

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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From Riga to Jerusalem:

THE SECOND MIRACLE



RUSSIAN IMMIGRANT, KISSING SEFER TORAH UPON ARRIVAL IN ISRAEL

also | The Akhashverosh Riddle
Why Purim?
The "Aveirah" Syndrome
Letters • Books • Index

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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FROM RIGA TO JERUSALEM:

The Second Miracle

by Herman Branover

as told to Nisson Wolpin

It is really a two-fold miracle. First the survival of Jewish feeling and a life of Torah and Mitzvos among some Russian Jews who had been brought up with our religion. These people had to withstand every conceivable pressure and threat—from the Yevsektzias at the time of the Revolution, through the various Stalinist purges. They actually advanced in personal Torah knowledge, and raised new generations with the same loyal ties.—Clearly a miracle.

And now this new awakening. Young people who have no background or conscious memory of a Jewish existence are as if driven by an urge to live as fully a Jewish life as possible. The apparent inspiration is minimal and the obstacles are seemingly insurmountable, and yet they continue to thirst and

DR. YIRMIYAHU (HERMAN) BRANOVER is a world renowned physicist whose name has been mentioned as a possible Nobel Laureate in connection with his definitive work in hydro-dynamics. He begged not to be nominated, so as not to endanger his hopes for immigration. A number of his published books are used as texts in the field, and during his visit to the U.S., his calendar is crowded with lecture engagements in the U.S. Bureau of Standards in Washington, D.C., Cornell, Purdue and other universities.

In spite of his enviable credentials in his field, Branover was fired from his professorship at the Academy of Science in Riga in April, 1971, when he applied for a visa to Israel. He finally left Riga this past December, after diplomatic intervention on his behalf and payment of a \$40,000 headtax—which incidentally has made him the “most precious Jew” to leave the Soviet in modern times.

Dr. Branover is a tall, bearded man in his early 40's. Speaking with him is like sitting in the proverbial calm of the hurricane's eye. But in spite of his underspoken manner, and his almost total negation of self, a full-length portrait of the Second Miracle emerges—the seemingly spontaneous return of the individual to his Jewishness, as reflected in one man's awakening.

demand for the Jewish experience.—Beyond doubt, another miracle.

Eight Years in Ten Minutes

I always knew I was Jewish. I remember going to *shul* on *Yomim Nora'im* (the High Holy Days) with my grandfather in Riga . . . the *Pesach Seder* together . . . learning *Aleph-Beis* in *cheder* before World War II. But that was the extent of it.

Then, when I was doing my research in Marxist ideology in preparation for my comprehensive examinations, I was struck by the terrible inadequacy of dialectic materialism in explaining the human condition. There had to be more to man than producing and consuming.

The library in Leningrad was immense. I made up my mind to read every work on philosophy, and I just about did—from Ptolemy, Aristotle, and Plato through the modern existentialists. The rational philosophers did not even scratch the surface. The idealistic ones were more satisfying to me, but once they dealt with national groups and their destinies, they fell into the rationalistic trap. Then I read works on Jewish history by Graetz and Dubnow. I became more acutely aware of the inadequacy of descriptive works in explaining history—especially Jewish history.

Intuitively, I felt that the key to the puzzle of mankind must lie in the Jewish experience, so I ventured into the Jewish section of the library. I was illiterate in Hebrew, and besides, the librarian warned me: “If you want something in particular tell me, and I'll get it for you. Otherwise, I would recommend that you not frequent that section. It could harm your career.”

I stayed away, but I found a *Tanach* with Russian translation. I read it through several times. Everything fell into perspective. Life, peoplehood, Jewishness all took on meaning.

Understanding led to commitment, and a commitment must be translated into action. . . . I kept the

little I knew: From that time on, I never worked on *Shabbos*—I would not strike a match, but I didn't realize that electricity was in the same category. I refrained from eating pork or mixing meat and dairy—but I did not know much more.

Back in Riga, I began attending *shul* on *Shabbos*. This time I was told officially that it was not the place for a budding scientist to spend his time, so I sought out an underground *minyán*. Some Lubavitcher *Chassidim* befriended me: "Wouldn't you rather understand what you're saying instead of simply mouthing the words?"

Of course I did, and they launched me on an intensive program on Judaism, from *Chumash* and Rashi through Talmud and *Tanya*—which I found deeply satisfying to my philosophical thirst.

* * *

In ten minutes I have attempted to summarize an eight year period in my life. But should I speak for hours, I could not do justice to what in retrospect I cannot explain. One might attempt to dissect and analyze the Jewish experience, but it cannot be done.

A miracle will clothe itself in the trappings of a natural event. In the final analysis, however, it is still a miracle.

The Road Back to the "Avos"

The Riga ghetto was destroyed by the Nazis in the early 1940's. No one seemed to know the burial place of the Ghetto inhabitants nor did anyone seem to care. Then we discovered a young lady who had been in the Ghetto, and had somehow escaped the annihilation. She promised to show us where our predecessors to Riga were buried.

I cannot tell you why we cared—"we" meaning a group of twenty young people—boys and girls, some still in their teens. But with great excitement and a deep sense of dedication we followed her to a mound in the middle of a forest, some distance from the city.

The spot was covered with weeds and tall grass—a terrible desecration, we thought, and we felt that we owed the place—the people—our attention. Every Sunday we armed ourselves with picnic baskets filled not with wines and cheeses, but with hoes, shovels, and gravel.

Our ranks grew from week to week, until we numbered fully two hundred. We cleared the grass away, hand-paved a road to the mass grave site. It was a work of several years.

When we felt that we were finished, we decided to put up a stone with an inscription in Russian, Latvian, and Yiddish. The government was aware of our plans and a committee from Moscow came to



Professor Branover at a recent press conference in New York

investigate our activity. It did not like the text of our planned inscription. So we secretly engraved a Yiddish epitaph on a stone: קרבנות פון פאשיזם (Victims of Fascism), placed it on the site at night, and photographed it. We sent prints of the photograph to cities throughout the world. . . . It was not befitting for the government to order it removed. So the monument stands.

But the real monument to the fallen Jews of the Ghetto are the two hundred youngsters who found their way back. They came from all walks of life, and from all levels of Jewish consciousness. By the time we finished, all—virtually every single one—were G-d fearing, religious Jews. And all have managed to leave the Soviet Union. They found their *avos*.

While life as a religious Jew was not dangerous, there were difficult, unpleasant, and even oppressive aspects. I always managed to be free from work on *Shabbos*, but my *Shabbos tisch* and my wife's candles were hidden away because Friday night was a favorite visiting time with my "friends." . . . My son had to be trained to keep silent about those things that were dearest to us, and this was a terrible strain on us all. . . . I always timed my vacation month to coincide with the month of *Tishrei*. We would go to

the town of Munkatch or to Tashkent, where the religious oppression is not so severe, and I could go to *shul*. . . . At times, years would go by with no taste of meat. I remember packing my tiny car with live chickens, driving some 50 or 100 miles to the *shochet* for ritual slaughter. The incongruity, the sounds, the smells. . . . The *mikvah* was some twenty miles from our home. It was seldom used so it was only heated several times a week. Other times, it was not usable. . . .

Without a Song

A small group of people that I had contact with were in various stages of finding their Jewish identity: A young fellow who at sixteen was influenced by a religious classmate, and soon surpassed him in his *Yiddishkeit*. He would bring no books or pen and paper to class on *Shabbos*. He refused to eat at home, subsisting on bread and tea, except when his parents would feed him by sheer force. No sympathy from them—they even burned his *tallis kattan*. . . . The twenty-four year old math genius who leads a double life. He is reluctant to buck his family's opposition, but in these past three years he has advanced from not recognizing *Alef-Beis* to studying *Gemora* on his own. . . . The thirty year old laborer who used to attend church on Sundays, along with hundreds of other searching Jews. He found emptiness there; now—he had himself circumcized and puts on *tefillin* daily. . . . I personally know some twenty others, whom I was teaching. I would estimate that a quarter million Jews in the Soviet are thirsting for their Jewishness but do not know what it is.—*A spiritual thing?—A sense of history?—Does it involve risks to self?—To family?—Is it worth it?*

The crowds at the Riga *shul* this past *Simchas Torah* were just as large as last year, but the leaders of the old crowd were mostly in Israel, and the new ones did not know the songs we sing.

A Jewish Protest

Once I had applied for my visa, my wife and I were both fired. Mrs. Branover is a physician and was heading a nurses' training school. We were threatened, warned, even jailed several times on charges of "hooliganism." Finally, we decided to protest our inability to emigrate from Russia, but to do so in a decidedly Jewish fashion. A group of thirty-five intellectuals gathered in an apartment and declared a three-day fast on the Sunday-through-Tuesday holiday, May 7 to 9. We ate nothing the entire length of the day, all three days. Those of us who knew Hebrew said *Tehillim*, others read it in Russian, some reviewed the *Alef-Beis*. . . .

It's hard to say if anything happened as a direct result, but today almost every one of those thirty-five is now in Israel.

* * *

Is it not similar to the study of nature? My colleagues in the laboratory would not like to accept what I am saying, but neither can they deny it. At best, we can only *describe* natural phenomena—*how* something behaves, but we cannot penetrate *what* it is, or *why*.

Dr. Branover described his personal Odyssey from a man-of-the-test-tube to a man-of-faith in a Russian language pamphlet De Profundus. It was smuggled to Israel, where it was reprinted in Hebrew. It is a stirring document of belief, and was recently translated into English by the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jews. Excerpts from an earlier translation appeared in THE JEWISH OBSERVER in April, 1970.

. . . And When They Get There

Tens of thousands have come. We can expect tens of thousands more. The air in Russia is charged with excitement. Things are different. You realize that fifteen years ago perhaps 50% of the Russian Jews intermarried, while during these past few years I do not know of one such case!

Something is driving the Soviet Jew, and he does not know what it is. Many have identified this drive with a void in their Jewishness, yet they do not really know what it is to be a Jew, to be a member of the People. In Israel, they hope they will find out.

A rush of changes greets them when they arrive in Israel. The Jewish Agency and the Absorption Ministry handle many of the adjustment problems admirably: jobs, housing, language. But the void remains unfilled. Even the greatest activists write home that it just may not be worth the risks, the effort, the expense to make the change, and as a result, immigration has tapered off.

A hundred and twenty of us have banded together and formed an *Igud Akademi'im Shomrei Torah MiBrit HaMoetzet* (Organization of Religious Academicians from the Soviet Union). We plan to prepare and publish literature in Russian—to call assemblies, to reach these Russian immigrants and explain Judaism to them, to make the trip worthwhile.

The American Landscape

I am asked what strikes me most in America. The New York City neighborhoods are exciting with *Yiddishkeit*, the way I pictured them. The college campuses are dreadful wastelands, beyond what I

had expected. . . . I lectured at Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York. There are 2,000 Jewish students there. There were eleven at the campus *Shacharis minyan*—only eleven! I am told that during *Yomim Nora'im* not even 1,000 are accounted for as *davening* in a *shul*—any *shul*: Hillel, Young Israel, even a Reform Temple. Incredible!

The Americans are anxious to hear about conditions in the Soviet, but if I say the unexpected, some people become irritated—even outraged. A man in Queens thought it immoral that ransom money be paid to the Russians for the release of hostages. . . . I cannot pass judgment on the *halachic* and *mussar* implications of such payment. But I can testify that a family that had applied for a visa, saved pennies over the years, has a son on the threshold of military age, and could leave for Israel if they had a few dollars more. Is there not a case for sending them packages, to be converted into money, to allow them to get out on time?

Of Packages and Protests

Parcels of food-tins and clothing are a life-line to the Russian Jew. \$150 in American merchandise can sustain a family for three months. It gives a jobless visa-applicant the means of lasting the long wait for approval to leave. There are many who would contemplate leaving, but cannot put themselves, their families into a situation of losing all sources of income. When they see packages coming to others, they will take the risk.—And it is psychologically reassuring, that someone cares.

Public demonstrations? We find them amusing at best—a man shouts slogans at a TV camera in

front of the Soviet Consulate, and goes home to his family. By contrast, sending a package cost a fellow something.

At worst, a street demonstration hurts us in the Soviet. While the newspapers in Russia are silent on substantive measures such as the Jackson Amendment, they make much over every little JDL incident. The normal Russian citizen becomes incensed over the indignities his representatives abroad suffer because of “us Jews.” And we Soviet Jews could feel their bristling hostility in many ways.

Worse yet, well-meaning American Jews channel time and effort towards activities of dubious value, when the same funds and effort translated into packages would be of indisputable value.

Worst of all, people have become deluded into thinking “my power and the might of my hand have achieved this glory for me”—the release of Jews from Russia. Remember—this totally inexplicable turnabout in Russian policy, the opening of the gates for immigration, began in November 1968. The sizable street demonstrations in America began two years later—in December, 1970. The Soviet had ignored World Communist pressure, and marched into Czechoslovakia in 1969. They can afford to ignore several thousand Jews in America. But they still continued to let us go.

As I said, there is so much that cannot even be described in rational terms, so much that points unequivocally to the Hand of G-d in our lives. When it is there for us to see, it is of paramount importance that we do not fail to recognize it. This street activity distracts our attention from what should be uppermost in our minds: the miraculous nature of the times through which we are living. □

Aaron Brafman

A Modest Proposal

on opening our doors and joining the revolution

NEVER BEFORE IN OUR HISTORY have we experienced anything comparable to the present situation. Never before has such a large segment of *Klal Yisroel* been alienated from Torah, without any feelings of hostility. Never before have so many Jews been so ignorant of any knowledge of Judaism. And never

RABBI BRAFMAN is Menahel of the Yeshiva Derech Ayson in Far Rockaway, New York. His “Reassessment of Our Mesivta High Schools” and “The Chazon Ish—Through His Writings” appeared in earlier issues of JO.

before have the alienated been searching for something spiritual. This places a great responsibility upon the shoulders of the committed religious Jews. Perhaps it is time that we stopped fighting with a holding action, merely seeking to maintain our own close knit circles, which seem to be getting smaller and tighter, and opened ourselves and our homes to these searching youths. A number of organizations have various projects and seminaries designed to reach these youth. The core of the Yeshiva world and committed Orthodoxy,

however, has not really participated. As a result, the task of presenting and representing Yiddishkeit has been left to those who might be far from its true representatives.

What I propose is the opening of the homes of *bnei Torah* and "frum" families to these searching youths. It is the way fraught with the least danger, for they will be coming to us. It does not involve going to some college campus or seminary where the religious few are outnumbered by all the others. And it would give these youths a chance to experience living *Yiddishkeit*.

RECENTLY, THE YESHIVA I am associated with was instrumental in bringing a group of teenagers from upstate New York to Far Rockaway for a Shabbos. The girls who had stayed at our home left a note which brought tears to our eyes. It also brought home the realization of what could be done with so little effort. They wrote:

"Much will burn in our hearts as ba'ale teshuvah (people returning to Judaism). In particular the teaching of the essence of Yiddishkeit to the young, and seeing the understanding of the Key of Judaism, the Shabbos, at the age of three. . . . Seeing that to a five year old it makes a difference what clothes to wear to meet the Shabbos Kallah. . . . Seeing a family unit disregarding all M'lacha, not rushing through a Kiddush to watch the latest ball game. . . . Basically you have exemplified that Torah is a living, breathing—as well as spiritual and mystical—entity and that herein lies the secret of Jewish existence."

There was nothing exceptional or special about the Shabbos they witnessed. It was simply seeing Shabbos lived, as it is in thousands of other homes, that was significant.

THIS FORM OF INVOLVEMENT has another advantage. For these youths it is not a search for a host who must be able to engage them in long philosophical debate. These children who are searching have read enough about *Yiddishkeit*; thank G-d, there has been a tremendous output of material in English. They have also listened to lectures and speeches on all the relevant topics. What they lack is the living experience of *Yiddishkeit*. This almost any "frum" home can provide.

There is a family in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan who, through its hospitality and concern, has made countless searching souls into *ba'ale teshuvah*. They have helped countless *ba'alei teshuvah* through their struggles and triumphs, become not merely marginal Jews but deeply committed ones, who have

devoted their lives to Torah and *Chinuch* (Jewish education).

In Far Rockaway, much to my delight, I found a community which is steeped in *hachnosos orchim*—the finest form of hospitality. On any Shabbos, hundreds of *ba'alei teshuvah* and Yeshiva students are accommodated in homes throughout the community. If the greater New York community would open up its doors, how great an impact it would be!

ASIDE FROM THE MITZVAH of *hachnosos orchim* that would be resurrected, there is an important benefit of which people are not aware—the personal growth that the host undergoes. When a *ba'al teshuvah* is a guest at one's table, the host gains in his own *ruchniyos* (spiritual status). It can shake a person out of his routine, habitual way of doing things. One begins to notice things one has always taken for granted. One begins to see the beauty of Torah through fresh eyes and everything one has always done by rote quite suddenly becomes significant. When a long practicing Jew watches a *ba'al teshuvah* at his table struggle with "Yvra," as he says *Birchas Hamazon* (Grace) and watches him say each word distinctly and with *kavana* (concentration), the observer, too, begins to *bentsch* differently.

Many attempts are being made to preserve our *Yiddishkeit*. All of them involve attempts at shutting out outside influences which infiltrate even more than ever. Perhaps if we—especially our children—realized and saw that we have a way of life and a sense of stability which others are searching for and are envious of, we would not have to live with such fear.

We are increasingly concerned with our crumbling communities. We are alarmed at seeing areas into which we have poured so much wealth and sacrifice slowly disintegrate. We who believe in *hashgacha* (the Divine hand in human events)—and espouse it so often—why do we not stop to think about the possible whip?—Is it only the irreligious who are punished for their transgressions? Perhaps our punishment for being self-centered is the breakdown of those very communities which allow us to feel so complacent and apathetic about the state of *Yiddishkeit*.

There are numerous organizations and yeshivos that have contact with these searching youths. If one would let them know that he is interested in helping, they will send him those in need.

In, particular, National Council of Synagogue Youth (affiliate of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations) is always in need of placing students for Shabbos. The Agudah office has contact with many youths who are searching for *Yiddishkeit*. By joining in this task one could thus become party to helping a *Yiddishe neshomo*—a Jewish soul—in its struggle to mold itself into a full-fledged Torah Jew. □

Fighting for Shabbos on the Legal Front—Addenda

A Story of "Hashgacha Protis"

MUCH PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE in establishing the legal rights of Jews in the employment field—especially in regard to conditions arising from the necessity to be absent from work because of the Sabbath and festivals.

COLPA* (National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs) has been in the forefront of this battle, and has found it imperative to fight for the employment protection of non-Jews as well as Jews, since bad precedents set is cases involving non-Jews would adversely affect the rights of observant Jews as well.

In September 1969, *The Jewish Observer* carried my article entitled "Fighting for Shabbos on the Legal Front—A Study of Orthodoxy's Capacity to Protect its Civil Rights." The purpose of this present article is to bring developments in that area up-to-date.

The previous article mentioned the case of Robert K. Dewey of Grand Rapids, Michigan, in which COLPA submitted its first brief in support of the guidelines issued by the EEOC** which required reasonable accommodations to the needs of Sabbath observers in the absence of undue hardship to the employer.¹ Mr. Dewey is a member of the Dutch Reformed Church who would not work on Sunday or even arrange with another employee to replace him on that day. As a result, he was fired by his employer, Reynolds Metals Company. The District Court directed the employer to reinstate him with back pay. At that time COLPA had hoped that this would prove to be a landmark decision.

Short-lived Elation:

Religion, a Matter of Conscience Only

THIS OPTIMISM PROVED to be short-lived, for the EEOC guidelines were rejected in court-case after court-case.

* COLPA was founded in 1966 by Rabbi Moshe Sherer, Reuben Gross and Marvin Schick on the initiative of Agudath Israel in order to provide Orthodox Jewry with its own legal representation. Agudath Israel provided COLPA with its first office and related services. It is now located at 66 Court Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201 (Tel. (212) 875-5630).

** Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Reynolds Metals' appealed, and succeeded in obtaining a reversal: Mr. Dewey need not be reinstated. The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, by a 2 to 1 vote, basically decided that Dewey was bound by an arbitration decision which he had lost, but also expressed doubt as to whether the guidelines of EEOC were authorized by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. COLPA was dismayed by this decision and requested reconsideration by the court.² On Tisha B'Av of 1970, the same court, again by a two to one majority, reaffirmed its prior ruling and explicitly declared the EEOC guidelines to have exceeded the requirements of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.³

In the opinion of the court, the term "religion" in the Civil Rights law meant only abstract faith or belief, and did not cover religious practices such as observance of the Sabbath or religious holidays. In other words, an employer was not obligated to make any adjustments in the regular work week for anyone. The court went so far as to express doubt as to whether Congress had the power to protect the rights of Sabbath observers without violating the separation of church and state under the First Amendment.

COLPA sought review of this decision by the United States Supreme Court. But after hearing argument, the court split evenly, four to four, with Justice Harlan abstaining.⁴ While a split decision meant an affirmance of the lower court decision, no opinion is written in such cases and it is not regarded as a decision on the merits.

Other Cases, Elsewhere

DURING THE TIME that the Dewey case was going through the appellate process, other cases were proceeding elsewhere.

- In Louisiana, a federal district court applied the EEOC Guidelines to a case involving a Seventh Day Adventist who worked as a chicken plucker in a poultry market and directed reinstatement with back pay.⁵

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- A Sabbath observer who lost his civil service job with the State of California did not meet with much success in the California courts, nor with the United States Supreme Court.⁶

- In West Virginia, another federal district court dismissed a complaint by a Seventh Day Adventist postal clerk who had been dismissed by the post office for refusing to work on Saturday.⁷

It must be recalled that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 excluded federal, state and local governments from its coverage, although it did direct the President to assure equal employment opportunity in federal service by executive order. It was not until May 28, 1971, that after much prodding by COLPA, the United States Civil Service Commission finally promulgated a regulation to protect Sabbath observers in federal service, but provided that such accommodation should only be made without undue interference with the business of the agency or with rights of other applicants or employees.⁸ The broad and ambiguous "proviso" made the regulation far weaker than the EEOC guidelines, which made only one exception: undue hardship. It was still the best that could be gotten from Civil Service, as it had to contend with opposition by the postal workers' unions. These unions had successfully blocked efforts in Congress to enact legislation for Sabbath observers that Rabbi Moshe Sherer, with considerable backing by influential senators and congressmen, had sought to obtain in the early 1960's. Thus, the numerous Sabbath observers who worked in the post office had to depend on the good graces of their supervisors and fellow employees to avoid working on the Sabbath. This problem was especially pressing for new employees who usually had to take the least desirable shifts, since employees with seniority had first choice as to the work week, in accordance with the union's collective bargaining arrangement. Often, the personal pleas of rabbis or Jewish organizations were successful in working out an individual problem; other times, the Sabbath observer lost his job.

It was not until May 28, 1971—when the United States Civil Service Commission adopted its regulation—that any legal protection was given to Sabbath-observing postal employees, and even that protection was relatively weak.

It was thus becoming clear that new federal legislation would become necessary, if nation-wide protection for Sabbath observers was to be achieved. The necessity for new legislation became even more urgent as one court after another rejected the EEOC Guidelines as beyond the intent of the Civil Rights Act.⁹

Further Accommodations: Broader Definition of "Religion"

MEANWHILE THE EEOC and the New York State and City Human Rights agencies extended the accommoda-

tion concept one step further, covering manner of dress and appearance. Thus, the New York City agency ruled in favor of a person who was fired by the Stock Exchange because he wore a yarmulka on the job; the New York State agency ruled for a Black Muslim who lost his job with Eastern Greyhound because he wore a beard; and the EEOC ruled in favor of Old Catholic nurses whose dress was more modest than that of other nurses. The rationale that the term "religion" applied to all religious practices that do not cause an undue hardship to the employer was applied to such cases.

When Eastern Greyhound appealed its case to the Appellate Division (an intermediate appellate court in New York) in June 1970, that court ruled in favor of the employer, stating the rule prohibiting employees to have beards represented practical business policy and was not unlawful discrimination. It went on to say that an employer was not required to make exceptions to its established and uniformly applied personnel policies to accommodate the religious practices of a potential employee.¹⁰ COLPA had not been involved in the case up to that point, but was disturbed about the impact of this case and in December 1970 entered as *amicus curiae* (friend of the court). But the Court of Appeals unanimously affirmed the ruling of the Appellate Division, specifically stating that an employer could not be required to accommodate individual idiosyncracies, whether they involved personal appearance or variations in time schedules.¹¹

A Campaign Promise Delivered

COLPA HAD ANTICIPATED this result, in view of the decision in the Dewey case, and requested Agudath Israel to obtain an advance commitment from Governor Rockefeller, who was then running for re-election, to promote legislation spelling out the rights of Sabbath observers. After a series of meetings between Rabbi Sherer and the Governor and his staff, a formal letter to this effect was written by the Governor and became part of the campaign literature.

The result was that at the 1971 session, the Governor's office, working with COLPA, drafted a bill to extend the 1967 law for public employers to cover private employment as well. The bill was enacted into law with the personal assistance of the Governor and became effective on September 1, 1971.¹² Under this law, an employer must show that he would suffer undue economic hardship by allowing an employee to miss work on Saturdays; or that the personal presence of the job-holder is regularly essential on the Sabbath (such as a sport coach where the games are played on Saturday); or that his position deals with health and safety, and the job-holder must be available for duty whenever needed.

This bill ended the serious doubts regarding the

validity of the EEOC Guidelines, and their applicability under the New York Human Rights Law.

Since this law was adopted, COLPA has been generally successful in gaining an employer's cooperation, although sometimes this occurred only after a complaint was filed and an informal conference was held with the State Human Rights agency.

1971: No protection for workers who wore yarmulkas or Hassidic garb on the job, or for bearded people.

The New York law fell short of covering dress and appearance, and there was still no protection against discrimination for persons who wore their yarmulkas on the job, for Hassidic Jews whose dress differed from others, and for bearded people. In October 1971, COLPA had a bill introduced in the New York City Council to take care of these religious practices, and after a lengthy delay due to intra-party rivalry, the bill was passed and signed into law by the Mayor in early 1972.^{12a}

On the National Front

COLPA THEN TURNED its attention to federal legislation. Obtaining federal legislation is generally a very difficult task, and can take many years of effort and lobbying. In this case, it meant overcoming the opposition of labor unions as well, who are concerned about seniority rights. In New York State, Orthodox Jewry has a powerful voice, but nationwide, its clout is comparatively weak. The prospects for federal legislation seemed rather remote.

A special *hashgacha protis* (Divine guidance) seems to help those who work *l'shem shomayim* (for the sake of Heaven). In less than three months from the time COLPA started working on the matter, the objective was realized.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act was the end result of many years of effort by Negroes and liberals in the white community to obtain fair employment practices legislation. As a product of compromise, however, the EEOC was created as a conciliation agency with no enforcement powers.

If it failed to obtain voluntary compliance, all it was able to do was to advise the aggrieved party to take his case into the federal courts on his own.

Since 1964, Presidents Johnson and Nixon had both sought legislation to equip EEOC teeth (power of enforcement) but they did not succeed in getting a bill through both houses at the same session of Congress. Finally, in 1971, the House passed a bill sponsored by the administration that allowed EEOC to sue violators in Federal Court. The Senate Labor Committee adopted a version that would give the EEOC

"cease and desist" powers making it more effective. After a lengthy debate and filibuster the Senate finally passed a bill similar to that of the House. Meanwhile, COLPA with an assist from Agudath Israel influenced Senator Randolph of West Virginia (a Seventh-Day Baptist) to introduce an amendment from the floor of the Senate. The amendment had to look innocuous enough not to catch the attention of the business lobby. Drafted by COLPA Vice President, Nathan Lewin, formerly one of the top men in the office of the Solicitor General, it simply added a definition of the term "religion" as including all aspects of religious observance and practice. After a short debate, the amendment was passed by a vote of 55 to 0. This amendment survived the various revisions of the bill, finally passed the Senate, and was sent to House-Senate Conference Committee where both bills were to be reconciled after negotiation.

Purim Action

THE HOUSE MEMBERS of the Conference Committee held a caucus on *Ta'anis Esther*, 1972, and decided to insist on deletion of the Randolph amendment. COLPA learned of this development on the same day and immediately contacted rabbis and communal leaders from all of the districts which the House members represented. On Purim the Conference Committee met, and after some debate, left the Randolph amendment in the bill. The bill then went back to both houses where it was easily passed. The report of the Conference Committee stated that the purpose of the Randolph amendment was to reinstate the EEOC Guidelines and overrule the Sixth Circuit's decision in the Dewey case.¹⁴ The President signed it into law—known as the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972¹⁵—on March 24, 1972, without any fanfare, and his approval of the bill was not even reported in the newspapers. The law became effective immediately—as of *Shabbos Hagadol*—for all establishments employing 25 or more workers, and as of March 24, 1973 for all employers of 15 or more. The law also extended coverage to federal, state and local government employment. Thus, in one fell swoop, almost all employers were required to make accommodations not only for Sabbath observers, but also for persons with beards, as well as those who wore a yarmulka or Hassidic dress at work, unless the employer could prove undue hardship.

It must be emphasized that "undue hardship" differs sharply from inconvenience to the employer or to fellow employees; it means that it is not possible for another employee to fill in for the Sabbath observer or to postpone the work to another day.¹⁶

Evaluation

THE BUSINESS LOBBY was obviously caught napping, since the Randolph amendment received very little publicity in the newspapers. Divine Providence had

certainly guided COLPA's efforts and it may now safely be said that almost any Jew who so wishes can be a *Shomer Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* without fear of losing his job. There are very few jobs where the employer can prove that he would not be able to substitute another employee for the few hours on Friday afternoons in the winter, or during *Yomim Tovim*.

This law should encourage a concerted effort on the part of Orthodox Jewry to win more Jews to Sabbath observance. Many of us have become too apathetic to our contemporary scene where only a small fraction of Jews observe Sabbath. Since *shmiras Shabbos* is the key to observance of the whole Torah, we must not allow this singular opportunity to pass without constructive results.

Anyone who is unable to obtain or retain a job because of his observance of the Sabbath or other religious practices is advised to turn to COLPA for free legal assistance. COLPA has published a poster setting forth the legal rights of observant Jews.

The Israeli Scene

COLPA HAS RECENTLY BEEN REQUESTED to take an active role in securing the rights of Sabbath observers in Israel. Strange as it may seem, such a problem really exists in the Jewish State despite a law enacted by the Knesset in 1951 declaring Sabbath as the weekly day of rest for Israeli Jews.^{16a} This law allows the issuance of work permits for industries engaged in defense work or other important functions to work on the Sabbath. The Ministry of Labor has granted numerous permits, and an estimated 50,000 jobs are covered by such work permits.¹⁷ The Ministry of Labor has been quite liberal in issuance of such permits and they cover such industries as pier operations in Haifa and oil drilling.¹⁸ In effect, many qualified technical and scientific personnel can not obtain or retain a job in such industries unless some special accommodation is worked out with a fellow employee.

On January 21, 1972, a full page advertisement in many Israeli newspapers claimed that many recent arrivals from Georgia, U.S.S.R. were discharged as porters in Lod Airport because of their refusal to work on the Sabbath, and compared this with the situation in U.S. where Sabbath observers were protected. This caused a furor in the Knesset and the Knesset Committee on Labor voted that no Russian immigrant should lose his job because he is a Sabbath observer.¹⁹ This resolution, while not binding, resolved the immediate problem of the Russian Jews but not for anyone else, especially the technical and engineering personnel interested in *aliyah*.

A young, dynamic attorney, Simcha Meron of Givatayim, is waging a campaign to obtain legal protection for Sabbath observers. He sued the Broadcasting Authority which has a work permit for radio and television broadcasting on the grounds that such activities exclude Sabbath observers from employment opportunity. His case was dismissed on the ground that he lacked standing to bring such an action since he did not personally have the job qualification.²⁰

He then undertook to represent a Ben Uliel, an engineer with the Ministry of Communications who became an Orthodox Jew many years after he had started working there.²¹ Meron commenced legal action in the Labor Court, citing U.S. law as precedent, but was unsuccessful in obtaining a preliminary injunction. He sought COLPA's assistance in the case, but has since informed us that the case has been settled under pressure of the National Labor Court, by working out a transfer of job for Ben Uliel. He now feels that only legislation by the Knesset can achieve the desired protection.

Israel can surely afford to provide no less protection to Sabbath observers than the U.S.A. since one of the basic reasons for its existence is that Jews can freely live there without in any way compromising on their religious beliefs. □

FOOTNOTES

1. *Dewey v. Reynolds Metals Co.* 300 F. Supp. 709.

2. 429 F2d 324.

3. 429 F2d 324, 334.

4. 402 US 689.

5. *Jackson v. Veri Fresh Poultry*, 304 F. Supp. 1276.

6. *Stimpel v. California State Personnel Board* 6 Cal. App. 3rd 206, cert. den. 400 U.S. 952.

7. *Dawson v. Mizel*, 325 F. Supp. 511.

8. 5 C.F.R. 713. 204 (f).

9. *Riley v. Bendix Corp.* 330 F. Supp. 583. *Ketell v. Johnson* 377 F. Supp. 892, reversed by Fifth Circuit

Court of Appeals after change in Law. See 464 F2d 1113.

10. *Eastern Greyhound v. New York State Division of Human Rights* 34 Ad2d 916.

11. 27 N. Y. 2d 279.

12. Chapter 674, Laws of 1971, amending Executive Law, sec. 296.10.

12a. Local Law No. 74—1972 adding subd. 1-b(a) to Sec. 131-7.0 Admin. Code.

13. Congressional Record, Jan. 21, 1972 Senate pp. 227-253.

14. Congressional Record, March 8, 1972, House pp. 1861-62.

15. P.L. 92-261; 42 U.S. Code Sec. 2000 e(i).

16. *Ketell v. Johnson*, n. 9; *Supra*, but cf. *Reid v. Memphis Publishing Co.*, 468 F2d 346 (Sixth Cir. 1972) for another view.

16a. Law of Hours of Work and Rest 5711/1951.

17. See comprehensive article in Vol. 4 of Bulletin on Halacha and Maaseh published by Institute for Science and Halacha.

18. *Ibid*.

19. Reported in Israeli Newspapers.

20. *Meron v. Minister of Labor*, 24 Piske Din 337.

21. *Ben Uliel v. State of Israel*, Tel Aviv Labor Court File 9/70/31.

Probing the "Megillah" for Clues to the Perpetual Purim Riddle:

Who Was the Real Akhashverosh?

OUR FAITH IN OUR SACRED Torah heritage is absolute. For us, it is unnecessary to "confirm" the historical authenticity of, for example, the Purim events. However, a legitimate by-product of Torah study (*limud haTorah*) and Torah analysis (*chiddushei Torah*) will often be the discovery of information very useful "to answer the Apikoros." The same is true regarding the identity of Akhashverosh of the Megillah.

These are the Persian kings recorded in history:¹

<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>English</i>
1. Koresh	Cyrus
2. Kambiz	Cambyses
3. Daryavesh	Darius
4. Kserkses	Xerxes
5. Artakhshasta	Artaxerxes
6. Kserkses II	Xerxes II, son of Artaxerxes I (assassinated after 45 days by Sogdyan).
7. Sogdyan	(assassinated after 7 months by Darius II, son of Artaxerxes I).
8. Daryavesh II	Darius II
9. Artakhshasta II	Artaxerxes II, son of Darius II
10. Artakhshasta III	Artaxerxes III
11. Daryavesh III	Darius III

Where then is Akhashverosh of the Megillah? There have been differing opinions. Josephus identifies Akhashverosh with Artaxerxes II. Among the moderns, opinion is divided between Artaxerxes II and Xerxes.²

In his book, "*Die Wiederherstellung Israels*" (p. 106), Professor Sigmund Jampel of Heidelberg Univer-

1. See *Rosh Hashanah* 3b, and *Baal Hammaor* thereon.

2. See "Comparative Jewish Chronology" by Rabbi Simon Schwab, who identifies Akhashverosh with Cambyses. However, the Gaon-historian, R. Yitzchak Isaac Halevi z"tl, identifies Akhashverosh with Xerxes.

RABBI DANZIGER says *shiurim* in the *Mesivta Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch*, and is the Rabbi of Congregation Beth Midrash Horab in Riverdale, New York.

sity quotes an Aramaic cuneiform inscription found by archeologists in Egypt, which, translated, runs as follows:

"Thus says Artakhshatso the great King, King of Kings, King of the lands of all the earth, the son of Daryavesh the King; Daryavesh the King was the son of Artakhshatso the King; Ariakhshatso the King was the son of Khshayarshu the King; Khshayarsh the King was the son of Daryavesh the King; Daryavesh the King was the son of Ishtazpo of the seed of Achmenish."

This could have been said only by Artakhshasta II (Artaxerxes II, number 9 on our list), son of Daryavesh (number 8), son of Artakhshasta (number 5) (Since he was the son of number 5, there was no need to mention the two preceding kings, Sogdyan (no. 7) and Xerxes II (no. 6)), son of Khshayarsh (number 4, Xerxes of our list), son of Daryavesh (number 3), son of Ishtazpo (because Cambyses, number 2, left no heir). Consequently, the king we know as Xerxes, a corrupt version of the Persian name which derives from the Greeks, is called in this original cuneiform inscription: "Khshayarsh."

Adding the Initial "A"

PROFESSOR JAMPEL STATES that Khshayarsh (Xerxes) is Akhashverosh. The initial "A" (the prosthetic "A") was added because in Hebrew grammar a word cannot begin with two consonants (*Heth, Shin*-Khshayarsh). The initial "*sheva*" of a word must always be mobile, vocalized ("*sheva na*"). The "A" is therefore added to make the following "*sheva*" quiescent (*nach*). Thus Khshayarsh becomes (A)khshayarsh, which ultimately becomes (A)khashverosh. This is as far as Jampel goes.

The initial "A" is, of course, a well-recognized and frequently used device in Hebrew when foreign words beginning with two consonants are employed. Thus the Greek "Plato" (Platon) becomes in Hebrew "Aplaton" and ultimately "Apalton." Without the initial "A" the name would be pronounced in Hebrew



with a "sheva na"—"Pelaton." Similarly, the Latin word "*Specularia*" (window glass) becomes in the Talmud "*aspaclaria*." In the *Megillah* itself we find this device used in the words: "(a)khashdarpenim" (satraps), and "(a)khashtranim" ("royal") from the Persian "*khshatra*" ("kingdom").

Substituting "V" for "Y"

IN THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT of Akhashverosh from (A)khshayarsh, it should be remembered that the Persian-sounding KSHH(a)Y(a)RSH is difficult for a non-Persian to pronounce. The Jew found it easier to substitute a "V" for the "Y." Substitution of *Vav* for *Yud* is common in Hebrew, since the original Hebrew *Vav* was the light-sounding "W" rather than the "V." "W" and "Y" are both light consonants that border on vowels. The pronunciation of the consonantal suffix (KSHHaYa) *RSH* is also facilitated by giving it a vowel (ROSH). Thus, in terms of the written letters (without the "nekudoth"), KSHYRSH becomes (A)KSHHWROSH, the Hebrew containing two "vavs," whereas the original Persian contained none. It seems obvious that Akhashverosh is nothing else but the Hebraized form of the original Persian Khshayarsh. The Greeks, on the other hand, not having an SH sound, attempted to express KSH as KS,=X. Thus the development from Persian to Greek is: Khshayarsh=Khsharsh=Khshersh=Kserks+es=Xerxes.

The "Megillah" Clues

SO FAR, OUR EVIDENCE, as to the identity of Akhashverosh, has been external—archeological inscriptions and Jampel's highly probable hypothesis. However, Hashem has opened our eyes to an actual *pasuk* written in the *Megillah* itself which removes all doubt from the highly probable hypothesis and confirms it as a fact. For at the end of the *Megillah*, 10:1, we find it ex-

PLICITLY written: "And the king (A)KSHHaRSH laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea!" The "*kri*" (reading) is indeed Akhashverosh, as in all other places of the *Megillah*; but the "*ksiv*" (written text) is (A)KSHHaRSH (*Aleph, Heth, Shin, Resh, Shin*), which but for the prosthetic "A" is almost identical with the original Persian KSHHaYaRSH (the difficult "Y" sound being omitted). (The *nekudos* are intended to express only the *kri*, of course, not the *ksiv*.)

However, not only have we found the name of the king (A)KSHHaRSH (KSHHaYaRSH) clearly mentioned in the *Megillah*, but, by further analysis of the variations in spelling of Akhashverosh's name, it is also possible to prove the historical authenticity of the miracle of Purim.

Let us suppose that archeologists were to find in the ruins of ancient Susa (Shushan) not only the palace discovered by Marcel Dieulefoy (which corresponds in all details to the *Megillah's* description), but also the following four royal Persian documents:

- 1) a document which tells that Mordechai the Jew saved the King from his would-be assassins;
- 2) a document containing the detailed text of the decree which Haman sent in the name of the King ordering the destruction of all the Jews on the thirteenth of Adar;
- 3) a document telling of the greatness of Mordechai who was promoted by the King;
- 4) a document containing the detailed text of the counter-decree which Mordechai sent in the name of the King telling the Jews to gather themselves together and to stand for their lives to destroy the forces that would assault them.

What a reaction there would be to such an archeological discovery! All would admit that these documents confirm the main aspects of the Purim miracle as recorded in *Megillas Esther*.

Naturally, after more than two thousand four hundred years, we cannot expect to find preserved exactly those documents which we seek. But if we search well, we can "excavate" those documents from the hidden recesses of the *Megillah* itself! An explanation is in order.

Digging the "Megillah"

PREPARING FOR A LECTURE on *Megillas Esther*, I once wrote an outline of the Purim narrative. Among my notes I had written the following sentence: "In her honor the king makes another banquet, the banquet in honor of Esther." As an American I wrote the word "honor" twice according to the American spelling, without a "u"—not "honour," as the British spell it. I was therefore surprised to find that in another part of the same notes I had written: "Mordechai the Jew refused to bow down, probably because Haman claimed

divine *honours* for himself." Here I had used the British spelling: *honours*—something I would never do on my own. The reason, however, became clear. The last six words of the sentence, "Haman claimed divine honours for himself," had been copied by me from a British book, the Soncino "Five Megilloth," page 209. The original British source that lay open before me when I wrote that sentence had influenced my spelling of the word.

The Greatness of Mordechai

I believe that in exactly this way, the reason for the *kesiv* (A)KSHaRSH which we find at the end of the *Megillah* was an indication of the Persian source that lay open before the writer. For after having copied from the Persian source the words: "And the King (A)KSHaRSH laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea," the writer explicitly indicated this Persian source in the very next verse:

"And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the full account of the greatness of Mordechai, how the King advanced him are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia?"

It was this original Persian document ("The Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia") which lay open before the writer as he quoted from it, that served as a model for the spelling of the King's name (A)KSHaRSH in close approximation of the original Persian KSHaYaRSH. Instead of the usual Hebraized AKHaSHWeROSH (with two *vavs*) we have (A)KSHaRSH (minus both *vavs*). (Note: In the reading of the *Megillah* the official *kri* is in all cases the Hebraized "Ahashwerosh," and *nekudos* are supplied for this reading, regardless of how the name is written.) And so, *b'ezrath Hashem*, we have "excavated" from the *Megillah* one of the four documents—the one which tells of the greatness of Mordechai and his promotion.

The Assassination Plot

The document which relates that Mordechai saved the King's life is contained in 2:21-23:

"In those days, while Mordechai sat in the king's gate, two of the King's chamberlains, Bigsan and Teresh, of those that kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hands on the King (A)KSHaWaRSH" (minus the second *vav*.)

Why is the second *vav* missing in this case? Let us read on:

"And the thing became known to Mordechai, who told it unto Esther the Queen; and Esther told the King thereof in Mordechai's name. And when inquisition was made of the matter, and it was found to be so, they were both hanged on a tree; and it was written in the Book of Chronicles before the King!"

Here again the author of the *Megillah*—Mordechai—was quoting from the Persian book of the chronicles which lay open before him, and consequently, the spelling was *beru'ach hakodesh* modeled after that original document. Therefore, we have an approximation, (A)KSHaWaRSH (with only one *vav*), instead of the usual AKHaSHWeROSH, the Hebraized version with two *vavs*. We have thus "excavated" and authenticated the second of the four documents—the one which tells how Mordechai saved the king.

The Genocide Plan

The third document, Haman's decree to destroy the Jews, is contained in 3:12-14.

"Then were the King's scribes called in the first month, on the thirteenth day thereof, and there was written, according to all that Haman commanded, unto the King's satraps, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the princes of every people; to every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, in the name of King (A)KSHaWaRSH (minus one *vav*) was it written, and it was sealed with the King's ring. And letters were went by posts unto all the King's provinces, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, (Note: The repetition of similar expressions is common in legal documents. We have here the *actual text* of Haman's legal decree.) all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. . . ."

Here again, because Mordechai was referring directly to the actual text of the original document which lay before him, we find (A)KSHaWaRSH (minus one *vav*) instead of the usual (A)KHaSHWeROSH (with two *vavs*)!

The Counter-Decree

The fourth document is the counter-decree of Mordechai, which in its legal phraseology is almost identical with Haman's decree, since both follow the official text of Persian royal decrees. It is contained in 8:7-13.

"Then the King (A)KSHaWaRSH (minus one *vav*) said—Write ye also concerning the Jews, as it liketh you, in the King's name, and seal it with the King's ring; and it was written according to all that Mordechai commanded concerning the Jews, even to the satraps, and the governors and princes of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, a hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language. And

they wrote in the name of King (A)KSHaWaRSH (minus one vav) and sealed it with the King's ring . . . that the King had granted the Jews that were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, and to slay, and to cause to perish, all the forces of the people and province that would assault them, their little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for prey."

In connection with this fourth document, the name (A)KSHaWaRSH (minus one vav) appears twice, instead of the usual (A)KHaSHWeROSH.

Now let us consider the facts. The name of King Akhashverosh occurs in the *Megillah* a total of twenty-nine (29) times. Of this total, the name is written twenty-four (24) times in the usual, normal Hebraized version—AKHaSHWeROSH, with both vavs malei (plene). Of the total, only five (5) times is the name written *chaser* (defective) in an unusual way which approximates the original Persian KSHaYaRSH. That is to say, five (5) times either the second vav or both vavs are missing. And what is extraordinary about these five (5) exceptional *chaser* (defective) spellings is that they *always occur only, exclusively, in connection with an official written Persian quotation!* The author of the *Megillah*, Mordechai was so carefully exact when he copied *beruach hakodesh* from the official Persian documents, that he even used an approximation of the Persian spelling instead of the usual Jewish version.

To sum up, let us again bear in mind that the Persian name KSHaYaRSH is a difficult one for a non-Persian to pronounce. There are two ways to overcome the difficulty: One is to eliminate the "Y" entirely, getting (A)KSHaRSH (minus two vavs), as we have found it at the end of the *Megillah*. Another way is to substitute the facilitating vav (W) for "yud," a substitution which is often made in Hebrew, as has already been explained. We would then get (A)KSHaWaRSH (minus the second vav). Thus, the original name is KSHaYaRSH (with no vavs); an approximation of the original is (A)KSHaWaRSH (with the first vav, but minus the second vav); another approximation is (A)KSHaRSH (minus both vavs); and the non-approximation, the complete Hebraization, is (A)KhaSHWeROSH (with two vavs).

As Halevy Said . . .

THESE DIFFERING APPROXIMATIONS, (A)KSHaRSH (both vavs missing) and (AKSHaWaRSH (minus one vav) correspond significantly to what has been explained in a *different connection* by the Gaon-historian Rabbi Yitzchak Isaak Halevy, זצ"ל. In his *Doros Harishonim, Tekuphas Hamikra*, concerning *Megillas Esther* (pp. 262-269) he points out that Mordechai is the author of the *Megillah* until 9:22 ("and Morde-

chai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews—that they should keep the fourteenth day—and gifts to the poor"). From that point on ("and the Jews took upon them to do as they had begun, and as Mordechai had written unto them . . .") until the end of the *Megillah*, we have the summation of the editors of the *Megillah*—the *Anshei Kenesses Hagedolah*. Rabbi Halevy explains thereby the fact that the Talmud (*Megillah* 2a and *Baba Basra* 15a) ascribes the *Megillah* of Esther to the *Anshei Kenesses Hagedolah*, although Esther (9:20) clearly states that Mordechai was the author. Accordingly, it is understandable that Mordechai and the *Anshei Kenesses Hagedolah* used different approximations.

The variations in spelling we find in the *Megillah* are evidence of the fact that the author had before him actual texts and official documents which contained the main facts of the Purim miracle. Having been guided to "excavate" these treasures from the inner recesses of the sacred *Megillah*, where they have been hidden for thousands of years, let us close with the words of the Psalmist: "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold *hidden* things out of Thy Torah." □

Sounds from Silence

I

The gray clouds and rolling fog blot out the sun
The horizon where the ocean ends and the sky
begins appear as one

Hester Panim!

Yet the sun is there and so is the Ocean
All that is needed is one ray of light
The fog melts and the clouds disperse—
One little insight into Torah—one flash of truth!

II

Hashem: ממעמקים קראתיך

(I call from the depths!)

All I hear is silence.

Hashem: לשועתך קויתי

(I anticipate Your salvation!)

A resounding silence.

Hashem מי כמוכה בקלים

(Who is like You amongst the mighty?)

The silence is deafening!

And then I perceive the answer:

"I have already spoken!"

by AARON BRAFMAN

Elkanah Schwartz

Why Purim?



*Some answers,
focusing on
the Purim miracle
and other "natural events."*

Fundamental to Jewish belief is recognition of Divine control of the universe. There are no accidents. Everything—literally everything—is so because the Almighty makes it so. The concept of *hashgacha pratit* (specific supervision) refers to the control of the Divine Being over everything there is and over everything that occurs. This belief is, in fact, the first of Rambam's Thirteen Principles of Faith: "I firmly believe that the Creator, blessed be His name, is the Creator and Ruler of all created beings, and that He alone has made, does make, and ever will make all things."

Divine control, however, functions in two patterns, *tevah*—nature, and *nes*—miracle. Nature means the Almighty moves everything within an identifiable and predictable order. (We describe as "natural" those events that occur by Divine control within this order.) Miracle means "unnatural"—something which, while occurring through Divine control, does not fall within any identifiable or predictable order.

Miracles, too, function in two patterns: in one, the *nes nigla*, Divine control is revealed, and the miracle is recognized as such; in the other, the *nes nistar*, Divine control is hidden, and the miracle is made to appear as a natural occurrence. The miracle of Chanukah was through the first pattern; the miracle of Purim, through the second. While the miracle of Chanukah was obvious—a one-day supply of oil burned for eight days—the miracle of Purim was not obvious. The entire Book of Esther reveals nothing miraculous: a pleasant story, of almost fairy-tale outline, telling of a wicked man's downfall, and the triumph of the hero and heroine.

The Rabbis of the Talmud discuss this, reporting that the Book of Esther, which does not mention even once the name of the Almighty, is a case of a miracle camouflaged to appear as a natural occurrence.

One might wonder whether any natural-appearing event is really a camouflaged miracle. If so, is one required to make a holiday for every joyful event, since one cannot always know whether, like Purim, it is a miracle in disguise?

Perhaps so, were it not for our Rabbis who revealed the miraculous nature of the Purim events, thereby teaching faith in the Almighty, to recognize that He is truly directing the circumstances surrounding individual and collective lives along patterns destined for their benefit, though one may not at the time be aware of

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it— just as Mordechai, Esther, and the other Jews of the time were initially not aware of the miraculous nature of the “natural-appearing” events of their time. Now that Purim has been identified as a miracle, it is to be treated as such. Many a disguised miracle may be taking place at any time, but we do not treat them as such, since they have not been identified.

The unique standing of Purim as a hidden miracle later revealed, is identified in the Talmud (*Chullin* 139b): “Where is Esther indicated in the Torah? In the verse, *V'onochi hastayr astir ponei*—‘For I will surely hide my face’ (*Devorim* 31:18).”

Rather than merely developing a play on words (Esther/“*astir*”) the Rabbis of the Talmud were asking: “Where is it indicated in the Torah that there can be a miracle in disguise? In the verse wherein the Almighty is telling Moses that He will always guide the Jews through all the tribulations that may befall them, except that His hand may not be revealed in the process; that He will never forsake His children, though they may not always be conscious of His presence; that *Hester Ponim*, literally ‘Hidden Face,’ is also a process of Divine Guidance.”

In fact, the commentary *Sforno* explains that verse in *Devorim*: “Wherever the Jews may be, my Divine Presence will be within them.” How else, truly, can the continued existence of the Jewish People throughout these millennia of *golus* and persecution be explained, other than to recognize the Divine Presence within Jewry, even if it be hidden from them.

As is well known the miracle of Purim took place outside *Eretz Yisroel*, in contrast to the miracle of Chanukah, which occurred in Jerusalem. Purim is the reassurance to the Jewish People that they will never succumb, even amidst the worst offenses by the nations of the world, in their own terrain.

And while Purim was not the only time that the Almighty helped His children through difficulties by natural-appearing methods, Purim is the only such event whose identity was revealed to give Jews an annual reassurance of the Divine Presence behind the *Hester Ponim* (the “Hidden Face”).

That is why the Purim celebration goes beyond celebrating the miracle of Mordechai and Esther, just as Mordechai and Esther willed it to the Jewish People to go beyond that. It must enter the realm of year-round service to the Almighty, to seek greater grasp and deeper understanding of faith in the Almighty.

Purim occurs exactly one month before Pesach. The miracles of Pesach are recounted for us: in the Torah, in the Haggadah, and every day in our prayers when we speak of “*zaycher l'yetziat Mitzrayim*”—“remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt.” The miracles of Pesach occurred not only before the eyes of the Jews

but before the eyes of all the world, who recognized the miracles as such: “*The peoples have heard, they tremble; pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia. Then were the chiefs of Edom affrighted; the Mighty men of Moab, trembling takes hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away. Terror and dread falls upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they are as still as a stone*” (*Shemos* 15:14-16).

The miracle of Purim might have slipped by as another of many events where good triumphed over evil, had not the secret been revealed. The reason—to remind us of that important aspect of our faith: the “Hidden Face” of the Almighty, which functions not only on Purim, but eternally. (See the commentary of the Vilna Gaon on Esther 1:2.)

Small wonder, then, that the fulfillment of Purim is through acts which appear ordinary, but when understood within the above context become extraordinary. Consider, first, the reading of the *Megillah*:

Every *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* morning, and every fast day at *Minchah*, following the reading of the Torah, a selection from the Prophets is read with blessings. Every *Tisha B'Av* evening, the entire Book of *Eycha* is read without the preface of a blessing. Thus, the essential practice of reading scripture publicly is not unique to Purim, but Purim is the only time one must both read scriptures from a parchment scroll and recite blessings over the reading.

Then, a second *mitzvah* of Purim, *mishlo'ach monos*, sending food packages to a friend; or a third *mitzvah*, *matanos lo'evyonim*, gifts to the poor; or a fourth *mitzvah*, *seudas Purim*, the festive meal. None of these is of a unique nature as is blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashana, handling the *lulav* and *esrog* on Succos, or eating *marror* and *charoses* on Pesach. There are other times during the year when we read from the scriptures; when we send gifts to friends, and to the poor; and when we enjoy a hearty meal.

But then, if Purim is a celebration of a miracle in disguise as something natural, then the fulfillment of Purim should also appear as something natural, although in reality it is not. One must be aware, while listening to the reading of the *Megillah*, sending food packages to friends, giving gifts to the poor, or enjoying a festive meal, that all may appear “natural”—but in reality are not. Instead, one must be mindful of loftier meanings. It is simpler to be reminded of faith when doing something exotic; it is more difficult to be so reminded when we are doing something ordinary. But then, once reminded, the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

Purim, then, in a very special way is an annual reminder of the very special way the Almighty takes care of His children: He is always there, even when we do not realize it. □

The "Aveirah" Syndrome

Some thoughts on human frailties and man's ability to contend with them as reflected in the opening passages of the "Shmoneh Esrei"

THE "SHMONEH ESREI" *brachah* of *Gevuros* speaks of G-d's ability to lift the fallen, heal the sick and free the imprisoned. The obvious reference of this phrase is to the Al-mighty's ultimate power of salvation in the physical sense. When a person "falls" ill—even when medical science can allow him but a few days to live—Hashem, the source of all life, can still revitalize his health completely. The *brachah* concludes with the climactic, penultimate praise: Hashem will quicken the dead in the period of *T'chiyas Hameisim* (the resurrection of the dead). This literal interpretation is most certainly the intention of the *brachah*.

Perhaps one might be permitted to infer another level in this praise of G-d's omnipotence, while taking into account the requests that follow. The *brachah* of *Binah* (understanding) sets the stage for one's pleas for *Teshuvah* (repentance). Only when one realizes that Hashem bestows people with the ability to choose between good and evil can one appreciate the concept of *teshuvah*, for without free choice in one's actions one cannot be held responsible for them. Perhaps, then, there is some way in which *Gevuros* can be understood as an introduction to the concept of *binah*, in as much as the opening paragraphs of *Gevuros* introduce all that follows.

JEWISH BELIEF IN HUMAN FREEDOM tends to challenge the concept of an unconscious as an uncontrollable force that dictates attitudes and decisions to the unknowing human victim. Man, as possessor of free choice, must be in power to combat, modify, and manipulate the life forces within himself. True, the Talmud states that "All is in the hands of Heaven, except the fear of Heaven" (*Brachos* 33b), but this refers to the circumstances of life, not to alleged overpowering forces that predetermine good or evil behavior. As the Rambam (*Shmona Prokim: VIII*) explains, people do have *predispositions* to certain modes of behavior, but

in the final analysis the individual has the power to mold, modify or even restructure his personality. There are no hidden forces at work that a person is incapable of combatting.

On the other hand, possessing Free Will does not mean that one *will do* the correct thing merely because he "chooses" to. It is one thing to decide to attend a *minyán*, and to be more involved in one's prayer. It can be quite another thing to get there. The gaps between decision, determination, and performance have been discussed by many Jewish thinkers.

The concern of this discussion is the vast area of human frailty that is too often shrugged off as the toll of being victim of unconscious forces, when in truth Conscious Man can affect positive changes by restructuring behavior patterns.

When these patterns are described as "habits," actions mastered by rote and without much conscious attention, they are often dismissed as being unimportant areas of activity of which we are relatively unaware. As a simple example, one does not give much thought to taking the fork in his left hand and the knife in his right when eating. If one were to stop and reflect upon that action for a moment, however, he would understand that he has *learned* to handle these utensils in this manner since childhood. There is no unconscious force that drives him to perform that act—such is the case with most of our behaviors,* including those that are more heavily laden with emotional value.

The major difference between acts and decisions determined by acquired habit and those dictated by unconscious forces is that the individual has the ultimate control over his habits. When a person commits the ordinary *aveirah*, Judaism does not view him as being driven by some uncontrollable, inaccessible primitive force. It is generally an act one has come to perform (or an objection one permits himself to

MOSHE SPERO studies in the *Beis Medrash of the Telshe Yeshiva of Wickliffe, Ohio*. His "Wisdom—as the Cock Crows" appeared in the Oct., '72 edition of *JO*.

* This discussion does not deal with reflex actions.

ignore) by force of something one has justified in his *conscious* mind with the very first perpetration. Later, he commits it again without much thought. "Having transgressed once—and then again, the prohibition becomes as if 'permissible'"—עברה ושנה בה—נעשה לי—כהיתר.

After a while, a person becomes desensitized to this change in his behavior and he persists in it. Yet, it is the very nature of habit—as something the *individual himself* has brought into being—that gives one the ability to override it . . . to do *teshuvah*, and to modify the acquired pattern to conform with the Torah-mode of behavior.

THIS CONCEPT MAY LIE behind the framework of the *brachah* of *Gevuros*, for it traces the *three step syndrome* of a specific psychological illness—the act of succumbing to one's adverse will . . . the act of committing an *aveirah*.

Initially, there is a slightly accidental—or moderately intentional—occurrence of an *aveirah*. Temptation has *felled* the person and *weakened* the defenses of the *yetzer tov* (his inclination for good). "The beginnings of an *aveirah* are the musings of the heart" (*Avos* IV:2). Slightly, almost imperceptibly, but nonetheless with a definite measure of awareness, the heart has strayed. Yet, this is only a slight abnormality. If arrested immediately, this faulty behavior can be corrected. Since this was a conscious error, he who committed it knows he has committed it and can be expected to effect a *teshuvah*. And that G-d's promise to accept the penitent is a source of *reinforcement* to him. All he has done, so far, is to stumble. . . . G-d will raise the fallen, if man makes the initial effort.

Yet, the *aveirah*-act has satisfied some need—for pleasure, money or power—albeit in a harmful way—and the person's predilection for this act has been reinforced. If his will is not strong, one can almost guarantee a repetition of the *aveirah*. "One *aveirah* causes another" (*Avos* IV:2). A habit will form.—One might no longer concentrate on each act, but initially it was caused by the person's own volition, and ultimately he can control it.

LIKE A GERM THAT WILL SPREAD infection to all parts of the body if not destroyed, so can an *aveirah*, if not checked, corrupt all one's senses and actions. One no longer sees, feels, hears, or understands things with a healthy Torah attitude. He has allowed himself to become ill with a malignant ailment that crowds out the *yetzer tov* and deflects his energy toward deeds that are contrary to his better judgment.

One can be "healed," however, if he cooperates with the diagnosis of the Master Physician and tries to combat this destructive condition. The symptoms, overt acts of an *aveirah*, are eased by admitting to being

wrong—thus relieving anxiety and unspoken guilt—and by concentrating on not repeating the *aveirah*, to erase the habit. The rest of the illness is ultimately cured when one completes his *teshuvah*. Hashem heals the sick completely when He accepts the person's *teshuvah*. "Great is *teshuvah*, for it bring a cure to the world" (*Yoma* 86a).

BUT IF THE SPREAD of the disease is not brought here to an immediate halt, then one succumbs to complete imprisonment under a new master will, the *yetzer hora* (inclination for evil). One's entire sense of cognition and reality is warped, and works for the wrong ends. If anything, the *yetzer tov* has been rendered "unconscious." Sociologists have found the prison situation, where the inmate loses his identity and sense of self (anomie) as society's opportunity to reconstruct the prisoner's personality.—Is this not the case with a prisoner of one's will? One loses his identity as a Torah Jew, with his will to do good diminished almost to non-existence. As a result, one's free will is also lessened because he can no longer make intelligent decisions regarding good and evil. He is lost in the habits of *resha* and iniquity.

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Thus the totality of *Gevuros*—supporting the fallen, healing the stricken, and releasing the imprisoned—spells out the various aspects of overcoming the different stages of the *aveirah* syndrome, anticipating the arduous journey from *binah* (understanding) to *teshuvah* (repentance).

THIS IDEA ALSO SHEDS SOME LIGHT on another concept. "Who is mighty? He who conquers his passions" (*Avos* IV:1). If might, on G-d's level, is the rebuilding of fallen personalities, then we, on our level, attempt to emulate this attribute by mending our errant personalities and conquering our intemperate desires.

Finally, it is this knowledge that one has this ultimate control over his personality that permits *teshuvah* to be effective. True, the individual has committed an evil act, but it is he who can decide to do *teshuvah*. Even an ingrained evil pattern can be converted to a positive one.

Good deeds are reinforced by the realization that one's guilt is relieved by G-d's accepting his *teshuvah*. This, then, insures that the *mitzvah* will be repeated: שָׂכַר מִצְוָה מִצְוָה מצוה On the ultimate level, one is motivated solely by good deeds, and he need no longer look for external reinforcement. His *mitzvos* are performed only for the achievement of the goal of personal perfection. □

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BOOKS

CHAZON ISH

A Biography of Rabbi Abraham Isaiah Karelitz,
translated and condensed from the original Hebrew
manuscript

by Rabbi Shlomo Cohen
(Netzach Publications, 1971, \$7.50)

THIS BOOK is a condensed translation of the first two volumes of "*Pe'er Hador*," the justly renowned Hebrew biography of the Chazon Ish; it covers his background, his life in Lithuania, the move to *Eretz Yisroel*, and the turn which his life took at that time. In its 279 pages it includes 79 illustrations, as well as innumerable stories and sayings throwing a penetrating light upon the personality and teachings of the Chazon Ish. Moreover, the style of writing is easy-flowing, holding the interest of the reader without much effort.

Yet this reviewer is deeply distressed that a book of such importance should be flawed by a very large number of English mistakes. Whoever was charged with reviewing the English translation did a most unsatisfactory job, and the publishers are urged to have the necessary corrections made before they print a second edition—which, this reviewer is confident, will be necessary.

It should be pointed out that this is not just a question of literary merit (for instance, the use of "confidante" instead of "confidant") but affects the accuracy of the book. For example, we find on page 112 that "the *Yod* of the *Tzadi* must be written straight and not upside down," while the real meaning of the passage is that, according to the Chazon Ish, the *Yod* must face *forward* and not *backward*. On page 181 there is quoted the precept, "eject the heretic and do not elevate him" which should read "throw down the heretic and do not lift him up."

At the same time, it has to be emphasized again that such mistakes should not discourage the reader, for wherever he will open this volume he will find precious insights that will linger with him, long after he finishes

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reading. For this reason, this book should be required reading for anybody who cannot tackle the more comprehensive Hebrew original. Where else could he find those succinct and epigrammatic sentences in which the Chazon Ish was wont to sum up an entire philosophy of life?

One example may be given here. In reply to the remark of the Satmarer Rebbe, with reference to living in *Eretz Yisroel* today, that "the Rambam stipulates that one must flee from a district of evildoers, and even settle in caves or wildernesses, rather than be influenced by them," the Chazon Ish said, "The Yeshivoth are the caves and wildernesses of our generation" (p. 189). Yet, though so deeply committed to living in *Eretz Yisroel*, the Chazon Ish peremptorily silenced somebody who criticized the *gedolim* of the last generation that opposed settling in *Eretz Yisroel*: "Your words are full of heresy . . ." (p. 157)—a heresy, incidentally, that is sufficiently widespread today to warrant publicizing the Chazon Ish's words.

It is to be hoped that not only will this volume see a second edition, but that it will be followed by further volumes drawing on the treasures of the "*Pe'er Hador*." □



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BOOKS (continued)

RELIGIOUS JEWRY AND THE UNITED NATIONS

by Dr. Isaac Lewin
(N. Y., 1953, \$2.50)

IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

by Dr. Isaac Lewin
(N. Y., 1957, Bloch, \$2.75)

TEN YEARS OF HOPE

by Dr. Isaac Lewin
(N. Y., 1971, Shengold, \$4.00)

WHEN, DURING WORLD WAR II, the future organization of the community of nations was discussed, there were two schools of thought: those that looked forward to an association of all the free and sovereign states in our world, and those others that were sure that no such association could ever function effectively. The latter was convinced that sovereign states would always pursue their own interests and not voluntarily subordinate them to the will of the majority; hence, international order could only be established if all final authority rested in the hands of a supernational body.

Very obviously, the world was not ready for such a daring step, and so the United Nations came into being as a loose association of states, a forum for debating current issues but unable to take the action necessary to resolve them. Despite all the pomp and circumstance on the East River, the prestige of the United Nations has sunk to a very low point.

Yet the inability of the United Nations to solve the major political crises of our world should not blind us to the valuable positive contributions made by the organization to the welfare of humanity. There are the specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization, that have made nations cooperate on important projects and enterprises. And there is the moral effect of the work of such groups as the Commission on Human Rights and its sub-committees, which have had a very real impact on public opinion and even on the policies of member-governments.

Many of the issues that gravely concern religious Jewry in all parts of the world belong within the scope of the work of these United Nations agencies. It is

fortunate, indeed, that—as shown by the books before us—we have had the organization and the spokesman to present our concerns and successfully to draw attention to our needs. It is interesting to note that, while in the area of American national and local politics the assertion of the needs of religious Jewry by its own spokesmen has only come to be accepted relatively recently (primarily through the work of the American Agudah), Orthodox interests on the international scene have always been watched by Agudath Israel. For example, an Agudah delegation (the only representative of religious Jewry) played a crucial role at the great 1944 Montreal conference of UNRRA and the planning of post war refugee relief and rehabilitation done there.

With the establishment of the United Nations, the Agudath Israel World Organization was accepted as one of the official "Non-governmental Consultative Organizations" and Dr. Isaac Lewin, chairman of the American section of World Agudath Israel, became its accredited representative. The books before us bespeak the wide range of causes and issues that Dr. Lewin has discussed in his appearances before United Nations bodies.

A number of the addresses concern the freedom of religious observance, religious education of orphans and religious discrimination, and it is therefore of particular interest to note that the entire subject of religious rights and practices, and discrimination in this area, was only taken up in 1952 by the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, upon the urging of Dr. Lewin. Other subjects discussed include rights of refugees, revival of Nazism, calendar reform, and defense of Shechita (some addresses to U.S. congressional committees on this matter are included in "Struggle Against Discrimination").

As on the national scene in the U.S.A., the Agudist representative has had to contend with the desire of such groups as the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organization to present themselves as the exclusive spokesmen for the Jewish people. They were not successful in this, for a number of reasons. Very obviously, Dr. Lewin's presentations in behalf of historic religious Jewry had an authenticity of spirit and concern that could not be rivalled by men who themselves had cut most of their traditional Judaism. Moreover, in an organization in which the State of Israel is a subject of violent controversy, organizations with close political links to the Jewish Agency and the government of Israel (with "interlocking directorates," so to speak) cannot aspire to the same dispassionate hearing as a group obviously and purely concerned with the social and religious welfare of the Jew. Lastly, however, the success of the World Agudah's work at the United Nations is a tribute to the dedication and ability of its outstanding spokesman. □

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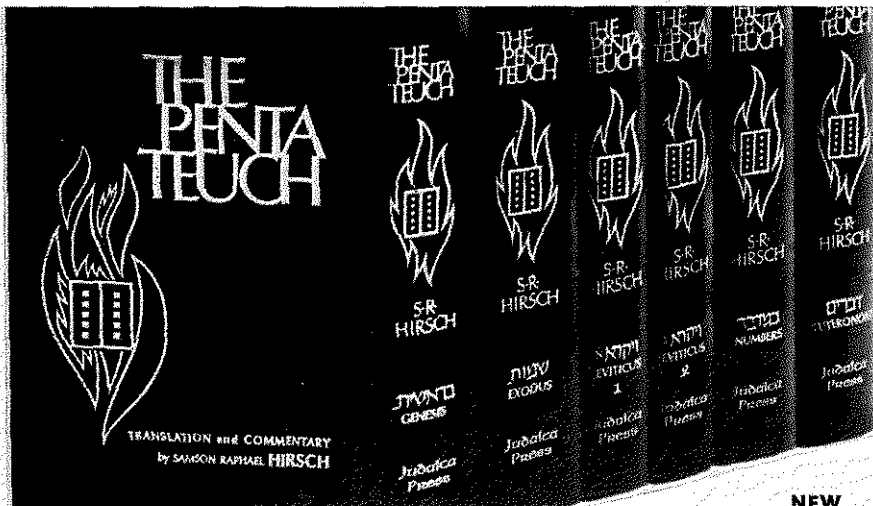
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A PRESENT IN MY TREASURE CHEST
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significance of Shabbos, and through at least a cursory summation of the laws of Shabbos observance. There is a list of Torah passages where Shabbos is discussed, a "Shabbos dictionary" of terms connected with Shabbos and synagogue attendance and a list of Rabbinic sayings about Shabbos. The book aims to aid in the conducting of Oneg Shabbos programs, and offers suggestions for planning such programs, in addition to furnishing a good deal of material for use in an Oneg Shabbos. The author will undoubtedly reap a rich reward for his endeavor, as his volume will contribute to the proper appreciation of Shabbos and its better enjoyment. □



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As Dreamers We Were

Aaron Blech

They flew in formation. How long has it been? The months the years matter not, for time cannot blunt the eternal, the unceasing wish.

The pen was but open for a moment, that iron bar begrudgingly lowered for those who ventured the risk. Could these limp wings carry these determined souls? Ascend! Ascend! is their tearful cry. Hearts rising and drawing untrained wings.

Instinctively these birds know their way, no obstruction now could them delay. Pain and suffering they have endured, longing only to deliver the message entrusted to them. To have lived, to have died, to have carried the word.

AARON BLECH studies at Beth Medrash Gevoha of Lakewood, N.J. His poem "Till Shiloh Comes" was featured in the May, '72 edition of JO.

Hearts beat and swell in anxious anticipation. The ungodly cold is behind them now. To climb, to soar the heights of heaven, to warm themselves in a brother's touch is all they seek. Ascend! Ascend!—is their tearful cry. Come, come, is our sympathetic reply.

That ancient perch is now in sight. Home, to erase the years of blight. But alas, this shall shall not be, for the clever hunter with bow in hand lies in wait, for the unwitting pilgrim who has taken the bait. The string is plucked and the deed is done. To have lived, to have died, to have carried the word.

To be sure, there are no desperate fowl, no vicious huntsman stalking his prey. Rather, just Cain-and-Abel whom he did slay.



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Letters to the Editor



Recognize the Secular Pitfalls—Don't "Kosher" Them

To the Editor:

I would like to comment on S. M. Breslauer's article "Reclaiming the Secular Departments."

Mr. Breslauer proposes the teacher make the students aware that their secular studies are compatible with the aims of Torah Chinuch and do not spell an interruption in the day of a Torah student.

I think this proposal is fraught with danger. If we follow these lines we will have "kashered" the secular department. If we don't want the student to feel "for three hours a day I engage in a goyish pursuit" we will lead him to believe that the whole day is pure Torah.

Mr. Breslauer proposes that "All subjects should be considered as preparation for or an intrinsic part of some sort of Mitzvah, such as: earning a living at a job or profession . . . civic involvement etc."

If this were so, then any subject is permitted. A student would study Shakespeare or Chaucer or any of the other "giants" of literature and he would have no qualms about it. He is studying it in order to teach or influence others or to earn a living.

A student would feel no pangs of remorse if he misses one "seder" in the Yeshiva because he had to study for a test. Why should he? This is also Torah or a "Mitzvah-centered" activity.

I do not think we can justify three hours a day in a Mitzvah-

centered activity. We cannot give up so much time from genuine Torah learning to devote to a subordinate form of Torah. Under our present system, we make it clear (or should) to the student that Torah is our main purpose in life. We study secular subjects only because the law of the land requires it, and never the twain shall meet.

Then, at least, we are being honest with ourselves.

And let it not be the goal of every Jewish mother to have her son "participate in community projects," become a *shadlon* or "Seek the peace of the city"—but rather, as it has always been in our past, to have a son who is a ben-Torah or a *frum* Jew with *bitachon* in the "*Chasdei Hashem*."

There are many points in the article which need further discussion and clarification. However, I would agree that having teachers who are *Bnei Torah* (in order to keep things in the proper perspective) would be commendable.

DAVID KLEINBARD
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Reply: A Matter of Reality and Perspective

It is unpleasant to disagree with one who so nobly pleads for the supremacy of Torah. Fully acknowledging this preeminence I must, nevertheless, defend my view.

Mr. Kleinbard concedes that a *ben Torah* teacher for the English department to maintain the right perspective is commendable. We differ, however, as to what the right perspective is.

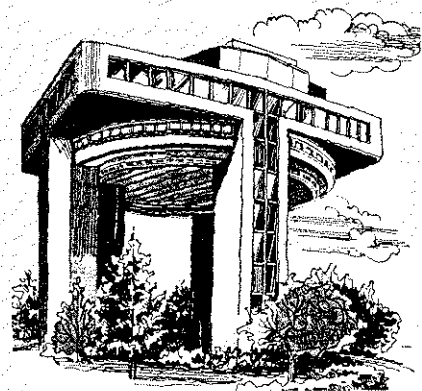
He contends that, were my philosophy implemented, students would be led to believe that secular subjects are pure Torah or Mitzvahs, would lose sight of the overwhelming prominence of genuine Torah, and no matter how much interest, time, and effort they would devote to secular studies, they would need feel no guilt since they are, after all, occupied with Torah and Mitzvos.

Therefore, his *ben Torah* teacher—to be honest with himself and with his students—would have them feel that they *are* engaged in an undesirable “*goyish*” pursuit, that the prominence of Torah demands that we devote ourselves *only* to Torah, and time is given to secular studies *only* because it is the law of the land. Furthermore, *his* teacher would not attempt to guide students towards useful utilization of the skills they would acquire for the benefit of Mitzvah or *Chessed* activities, and would urge them *only* to become *frum bnei Torah* with *bitachon* in *Chasdei Hashem*.

If my approach is fraught with danger, then Mr. Kleinbard’s is pedagogically devastating. If a student can be told that he undergoes twelve years of unjustified secular training, under the aegis of *his* yeshiva—his *makom Torah*—with the lame excuse of “law of the land,” then does there not exist a rationale which will equally allow him to neglect Torah in later life?

What is the student to think when he learns (*Orach Chaim* 231: *Mishnah Berurah* #8) that all a person does, he must do *l’shem shomayim* (for the sake of Heaven), after he spent twelve years in a Yeshiva-sponsored, unproductive, negative atmosphere presided over by none other than a *ben Torah*? What will be the student’s sense of value for time spent away from genuine Torah, if he is inculcated with the

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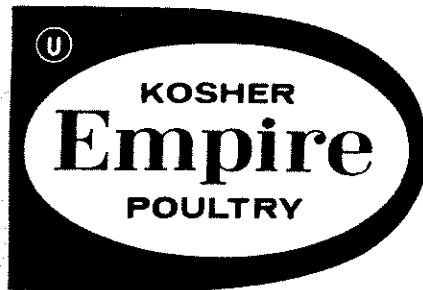
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LETTERS CONTINUED

attitude that, rather than spend this time constructively in the interest of areas of which Hashem approves, he must bear with it passively for no other reason than that it is the law of the land? Must we not give account for such waste of time, energy and human resource? And, above all, might not those very many students who do display interest in the secular subjects, either on their own accord or because of parental prompting, become permanently disenchanted with genuine Torah just because of this attitude? If we force them to chose between one and the other, how many will heed us to turn their backs on *limudei chol* (secular studies) to embrace Torah exclusively? Is it not apparent that this approach would be counter-productive: committing those few who are most likely committed to Torah anyway, and alienate the multitude? It would be far wiser for Mr. Kleinbard, rather than to subject our students to such inconsistencies during their most formative years, to eliminate



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limudei chol altogether, circumvent the compulsory schooling law as conscientious objectors, and let each Yeshiva parent fend for himself in seeking the secular education they feel they must provide for their sons under the far reaching duty (*Kidushin* 29a) and Mitzvah (*Shabbos* 150a, *Rashi*) of teaching their sons a trade to be able to earn a living.

Please note that it was not the purpose of my article to campaign for or against *limudei chol*; to establish the amount of time that should be expended or the subjects that should be taught. (For a thorough exposition on basic re-evaluation and revision see the lead article in the December 1972 J.O.) It was my purpose simply to deal with an established fact; that the average Yeshiva day school does provide approximately fifteen hours of secular instruction per week, which closely parallels the public school curriculum, and as long as this is

the case, I maintain that it must be done positively, in a Torah oriented fashion. If this includes Mitzvah-centered activities or Mitzvos themselves, then at least we have found a redeeming factor on which we should capitalize.

I also take exception to the contrasting of "*shtadlonus*" (diplomatic intervention) with "*bitachon*" (trust in Hashem) as though they were mutually exclusive. Indeed, were Yaakov Avinu, Reb Yochanan ben Zakai, Don Yitzchok Abarbanel, and Reb Yosselman of Rossheim lacking in trust in G-d? I think not.

Concerning correct perspective: I thought I had done this point justice by simply stating, "The general studies would thus be presented as deserving the care and respect of any Mitzvah centered activity, *subordinate, of course, to the primary lifetime pursuit of Torah study.*" I see, however, that brevity breeds misunderstanding, and I must elaborate.



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It is elementary that not all activities which may be labeled Mitzvah or a Mitzvah-centered activity are of equal importance, especially when measured against the primary Mitzvah of Talmud Torah. Nevertheless, we find such mundane activities as bathing (*Shabbos* 50b, *Vayikrah Rabbah* 34), earning a living even beyond immediate need (*Orach Chaim* 248: *Mishnah Berurah* #34), decorating a Succah (*Orach Chaim* 638: *Mishnah Berurah* #11), or a congenial meeting of friends (*Orach Chaim* 531: *Mishnah Berurah* #14) are called a Mitzvah.

The question is: Should we sweep these under the carpet and conceal them so as not to provide a convenient excuse for those who seek to neglect more important Mitzvos? Or should we teach them and encourage their fulfillment in the right perspective, the correct emphasis of importance, and proper allotment of time and energy?

—Did Hillel refrain from calling bathing a Mitzvah so that some *talmid* should not use it as an excuse to squander precious hours in the public baths?

—Should we strike *noy succah* from our *dinim* lessons because some will attribute more importance to the decoration than to the *s'chach* (the required covering) itself?

—Should a Rebbe teach his *talmidim* to consider recess as an auxiliary Mitzvah to refresh themselves for another two hours of effective Torah study, or should he burden their conscience with the rebuke that recess time is nothing more than legalized *bitul Torah* (time wasted from Torah) lest they be tempted to expand this Mitzvah unwarrantedly?

The apparent answer, in my opinion, is that any Mitzvah properly taught will be properly kept, and those who seek other paths do not need us to provide their subterfuge.

I am confident that a *ben Torah* secular teacher—who himself subscribes to the primacy of Torah, who encourages *hasmadah* (diligence in Torah study) by word and example, who cocks a disapproving eyebrow at a poor Hebrew mark on the report card, who insists that homework must be done but not at the expense of the evening *seder* or

sleep needed for tomorrow's Torah lessons, who will discourage secular reading on Shabbos even though it may be permissible—can successfully make *limudei chol* a Mitzvah-centered program while at the same time maintaining the proper relationship between Mitzvos of varied magnitude. This in itself carries a valuable *chinuch* potential, for is not every adult faced with the need for such discretion?

To latch on to Mr. Kleinbard's example: I could very well see a present day Yeshiva high school senior hearing some fragment of my philosophy and thereby justifying his interest and desire to delve into Shakespeare and Chaucer extensively (—as if without my words he would never have dared!). But would he have had eleven years of Torah-oriented secular schooling under suitable *bnei Torah* teachers behind him, he would most likely be imbued with the correct perspective, would not look for cheap excuses, artificial Mitzvos, or unwarranted "heterim," and would inevitably find his way to feel at home in the *Bais Hamidrash* no matter what occupation he eventually chooses.

S. M. BRESLAUER

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SINGER, SHMUEL A Victory Centennial, May '72.

SOKOL, MOSHE The Wall (a poem), June '72.

SORSCHER, YEHUDA A. Crisis for the Urban Jew: The Kehilla—a Community Stabilizer, Sept. '72.

SPERO, MOSHE Wisdom—as the Cock Crows, Oct. '72.

SPIEGEL, YISROEL What is a Jew . . . ? May. '72.

TOSHAVI, EZRIEL Voluntary National Service for Girls—Compromise of a Nation's Purity, Dec. '71; The Long Trip From Russia . . . Where is Fulfillment?, Mar. '72; Rabbi Goren Takes Over, Dec. '72; Terror Tactics in Israel, Jan. '73.

WEINBACH, MENDEL The Day the Clock Stopped (a story); The Little Fellows (a story), Oct. '72.

WEINBERGER, PAUL AND DOROTHY Religious Tradition and Social Services, May '72.

WEISBROD, MANNY From "The Diary of a Judaic-Studies Student," Apr. '72.

WOLBE, SHLOMO We Can No Longer Remain Silent, June '72.

WOLPIN, NISSON Displaced Glory, Dec. '71; What Ever Happened to Motherhood?, Jan. '72; An Epitaph for Conservative Judaism, May '72; Is There Shabbos in the Soviet Union?, May '72; Jewish Graphic Art, June '72; The "Halacha" Vote in the Knesset, Sept. '72; The Jewish Vote—Getting Filled Up, Oct. '72; The Great Public School Rainbow, Dec. '72.

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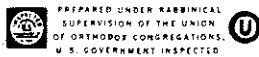
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Over 1,000 Orthodox leaders and activists, including the outstanding Torah authorities in this country, will join in the 51st Anniversary Dinner of Agudath Israel of America, which will honor three eminent personalities, on Sunday evening, April 1, in the Grand Ballroom of the Commodore Hotel in New York City.

The Horav Aharon Kotler Memorial Award for distinguished service to Torah will be presented to B. E. Spero of The Spero Foundation of Cleveland, Ohio, as "an exemplary Orthodox Jewish layman, who with humility and without fanfare has served as a catalyst for the expansion of Torah in this country and overseas."

The Moreinu Yaakov Rosenheim Award for outstanding service to the cause of Agudath Israel will be awarded to the eminent Agudist leader, Rabbi Dr. Michael L. Munk, whose decades of devoted activities includes service as a pioneer in Torah education for girls and worldwide defense of the practice of Shechita.

Chaim Hertz, president of the Gerer Mesivta, will be honored as the "Shearis Hapleita" Man of the Year, the annual Reb Elimelech Tress Memorial Award for his outstanding work for Orthodox Judaism after arriving to these shores as a refugee from war-torn Europe after the holocaust.

The elite of American Orthodox Judaism will at this occasion also mark over half a century of accomplishments by the Agudath Israel movement in every area of strengthening Torah authority and perpetuating authentic Judaism in this country and abroad through a vast network of constructive projects. □

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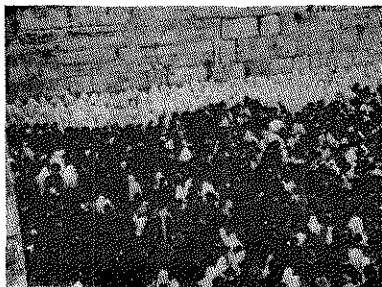
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CAMPAIGN FOR TAX CREDITS FOR NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENTS ENTERS FINAL PHASE

A prediction that Congress will at this session pass the bill granting tax credits for non-public school parents was made by Rabbi Moshe Sherer, executive president of Agudath Israel of America, at the final regional conference of Citizens Relief for Education by Income Tax (C.R.E.D.I.T.), the national coalition of all non-public school forces. Speaking on February 26th at the LaGuardia Airport Conference Hall, Rabbi Sherer, who is the president of C.R.E.D.I.T., declared that the series of nationwide strategy conferences which the coalition has just completed brought encouraging reports from non-public school leaders of a growing wave of Congressional support for this measure.

The New York conference is the sixth regional mobilization conference sponsored by C.R.E.D.I.T.; the others were held in Miami, San Francisco, Denver, Dallas and Chicago.

The tax credit bill which grants \$200 annually per child to every non-public school parent has bi-partisan support on Capitol Hill, headed by President Nixon and Congressman Wilbur Mills chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. It is estimated that parents of children attending Yeshivos would receive over \$10 million annually in actual cash benefits if the bill is passed. □

OVER 1,000 BOYS TO PARTICIPATE IN 10TH ANNUAL SIYUM HAMISHNAYOS OF PIRCHEI

Over 1000 Pirchim from throughout the United States and Canada are expected to attend the Tenth annual Siyum Hamishnayos of Pirchei Agudath Israel of America. This year will mark the tenth time that members of Pirchei Agudath Israel of America will have completed the entire *Shisho Sedrei Mishna*. The 30,000-plus *Mishnayos* that are learnt each year are mastered *be'al peh* (by heart) by the more than 3,000 Pirchim within our ranks throughout the United States and Canada.

Prominent *Roshei Yeshivos, Rabbanim* and lay-leaders of American Orthodoxy will be participating in this great *Kiddush Hashem*.

This year's Siyum Hamishnayos is being dedicated to the memory of the Vishnitzer Rebbe, Horav Yitzchak Meir Hagar, ZTL. The Siyum will be held on *Motzaei Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Poroh Parshas Tzav*, March 24, 1973 in the Auditorium of the Bais Yaakov of Boro Park.

At this gathering the Pirchei will honor Rabbi Shimon Zweig for his years of unselfish and loyal devotion to Pirchei Agudath Israel of America.

Shaya Yaraslavitz is the Chairman of the Siyum, with Ephraim Klein serving as the co-chairman of the Siyum Hamishnayos.

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**AGUDATH ISRAEL MOBILIZATION
DRIVE IN FULL SWING**

The drive to mobilize Torah-loyal Jews of all ages under the banner of Agudath Israel is now in full swing, with special emphasis on young people. The initial results indicate a renewed commitment to Agudath Israel by Orthodox Jews who realize that this world movement of independent Orthodoxy led by the *Gedolei Torah* is the only defense vehicle against efforts to water down or distort authentic *Yiddishkeit*.

Among the youth, special emphasis has been placed, with unusual success, to fill the gaps in the chain of membership in the Agudath Israel organization. A new Senior division of Pirchei Agudath Israel for boys from 13-18—Bachurei Agudath Israel—has gotten off the ground with an auspicious start and is making strong headway. Bnos Agudath Israel has also launched a senior division for post-high school girls—NAJR. Recent efforts to organize young marrieds in the Agudist movement have also struck strong roots.

The 10th anniversary of Pirchei Agudath Israel's national Siyum Mishnayos, will take place on March 24, 1973, bringing together over 1,000 youngsters.

Throughout the United States, local Agudath Israel branches are sponsoring community-wide dinners, which have helped bring the message and world view of Agudath Israel to large numbers of Jews in the grass-roots of America.

**AGUDATH ISRAEL LAUNCHES
FINAL DRIVE TO STOP
EQUAL RIGHTS PROPOSAL**

A nationwide drive was launched by the Legislative Commission of Agudath Israel of America in a final attempt to halt ratification of the women's equal rights amendment. This constitutional amendment, which requires ratification by 38 states, has so far been approved by the legislatures of twenty-seven states.

In explaining its effort to prevent the women's equal rights amendment from obtaining the ratification which it needs from eleven additional states, Agudath Israel declared that the amendment would "mandate the conscription of women into the armed services in the event when draft is renewed" besides its "deleterious effect on the moral tone of our society."

The Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America, headed by Rabbi Menachem Shayovich, has instructed its coordinators in those states which have not as yet ratified the amendment, to launch crash programs to convey this message to their local legislators. The Agudah women's organization, of which Mrs. Josephine Reichel is national president, has initiated a similar drive.

The following are the states which have so far ratified the women's equal rights amendment: Alaska, California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

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