have allowed it."

Concerning Saadiah Gaon's translation, it was made for some Jews who requested a text in the Arabic which they understood. However, the Ibn Ezra who draws copiously from this work does accuse Saadiah of making intentional errors, due to the fact that he was writing in a language that could be read by non-Jewish Arabs and thereby misconstrued. (See commentary, *Bereishis* 2.11.) Furthermore, Saadiah took great pains to stress that this was meant to serve as an explanatory commentary and not as a translation. This is why he called it "Tafsir" — commentary, and not translation (see his introduction). At any rate, we have already quoted another *rishon* who prohibits all *targumim*, and in such a dispute, the law is like the latter (*halacha k'brasrai*) even when a Gaon is pitted against a *rishon* (see *Yoreh Deah* 242, the *Kitzur Klolle Hora'a* of the *Shach* section 8).

After Three Dark Days . . .

One of my teachers pointed out that some Gedolei Yisroel did sanction translations and did not consider them a *churban* because after the first translation on the Septuagint left its destructive imprint in the Torah's particular sanctity of being the sole property

of the Jews, more damage could not be done . . . After the three dark days it could not get much darker.

Similarly, the German translation of Mendelsohn brought darkness to his land. It paved the road to assimilation, just as the Septuagint did for the Jews of Alexandria. Rabbis Yechezkel Landau of Prague, Raphael HaCohen of Hamburg, Hirsch Janow of Furth, and Pinchas Halevi Horowitz of Frankfurt, issued a *cherem* against it. Once the darkness had descended, Hirsch's translation could not add to the gloom, and in fact combated some of the darkness. If not for the breach made by Mendelsohn and others, one can venture to say that Hirsch never would have made a translation.

Elazar: Worthy of Comment?

As for the Talmud not officially censuring Elazar — May I relate a comment I recently heard in the name of Rabbi Chaim Soleveitchik, of blessed memory, the revered Brisker Rav. He was once asked why he did not speak out against certain Jewish leaders who were not acting properly. He replied: I follow in the path of Chazal. Chazal

Eli Lipoker

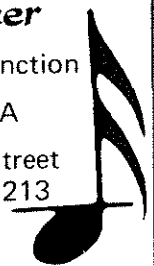
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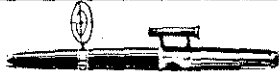
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LETTERS CONTINUED

did not censure everybody who erred in their times. They only chastised great men who erred. This is why there is absolutely no mention of Josephus of Philo in *Chazal*. *Chazal* disapproved of them, but they were not worthy of a fuss, for this would only serve to publicize them and make them appear to be far more significant than they were. They were consigned to a more miserable fate — neglect and oblivion. (This is not an exact quote.)

Similarly, I would say that *Chazal* did not give Elazar the publicity of their criticism. It has often been pointed out that the overwhelming majority of *Kohanim Gedolim* during the Second *Bais Hamikdosh* were totally unfit for the post and this may well include Elazar.

As a closing note, I would like to quote a passage I just chanced upon in Chapter 17 of "*Hamikra V'HaMesorah*," by Rabbi Reuven Margolis. Regarding "the sages of the Talmud and the Targum HaShivim," says, "their translation took the sacred out of the sanctuary and introduced the secular into the courtyard of Israel, bringing about Hellenism and assimilation. This project of great consequence is described in our literature, despite the fact that in general the *Chazal* preferred to remain silent about things which had no future significance and which did not meet with their approval."

Rabbi Margolis then marshals his staggering wealth of knowledge in both the Torah and the Greek Septuagint, and demonstrates how in many instances, *Chazal* without specifically mentioning the Septuagint, took great pains to eliminate the many fallacies and errors which were creeping into Jewish thought as a result of this distorted work, for it indeed did contain many, many deviations from the traditional text.

□
Avrohom Chaim Feuer

Assyrian Script Not "Borrowed"

To the Editor:

Rabbi Feuer made a laudable if laborious effort to prove his thesis that traditional Judaism . . . regards with misgivings the Greek translation of the Torah (JEWISH OBSERVER, March, 1971). While doing so, he himself espouses a theory contrary to halachah, obviously under the influence of secular scholarship. I refer to his almost parenthetical statement that ". . . it was not really so great a concession to allow Greek script, since there really is no official Hebrew script for Torah scrolls, and the borrowed Assyrian script (italics mine, S.G.) is generally used anyway."

This statement is not accepted by the halachic authorities. It is true that in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin*: 21,22) there is an opinion among others that our current Hebrew script was brought from Assyria, but the prevailing view accepted by the Gaonim and all Rishonim is that the *K'sav Ashuri* was the original script of the *Luchos* and of the Torah. Without going into details, which is impossible in the confines of a letter, suffice it to say that the *T'shuvot Ha-Gaonim*, *Rabbeinu Chananel*, and the *Yad Remah* fix the latter opinion as the *halachah*. This view is also accepted by the Kuzari. (On the other hand, Rabbi Joseph Albi in his *Ikkarim* expresses the contrary opinion. He is, however, not considered a halachic authority, and is also criticized for this "unorthodox" view by the *Ein Yaakov*.)

Even more incorrect is the statement that "there is no official Hebrew script for Torah scrolls." The fact is that the *K'sav Ashuri* is the official and only acceptable script for the writing of a Torah (as well as of tefillin and mezuzah) as clearly stated in *Yad Hachazoko*, *Hilchos Tefillin*, I, 19.

With Torah blessings,

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AMERICAN AGUDATH ISRAEL ASKS ISRAEL'S LEADERS TO HALT "COERCIVE TACTICS AGAINST TORAH LAW"

The Israel government was asked by an emergency meeting of the executive committee of Agudath Israel of America to "Halt its pressure tactics to attempt to coerce the Israeli rabbinate to compromise Torah law on conversion and personal marital status." The call, which was issued over the signature of Rabbi Moshe Horowitz, Chairman of Agudath Israel's executive committee, is in response to the ongoing controversy in Israel over the rabbinate's insistence upon strict adherence to Torah Law (halacha) in conversions to the Jewish faith and in the marital status of its citizens.

Specifically, the request was issued because: "Events in Israel during the past few weeks have pointed to an unprecedented campaign being waged by many people, including members of the Cabinet, against Torah standards for Halachic conversion and personal marital status. These eternal laws of unchanging relevance, are being challenged with coercive demands for modification and amendment to suit the wishes of secularist elements."

This declaration pointed to the anomaly of rabbinical courts in Israel being subjected to attempts at dictation by the State regarding halachic decisions — a type of pressure without precedent in Jewish history.

A Plea for Unit and Security

The declaration continued:

"Some religious Jews are reluctant to object openly to these pressures to give 'Jewish status' to non-Jews, because they feel that publicly challenging any Israel government policies at this time could harm the current security needs of the State. On the contrary, our objections to tampering with Torah law are a call to fortify the security and unity of our people. We believe most firmly that our people's security is based on the divine presence of G-d in our midst, and we cannot in any measure tolerate any proposal to expel the *Shechinah* from our Holy Land.

"It is our obligation to proclaim our pride in the zealous protection our rabbis give to the most minute detail of Torah Law. Only because of this consecrated devotion there exist complete Jews and a complete Jewish People who have a need in a Jewish Land.

"It is hoped that the leaders of the State of Israel will come to the realization that their belligerency to religion has gone beyond reason and their pressure against those who uphold the integrity and sanctity of Halacha threatens the very unity of our nation. We cannot tolerate any attempt to defile our eternal Torah Laws, without which there can be no existence for our People." □

Director of American Agudah's Tourism and Aliyah Department in Israel on National Tour

Rabbi Gavriel Beer, director of the Tourism and Aliyah Department which Agudath Israel of America established in Jerusalem last year, is currently visiting the United States to acquaint the broad religious masses with the special services he heads. Since its inception, the Tourist and Aliyah Department of Agudath Israel has helped a large number of potential *olim* and tourists in the Holy Land cope with their adjustment problems. Rabbi Beer can be reached for advice and assistance, during his stay here, at the national headquarters of Agudath Israel. □

ZEIREI AGUDATH ISRAEL MEETS WITH STATE DEPARTMENT ON SOVIET JEWRY

A leadership delegation of Zeirei Agudath Israel of America, Agudath Israel's youth movement, met with Mr. Herbert Okun, assistant director of the State Department's Soviet Desk and with other State Department officials on April 5 to discuss the plight of Soviet Jewry. The Agudist youth organization had been invited by the State Department to confer on this issue.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Okun lauded Zeirei Agudath Israel for its positive, helpful approach to the Russian Jewish problem. In presenting its position, the Orthodox youth leaders pointed to their commitment to refrain from taking any action that may result in negative consequences to the Jews in Russia.

The Zeirei Agudath Israel leaders asked the State Department to help in its efforts to win more religious freedom for Soviet Jews and for easing of restrictions of emigration. "The vast majority of religious Jewish youth in the United States is vehemently opposed to the actions of the extremists, and seek means of discreet constructive action to help the lot of Soviet Jews without endangering their lives," the delegation told the State Department officials.

The State Department officials pledged to continue their diplomatic efforts to win the easing of Soviet restrictions on Jewish religious life and emigration. They stressed their readiness to help any Jew seeking to emigrate to the United States, and promised to continue to speak up at international bodies for the rights of Soviet Jews as guaranteed by the United Nations Charter on human rights. □

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GOV. ROCKEFELLER SUBMITS BILL ENABLING YESHIVOS TO OBTAIN FUNDS FOR SUNDAY CLASSES

A bill to permit the Yeshivos to count their Sunday secular classes in computing the funds to which they are entitled under the Mandated Services Act was submitted to the New York State Legislature this week by Governor Nelson Rockefeller.

The Governor took this unusual step of introducing an amendment to the Mandated Services Act, after the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America brought to his attention that under existing law most Yeshivos would be deprived of one-sixth of the monies to which they are entitled because the State Education Department refuses to recognize Sunday classes for apportionment of funds. According to Agudath Israel, the Governor's new amendment will enable the New York State Yeshivos to obtain over \$200,000 which the present law denied them.

In a memorandum to the Legislature in support of his bill, Governor Rockefeller pointed out that the Jewish schools hold their secular classes on Sundays instead of Friday afternoons, because the schools must close early on Fridays in order to enable their students and faculty to observe the Jewish Sabbath which begins at sundown. This new bill declared that "attendance days may include

Sundays in a non-public school operated by a religious body, the members of which observe a day other than Sunday as their Sabbath." The Legislative Commission of Agudath Israel took the step of obtaining the help of the Governor, after its protracted negotiations with the New York State Education Department failed to change the original ruling against the eligibility of Sunday classes for funding. □

New York Yeshivos to Receive Second Half of State Aid

The Yeshivos in New York State will in mid-May receive the second half of the funds to which they are entitled under the Mandated Services Act of 1970. This will bring to a total of over \$1½ million in State funds obtained this year, it was announced by Rabbi Menachem Shayovich, chairman of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America. Under this law, the State is reimbursing the non-public schools for their expenditures on such mandated expenses as the keeping of attendance and health records. Agudath Israel's legislative commission has worked closely with the Yeshivos and all Torah institutions in providing them with every technical assistance to obtain this help. □

Year-Round Daylight Saving Bill Withdrawn to Accommodate Orthodox Jewry

Albany, N.Y. — A bill to extend daylight saving time throughout the calendar year, introduced by Senator Roy M. Goodman, was withdrawn this week by the Senator "in response to an appeal from Agudath Israel of America which had disclosed that this measure would create a major problem for religious Jews." Senator Goodman declared that, "after meeting with

Rabbi Moshe Sherer, executive president of the American Agudath Israel organization, who explained how year-round daylight saving time would during the winter create morning prayer difficulties for religious Jews, I felt conscience-bound to withdraw my bill out of consideration for the Orthodox Jewish community."

Senator Goodman's bill, introduced at the initiative of Con Edison, aimed to relieve New York's power shortage. However, Orthodox Jews would have suffered from its impact, because the



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earliest time when morning prayers can commence is one hour before sunrise. During the winter months, when prayers normally cannot begin before 6:15 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time), advancing the clock one hour would have meant that the observant Jew would first be able to begin his morning prayers at 7:15 a.m. As these prayers last from 30 - 50 minutes, it would have created an anomalous situation for the religious Jews whose employment requires their presence prior to 8:00 or 8:30 a.m. □

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