

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

KISLEV 5742/NOVEMBER 1981

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**"Zos Chanukah":** What is Special About The Eighth Day?  
*a search for meaning*

**Orthodoxy in the Press:** Can You Believe *The New York Times*?  
*an analysis of a front page story*

**Addiction:** Orthodox Jews, Alcohol, and Pills  
*a plea for help*

**True Wealth:** The "Oisher" of Williamsburg  
*a man worth emulating*

**Second Looks:** Higher Horizons, Down Under  
*a new Kollel in Australia*

**ERA Comes Home**  
*the feminists' retreat*

**Letters:** "Losing Your Mind"—to a Novel?  
A Rebbe Who Won't "Disappear"  
Josephus—Saint or Scoundrel?  
How Much Help for the Baal Teshuva?  
*readers have their say*

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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NOV., 1981, VOL. XV, NO. 9  
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## in this issue . . .

- The Crooked Mirror-II, Nisson Wolpin . . . . . 3**  
**Wanted: Help for the Orthodox Pill Addict, A. B. Cohen . . . . 9**  
**"Zos Chanuka"—This is Chanuka, S. Feivel Beilus . . . . . 7**  
**The "Oisher" of Williamsburg, Gershon Kranzler . . . . . 15**
- Second Looks at the Jewish Scene**  
**ERA Comes Home . . . . . 23**  
**Higher Horizons Down Under . . . . . 26**
- Postscripts**  
**A Non-Disappearing Rebbe, Hillel Belsky . . . . . 29**  
**Justice at the Digs . . . . . 31**
- Letters to the Editor . . . . . 32**  
*Helping Soviet Jews/Opening up to the Baal Teshuva/  
The Ideology of Josephus/The Subtle Influences of  
Reading Novels*

...dominates the role of religion in daily lives

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# The Crooked Mirror-II

## The Orthodox Community in Israel as reflected in an article in The New York Times

Orthodox Jewry can live with the situation when they are taken for granted or totally ignored. Our primary concern is that we understand ourselves and are loyal to our heritage. When a distorted image of our beliefs and our way of life is projected, however, we become deeply concerned. Lack of understanding breeds prejudice and discrimination, and our special needs can then become violated. By the same token, Torah as our source of values and life becomes discredited. Should the medium of distorted projection be a widely read, highly respected newspaper such as *The New York Times*, then we become alarmed. People in decision making positions read this newspaper and accept its word as truth. This includes the many Jews who know little or nothing of Torah Judaism, and form their opinions on the basis of what the media tell them. Their individual

decisions in regard to Torah also are significant.

*The New York Times* featured a front-page article (Oct. 26, '81) on "Israelis Assess Role of Religion," by its Israeli correspondent, David K. Shipler. While it opened with an evocative description of the Yom Kippur tranquility that blanketed the land on that holy day, it quickly delved beyond the deceptive calm and examined what Mr. Shipler described as an ongoing bitter argument. Now, religion in Israel, especially in view of its entanglement with the national political system, is a highly complex field. It can be difficult for an outsider to master, and even more difficult for him to explain. Mr. Shipler, unfortunately, did very poorly.

In his feature-length article, which continues from page one to cover half a page in its conclusion, he paints the picture of a society that, on the one hand, has "grown modern, comfortable and materialistic," rooted in Western society, while on the other, there are those who have rejected the old Zionist and Socialist ideologies and are turning to Orthodoxy. This swing, enhanced by the growing political power of "the ultra-Orthodox Agudath Israel"—the "Moral Minority" as

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one Israeli journalist dubbed the group—is resulting in too much uncompromising emphasis on “archaic” religious practices. The intellectual elite and even the more moderate Orthodox are becoming disheartened. . . . A bleak picture of a fragmented society, to say the least.

### From Whence the Perspective?

Whether wittingly or unwittingly, Mr. Shipler is treating the readers to a view of a dynamic, growing segment of Israeli society from the narrow, bitter perspective of a group that has long nurtured an antipathy to religion. It is an approach that can manage to recognize the legitimacy of *Mafdal* (Mizrachi) as the last possible outpost of reason, salvaged by its Zionist commitment, beyond which it sees the vast Torah community, including the various segments within Agudath Israel, and the Eida Hachreidis and Neturei Karta, all as one monolith . . . an approach typified by the virulent anti-religious English-language *Jerusalem Post*. Whether Shipler is a captive of the *Post*'s point of view because he does not speak Hebrew or Yiddish, or because he simply does not venture away from the tight-knit circle of journalists and reporters that cherish each other's prejudices too much to mix with the natives, we do not know. In any event, he writes about a topic that is alive in countless neighborhoods in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak, in towns from Safed in the North to Netivot in the South, in Ashdod, and Zichron Yaakov. Yet Mr. Shipler is oblivious to them all. He could only muster together seven quotations, of which six were antagonistic toward religion or confused about it—two feminists, two professors, a journalist and a disillusioned lady—versus one quotation from Chief Rabbi Goren, who is not offered a platform to refute the other accusations, but merely comments on the *baal teshuva* phenomenon.

Pictorially, the religious community is represented by a photograph of “Ultra-Orthodox Jews”—a group of Meah Shearim youngsters in sackcloth protesting archaeological digs in the City of David last summer. So much for “the other side.”

### Anatomy of a Distortion: Coming to Terms

How does one actually analyze the Orthodox community? If *Mafdal* is Orthodox, and so are Poalei Agudath Israel, Agudath Israel, and Neturei Karta, how does one differentiate between one group and the other? Once could refer to a left-right continuum; or employ a faithful/stringent-versus lax/lenient measuring rod; or resort to a moderate-extreme yardstick. Before selecting one or the other, one must first know *what* one is measuring, and then explore the implications of employing one set of terms or another.

Orthodoxy is an attempt at fidelity to a sacred yet vibrant tradition that is over 3200 years old. From a worldly point of view, it would be well-nigh impossible to fully achieve fidelity, especially in view of the corro-

sive effects of contemporary society. “Middle-of-the-road” Orthodoxy would also be some achievement. Shipler not only seems to be unaware of this, but consistently selects terms of negative connotation to describe Orthodoxy:

- Agudath Israel is the “ultra-Orthodox party.” “Ultra” is “excessive, extreme,” (Random House Dictionary); or “surpassing of a specified limit, range, or scope; exceeding what is considered moderate or proper” (American Heritage Dictionary). By whose criteria does Mr. Shipler determine this in regard to Agudath Israel's Orthodoxy? His choice of prefix is either superficial or calculated to offend!

- Similarly, he finds that “many [disillusioned Israelis] have turned to a fundamentalist ultra-Orthodoxy, which retreats from the contemporary world.” What does he mean by “fundamentalist” and where does it fit into the Orthodox scheme of things? Mr. Shipler seems to be drawing from his American frame of reference: Amish fundamentalists who eschew technological advances in favor of a simple life. Jewish “ultras,” however, not only use these in their businesses and professions, but employ modern machinery and techniques to resolve halachically difficult situations, such as running sophisticated hospitals in accordance with Sabbath restrictions and other Torah laws. . . . Mr. Shipler is perhaps thinking of old-time fundamentalists such as American Baptists who only accept literal interpretation of the Bible; but Orthodox Jews have a multileveled exegetical interpretive approach that goes far beyond the basic literal narrative.

I do not know what a Jewish fundamentalist is and I suspect that Mr. Shipler doesn't either. But it does have a nice perjorative ring to it, doesn't it?

- In his description of the Orthodox community in Israel, Mr. Shipler employs a sub-headline in bold type: “20 Ultra-Orthodox Sects,” informing the reader that the “right” wing of Orthodoxy is composed of “a cluster of twenty . . . Hasidic sects.” A sect, according to Random House, is “a religious denomination, . . . any group or faction united by a specific doctrine.”

Mr. Shipler probably is referring to the various Hasidic groups, such as Slonim, Viznitz, Belz, and Ger. The shapes of their *shtreimlach* vary, as do other other minutiae of their dress. After all, they do come from different localities in Europe. The only other major distinction of these groups is the respective Rabbinical leaders they identify with—similar to any congregational groups. But I fear students of comparative religions would be stumped in attempting to justify the term “sect” in regard to these various groups. Nonetheless, the implication of twenty sectarian groups competing for validity within Hasidic Jewry does add a nice, wild-eyed smudge to their media image, and “sect” it is in Mr. Shipler's lexicon.

Incidentally, what makes a group “left” or “right” of Orthodox center—mode of dress?—a tradition of stringency in halachic matters?—attitude toward the State? If

the "right wing" is the exclusive turf of the Hasids, as Mr. Shipler maintains, where does that put non-Hasidic Ponevez and Brisk in relation to Hasidic Ger and Belz? . . . Such questions should not be addressed to the unknowledgeable; but then again, the unknowledgeable should not be addressing such areas in their writings.

• In another defamatory stroke, Shipler quotes Tel Aviv University's Professor Gershon Weiler's comparison of "the rabbis" with Iran's Khomeini—an odious comparison. The rabbis promote peace, not violence; nor do they aspire to take over the political process. And while aspects of Jewish jurisprudence have been incorporated into Israeli law, civil law is secular, and not being taken over by the rabbis.

### A Gift for Misinterpretation

The difference between a reporter and a journalist is that while the former records what he sees, the latter interprets events and trends. The more incisive and on-target his interpretations, the better the journalist. In interpreting religious life in Israel, Shipler is off target—sometimes failing to understand subtleties, other times totally missing the mark by a wide margin.

Mr. Shipler cites a poll conducted by *Haaretz* to illustrate that while "traditionally inclined," the vast majority of Israelis are not religious:

**"38 percent of 1,500 people interviewed said they recited a blessing over wine on the Sabbath and 44 percent said they used separate utensils for milk and meat, but only 1 percent refrained from using electricity on the Sabbath."**

How is the average reader to decipher the information presented? "Reciting a blessing on wine" is not simply a religious ritual; it refers to "*Kiddush*," the formal declaration of faith in G-d the Creator that precedes that traditional Friday night festive meal. People who "make *Kiddush*" usually accept the idea of Sabbath restrictions on public transportation—whether in Haifa or Geula. Only a vociferous minority truly objects. But Shipler does not understand the meaning of the wine-blessing and uses it to paint the religious community into a corner.

As for the "only 1 per cent that refrain from using electricity"—this does not at all mean that the vast majority of Israelis who *do* use electricity on the Sabbath, switch on the lights in violation of the day's restrictions. Not at all. The 1 per cent that "refrain . . ." have adopted an extra Sabbath stringency and avoid public use of power generated on *Shabbos*. But many of the remaining 99% are Sabbath observant by any standard. . . . Not only is the average *Times* reader unaware of this distinction, he probably would not understand it if it were explained . . . and I fear Shipler doesn't either.

• Among the gains realized by Agudath Israel in the negotiations following the most recent elections, Mr. Shipler includes "extensive funds . . . [to] be given to

Agudath Israel yeshivos and other institutions." Just exactly what are "Agudath Israel yeshivos"? Are the schools owned or run by the party? There are none. Does it mean that their leaders are sympathetic with Agudath Israel? Then this includes just about all major yeshivos in Israel, besides those that identify with Miz-rachi, and which receive support far in excess of the amounts slated for "Agudath Israel yeshivos." Moreover, the per-student support for secular colleges is four times greater than that given to yeshiva students. . . . Does Shipler refer to Chinuch Atzmai-Torah Schools? This vast educational network was not a beneficiary of the coalition negotiations.

• In regard to the dispute over the archeological excavations in the City of David last summer, Shipler reports:

**"First with demonstrations and stonethrowing, then with political pressure, the ultra-Orthodox managed to induce . . . the Chief Rabbis into ordering the dig halted, despite the archeologists' insistence that no evidence of graves had been found."**

Were the stone-throwers—kids from Meah Shearim—the same ultra-Orthodox Jews that resorted to political pressure? That would be strange, for the Neturei Karta refuses to engage in political activities with the State, nor would it seek Rabbi Goren's help in the matter. . . . Furthermore, did they also "induce" the Chief Rabbi to take initiatives and discover human remains at the dig site? And weren't there any counterclaims by the Orthodox—counterclaims that were backed up with evidence? Why does the journalist ignore the other side of a controversy?

• "Mr. Begin's agreement . . . devotes most of its 83 provisions to pledges on religious matters." True—but these pledges basically deal with safeguarding rights already guaranteed in pre-State days in negotiations between Ben Gurion and representatives of Agudath Israel, and with redressing various inequities from which Orthodoxy has been suffering. Thus a line such as "permits for work on the Sabbath would be almost eliminated" does not refer to a new restriction forced on an unwilling populace, but to an elimination of a regressive policy that has permitted industries to run seven days a week in spite of an iron-clad agreement reached before the founding of the State. The individual Israeli still will not need a permit to drive his car or paint his apartment on the Sabbath.

• "Some intellectuals . . . are deeply concerned. 'We are sliding into clerical dictatorship,' said Gershon Weiler, a professor of philosophy at Tel Aviv University. If we adopted a constitution . . . the first paragraph would read: 'Israel is a Jewish state.'"

The smears speak for themselves. As for the Jewish nature of Israel—Chaim Weizmann read the Balfour Declaration that way, and so did Ben Gurion mean it to

be nominally so, for all his personal antipathy toward religion. Apparently only those bent on totally de-Judaizing Israel take offense at the prospect of "Israel as a Jewish State."

• "If anything, (halachic marriage) restrictions appear to foster circumvention of the religious laws. Couples fly off to Cyprus, Western Europe and the United States to do what religious law considers illicit."

Laws always foster violations, but lack of law fosters lawlessness and total chaos. Furthermore, the incidents of circumvention are relatively few in number. If anything, we would say that the restrictions make couples contemplating an intermarriage or an illicit partnership think twice before flouting the law. Instead of splintering the Jewish community, this preserves the unity of *Klal Yisrael*, making it one community where there are always possibilities of marrying across various social and religious strata. Should restrictions be eliminated, such marriages will become more rare. Shipler does not recognize this.

• "Feminists contend that Orthodox tradition tends to regard the wife as the property of her husband and women as unclean."

—Not in Orthodox Judaism. The *kesuba* (marriage contract) is a document of the husband's responsibilities to his wife, not a deed of ownership. As for "unclean"—this is a misleading translation of a ritual-related term. An anti-religious segment is smearing Torah Jewry with mud borrowed from other cultures, and the American journalist does not bother checking out the facts.

• "Prospective brides must be interviewed by a rabbanit, a woman official at the rabbinate, who asks intimate questions about personal and religious habits."

This "requirement" does not exist, unless the lady in the incident was a non-Jew preparing for conversion, but nothing in the article indicates this. . . . An anecdote then follows in which an interviewee realizes her worst fears when a rabbanit warns her that "if you don't go to the mikvah and you get pregnant that month, you can have a child who would have cancer or be mentally retarded or something."

Now, on the one hand, this one extreme case is not at all representative of the usual (voluntary) pre-marital lecture. On the other hand, who does not recall similar scare tactics from overzealous, misinformed gynecologists or environmentalists—or hairdressers, for that matter? How then does a good journalist use one isolated case and build on it, and why?

• "Feminists such as Tamar Eshel and another member of Parliament, Shulamit Aloni, both lawyers, have protested the advantage that they say men have in rabbinical courts, whose judges are all men. . . ."

This is a normal feminist complaint, but totally ignores two factors: the halachic requirements of a rabbinical court, and the high level of character of the men who serve on such courts. How does a journalist report such a nasty statement without either testing it with a statistical study or interviewing a (male) rabbinical judge?

• They continue:

"The rabbinical courts have impinged too much on private life, subjecting marriage, divorce and child custody to the archaic practices of ancient times."

"Impinge," of course, is an untruth. Rabbinical courts have always exercised jurisdiction over family matters, and continued to do so with the founding of the State, by the aforementioned agreement. But one wonders: would a *Times* reporter quote a Catholic reformist's criticisms in similar, virulent terms, without refutation from the other side, or without challenging the ancient (i.e. timeless)—equals—archaic hypothesis?

• "Some Orthodox intellectuals worry about the self-imposed isolation of the ultra-Orthodox. . . . Even in the military there [are] special groups for them . . . so they do not have common experience with others."

The isolation is neither in commerce nor in political life; only in the social sphere, where the Torah community rightfully rejects the secular community for aping the worst excesses of Western culture: whether in the intellectual preserves of Hebrew University, where until now coed dormitories had been permitted and the rights of Arab Nationalists are supported; or in the army bases, which were never celebrated as being bastions of morality. At this point, the less said the better.

### The UnRandom Sampling

It would seem that when someone undertakes a study of an aspect of a foreign society and culture that is indigenous to its history, its culture, and—according to some—its perpetuity, one must venture away from the familiar, easily approachable, articulate-in-English politicians and professors. Writing about the Jewish religion, he would naturally visit the many Orthodox communities and interview their leaders. If he is truly impressed with the thousands of Israelis disillusioned with old secular dogmas, he would visit one of the many yeshivos catering to the *baalei teshuva* and interview some of the fascinating people in their student bodies and faculties. Most important, he would learn Yiddish and Hebrew, or engage a knowledgeable guide and interpreter. Or stay home. In the meantime, Mr. Shipler owes the Orthodox community an apology, and *The New York Times* owes its readership the other half of a fascinating story.\*

\*A letter to this effect from this writer was published in *The New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1981.

# "Zos Chanuka": This is Chanuka



## I. "Ma Zos"—What Distinguishes the Eighth Day?

The eighth day of Chanuka is referred to as "*Zos Chanuka*"—"This is Chanuka"—ostensibly because the Torah portion read on that day includes the phrase: "*Zos chanukas hamizbaich* (This is the dedication of the altar)." It has long been assumed, however, that it somehow implies that the eighth day encapsulates the very essence of Chanuka. How is this so?

This search for the meaning of the eighth day of Chanuka takes on an added dimension in view of the famous question of the *Beis Yoseif* (Rabbi Yoseif Karo): Since there was sufficient oil for one day's use, there were only *seven* days of miracle, not eight. Consequently, Chanuka ought to be celebrated for only seven days! There are many answers given to this question, but for whatever reason there is an eighth day, the miracle of the oil was only during the first seven days; why, then, is the eighth day of such importance that it be called "*Zos Chanuka*"?

The *Pri Chadash* answers the *Beis Yoseif's* question by explaining that only seven days commemorate the miracle of the oil, while the eighth day is a commemoration of the triumph on the battlefield. At first glance, it would seem strange that the same ritual, lighting the menorah, should be used for commemorating both the miracle of the lights and the victory in battle. Is there any connection between the two?

## II. Behind the Mask of Nature

Rashi in *Pesachim* (2a) explains that darkness is a positive entity, not merely the absence of light. To understand this, we must realize that the terms "light" and "darkness" as used in the Torah, aside from the conven-

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*Rabbi Beilus is a New Yorker currently attached to a Jerusalem Kollel. This is his first appearance in these pages.*

tional meaning, also refer to "light" in a much deeper sense, i.e. divine emanations. The true state of affairs, then, is that "light" is everpresent, permeating every iota of existence, as the passage says: "His glory fills the entire world." Yet, to give mankind the ability to function in this world and still exercise free choice, this divine light was obstructed by a veil of concealment—darkness, if you will—so that man may not be compelled to recognize G-d's existence, but instead be able to do so by free-will. And what is this veil of darkness that so effectively masks the divine presence? It is that force commonly known as "nature." To a casual observer, the universe runs effectively without any signs of divine guidance. Many commentaries note that the word *אלקים Elokim*, G-d, has the same *gematriya* (numerical value) as *הטבע nature*. In other words, *Elokim* is the divine force as manifest in nature. Substituting one term for the other, the first verse is *Bereishis* "In the beginning (when) *Elokim* created . . ." can be interpreted homiletically "In the beginning nature was created," implying that the first act of creation was the setting up of the system of nature *per se*—that is, the ability of a world to function on its own, seemingly without "outside" participation.

There is a point where G-d's will, descending from higher regions, finds expression in "natural" events. It is toward the junction of "natural" and "divine" that man's Torah and *mitzvos* are directed, recognizing the divine as the cause of natural occurrences. If a person were to make a statement to the effect that "there exists a spiritual world totally divorced from our world and

completely beyond the reaches of any of our senses," his statement could be neither proven nor refuted. How does one argue over the existence of anything that by definition is completely un beholden to our senses? The concept of belief in G-d becomes meaningful and challenging only when we speak of Him in relation to our sphere of existence.

This concept is also mentioned in the *Shulchan Aorch* with regard to "אשר יצר" the blessing after performing bodily functions. The meaning of "ומפליא לעשות" (to cause wondrous happenings) is explained as the wedding of the soul to the body. This expression celebrates neither the wonder of the soul nor that of the body unto itself; rather, the connection of the two to function as one is underscored as the true wonder!

A person who is wise enough to realize, when confronted with "the mask," that there is "a face behind the mask," brings forth light and enlightenment to the world. Not so he who only sees the mask and believes that there is nothing beyond it. The more he studies the mask and becomes engrossed in its intricacies, the deeper he plunges himself into darkness. This is why darkness\* in the account of Creation is interpreted as referring to Greece, for Greece among all the nations was most deeply engrossed in studying the mask, divorcing it from the divine behind the mask.

This is also expressed in a well-known commentary on the *Mishna*: "Whoever interrupts his studies and says 'How beautiful is this tree . . . 'deserves to forfeit his life" (*Avos* III, 9). When marveling over the grace of nature represents an interruption of Torah thought—that is, if the person who enjoys the beauty of the tree fails to appreciate it as an expression of the same divine will that is revealed in the Torah—then he deserves to forfeit his life. (*Mayanos Hanetzach* on *Avos*, by Rabbi Aaron Surasky)

### III. From the Miraculous to the Natural

The victory over Greece, therefore, was not merely an opportunity to see the hand of G-d manifest in a miracle; rather, the miracle served as a steppingstone for recognizing the hand of G-d in that which is mistakenly thought to be nature. The ultimate Chanuka experience was to see G-d in the events of the "eighth day"—the day of Chanuka that did not seem to be a miracle. After seven days of commemorating the miracle of Chanuka, we now realize that the eighth day was no less miraculous than the other seven, and this—*Zos*—is the essence of Chanuka.

For this reason, we may also commemorate the victory over the Greeks through the medium of lighting the menorah. Once one has perceived the hand of G-d in a supernatural phenomenon, such as the miracle of the oil, one then is prepared to understand that G-d is

responsible for all that befalls us; one can come to see that the *very same* hand of G-d that was manifest in miracles is revealed in the natural event of victory in battle.

### IV. Miracles Without Effort

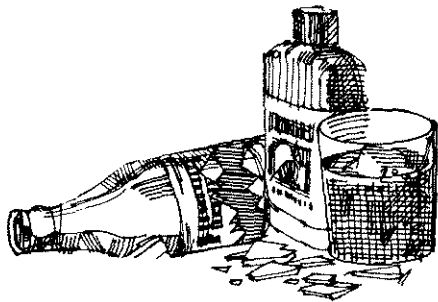
Extending this thought further, we can attempt to clarify the *Beis Yoseif's* own answer to his question regarding the reason for the eighth day of celebration. He suggests that the *Chashmonaim* originally divided up the oil into eight equal parts—using only a fraction of the requisite amount for each day's illumination, making each of the eight days a miracle. This approach has its own difficulties, for how could the *Chashmonaim* have kindled the menorah with only an eighth of the amount of oil necessary? Did they light the menorah in expectation that it would only burn a few hours, in violation of *halacha*? Or did they actually anticipate that the miracle would occur? This would have been in violation of the principle of "one may not depend on a miraculous event!"

To clarify this point, I recall a discourse I heard from Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner זצ"ל in which he referred to the Vilna Gaon's explanation of an incident recorded in the Talmud: The *Gemora* in *Taanis* (25a) relates that Rabbi Chanina's daughter put vinegar instead of oil into the *Shabbos* lamp. Rabbi Chanina told her not to worry for "He who commanded oil to burn will command vinegar to burn," and burn it did. The question immediately arises that this type of reliance is prohibited because of "איטרוחי קמיה מרא" (causing G-d to perform unnecessary miracles). In response, the Gaon explains that there are two types of believers: Someone who perceives the world as an independently functioning entity but believes that G-d in His omnipotence may intervene and overrule laws of nature; such a person may not "trouble" G-d to produce miracles unnecessarily. But then there is the individual who is so aware of G-d's omnipotence that he does not perceive nature as a force unto itself at all. He understands that all that takes place—so-called natural events and miracles—occurs by the hand of G-d. Such a person may rely on miracles. To quote Rabbi Chanina, "He who has commanded oil to burn will command vinegar to burn!" Neither of the two phenomena—the natural and the miraculous—calls for extra "effort." He is directly responsible for both.

Thus on Chanuka, when the veil of darkness called nature was momentarily lifted, people saw the hand of the "One who commanded oil to burn," and they attained a level of belief comparable to Rabbi Chanina's. They recognized that all events bear the imprint of the hand of G-d. It was then possible for them to divide the oil into eight equal parts and rely on G-d to extend the duration of its glow eight-fold, from a few hours to an entire day. Nor was it unseemly for them to do this. For people to whom natural and miraculous are identical, the rule of "Do not rely on miracles" does not apply. ❧

\*"And darkness hovered over the face of the abyss"—*And darkness*, that is Greece.—Midrash (see A. Scheinman's article in *JO* Dec. '80).





## Wanted: Help for Orthodox Addicts

### Learning to be Addicted

I come from a good home—a fine, religious, respected family—and attended a top yeshiva . . . a seemingly normal, very conventional background, with one exception. I am a recovering addict. That is, until recently I was dependent on all kinds of chemicals, such as tranquilizers and sedatives—what one can describe as a “white collar addiction”—and I felt that I could not live without them.

How does someone from a yeshiva background, never exposed to an environment that one usually associates with pill-popping or drug addiction, get hooked on pills? Are there others in the Orthodox community who are also suffering from some form of chemical dependency, too terrified to seek the proper help because of the shame and stigma? Indeed, are we immune to the problems that affect the rest of our society? How widespread is this problem? What forms of help are available to a religious individual who is trapped on the chemical-dependency merry-go-round?

For me, it all started with a great deal of unhappiness. Things were not running smoothly for me. I began having trouble concentrating in yeshiva. Other problems began setting in, such as difficulty in getting along with my family. In particular, *Shabbosos* and *Yomim Tovim* became unbearable. Many people look forward to being home on *Shabbos* to enjoy a rest and bask in the warmth of a family get-together. I dreaded the threatening cold of it all, for I felt very little connection with the others. Instead, as I look back, I recall a good deal of manipulation of us children by our parents and a barrage of accusations, both spoken and implied: “Why don’t you do well in yeshiva? Why are you such a disgrace to our family?” This led to my feeling very homeless all week

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“A. B. Cohen” is nom de plume for a young man attending an advanced yeshiva in the New York area.

long, week after week. I thought my parents too demanding and unsympathetic (although now I feel I understand them much better), and I began blaming myself and the world.

I gradually began to feel very isolated, beset with a sense of not belonging anywhere. I compared my aching insides with everyone else’s attractive outsides, and an inner emptiness began creeping in. Consequently, I started to look for something to fill that void. Eventually, in my recovery from addiction, I had to learn to find the elusive source of happiness within myself; but at that stage I was not at all ready to admit that the problem started from within and that therefore the solution had to be internal.

First I tried the geographic cure and went off to learn in a yeshiva in Israel for two years in my late adolescence, only to return more disillusioned and depressed. Change of setting did not change me. Next I began a series of unsuccessful psychotherapies, looking for someone to whom I could entrust my life. Along the way, as my discomfort increased, some doctors began prescribing a variety of mood-altering pills, such as Valium and common anti-depressants. I gradually learned the skills of self medication by going to many different doctors at the same time for different prescriptions, to be sure that I had enough pills to calm the self-hate and anxiety that were my steady companions. Continuing along this path of self-destruction and addiction, I finally reached the bottoming stages, each addicting medication or experience leaving me emptier and more anxious than before.

### Bottoming Out

I finally became sick and tired of being sick and tired. By an act of *hashgacha* I came across a newspaper article about Pills Anonymous. I identified strongly with this article and began attending their meetings. After being

able to recognize my own pill dependency, I began to recall incidences where I would in fact do a little extra drinking at events such as *Shabbos Kiddushim* and weddings because I felt lonesome or isolated in some way. I slowly became aware of how closely related pill dependency and alcoholism are: essentially, the individual is putting a chemical barrier between himself and his feelings. By the same token, there is a great deal of cross addicton for many people between minor tranquilizers and alcohol. I then began to make use of the Alcoholics Anonymous program as well. My observations were borne out when I met others who were similarly cross addicted.

It was at these meetings that I began my long journey to recovery. The rich encounter with others who had been through the same turmoil and had recovered gave me the confidence that I, too, would recover. I vividly remember the impact I felt during my first encounter with the members of the Pills Anonymous group who had gone through the same isolation, failure, and pill dependency that I was experiencing, and—lo and behold—they were smiling and seemed to be happy! I began dumping (PA term for unloading my personal emotional burdens): *How miserable my lot is!* Which they countered with: "Hold it! We've gone through the same unhappiness. We too felt lonely and desolate. You don't have to keep going through this pain, you don't have to keep taking pills. Rather, you can learn to let go of the anger and anxiety, and replace fear with confidence."

I was shocked: "You mean I don't have to keep living in this depression forever?" I had felt permanently trapped until that moment. For the first time I was encountering others who had "walked the walk"—that is, gone through the same experiences and illnesses I had, and recovered.

### Addiction: A Disease

My own experiences as well as those of others I was in contact with gave me some insight into addiction, which was later verified in my readings on the subject:

Chemical addiction is a disease, and like most diseases, it can affect anyone, even religious Jews. It is a disease that can begin with unwholesome attitudes toward

\* "According to the American Medical Association manual on alcoholism, repeated attempts to attribute alcoholism to a single cause have been unsuccessful, although many factors have been suspected and studied. Indeed, alcohol by itself does not cause alcoholism, as sugar does not cause diabetes. . . . Indisputably, the vast majority of those who drink alcohol do not become alcoholics. *No mention need be made concerning the specific volume of alcohol consumed nor the frequency with which such consumption takes place. Indeed, there are patients with this illness who ingest nothing stronger than beer, and there are those whose alcoholic intake is limited to but once or twice a year.*" ALCOHOLISM—A PRACTICAL TREATMENT GUIDE by Herb Peiser and Stanley Gittow.

"Addiction occurs when any normal function becomes dependent on a chemical for which there is tolerance."—CAUTION: KINDNESS CAN BE DANGEROUS TO THE ALCOHOLIC, by Dr. Twerski.

oneself such as loneliness, isolation, guilt and shame. A person feels compelled to take a chemical into his system to thwart feelings of discomfort, such as anxiety, and eventually graduates to taking this chemical to satisfy a craving for the chemical itself.

One can be addicted even when using small amounts; it is not a matter of the amount one takes but *why* he is taking it—to satisfy his dependency on it.\* Chemical dependency is also a progressive disease, where one may begin with small amounts and then proceed to very large amounts over a period of time.

In its incipient stages, when the craving is basically an emotional one, and a chemical dependency has not yet set in, a perceptive sympathetic individual can arrest the problem and help the potential addict avoid further entanglements. For instance, a *rebbe* who is attuned to his students' difficulties can extend warmth, understanding and *kiruv* to those in need and prevent further decline. I personally have met a number of rabbis whose understanding of incipient addiction and sympathy for the potential addicts was far keener than that of physicians I have dealt with. The human factor is by far the most important in preventive medicine. It is only when the "disease of attitudes" is not treated that it deteriorates into a disease of chemical dependency.

### Breaking Loose: Overcoming Denial

Recovery from addiction involves breaking out of one's isolation and learning to share one's real feelings with others, and developing a sense of individuality and independence.

The greatest hurdle to recovery from addicton is what is known as the "denial syndrome." Most addicts when confronted with their drug usage will usually respond with some form of denial: *Me, pill dependent? No way! I only pop a few Valiums when I'm feeling anxious.* Or they may say: *Yes, I take a lot of pills but I can stop any time I want to.* The same tendency toward denial exists in regard to drinking: *Me, an alcoholic? No way! I only get drunk once in a while.*

More serious than individual denial is the situation when an addict is a member of a community that believes that it has no addiction. The common claim: *The utter impossibility of me, an Orthodox Jew, being an alcoholic or an addict* compounds the individual's tendency toward denial. For this reason (among others), many therapists believe that when addiction strikes an individual who subscribes to a culture that has less overt alcoholism and addiction, it will strike him more severely. He may feel more bewildered and does not understand what is happening to him. Several Orthodox people who have gone through the experience of addiction tell how advanced their addiction had become before they chose to seek help. They also tell of the feelings of shame and isolation; they're afraid to ask for help for fear of increasing their feelings of isolation.

## Not a Question of "How Many?"

To what extent does addiction exist in the Orthodox community? While there are no statistics available, various sources indicate that individual cases and incidences do exist: Every Orthodox physician I have spoken to has had at least one or more Orthodox patients who is pill dependent or alcoholic. . . . According to Dr. Abraham Twerski (the clinical director of the Department of Psychiatry of the St. Francis Hospital in Pittsburgh) in a personal conversation: "The problem of addiction now exists in significant proportions in the Orthodox community."

Since this is not a scientific paper, significance should not be determined on a statistical basis. The mere existence of pill or alcohol addiction in one Jewish community after another gives the problem "significance." The

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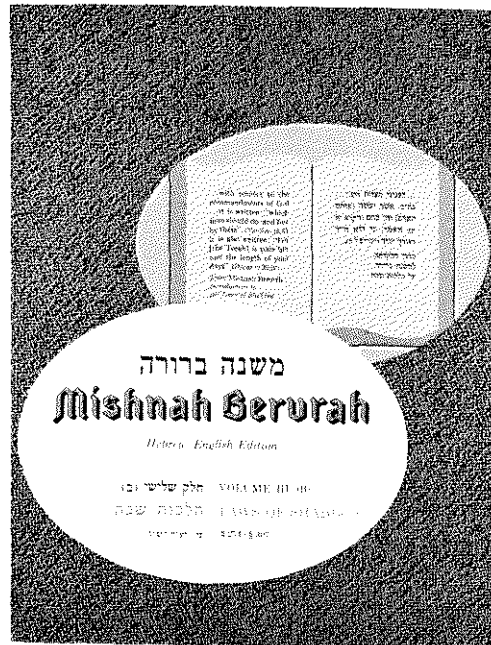


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only facts available are based on the experience of Orthodox people who are recovering from addiction, and they indicate that the existing belief that there is no addiction among the Orthodox is erroneous. As a result, Orthodox people with an addiction problem have had a very difficult time getting help—because both the individual and the community are unfamiliar with the existence of the problem, and the “Anonymous” programs that deal with them. We, the community, do have a responsibility to offer help to those in need.

**The Kind of Help Available**

What kind of help is available to Orthodox people who find themselves caught up in some form of chemical dependency? The individual often feels trapped, with no place to turn for help. He may be afraid to go to his *rav* or doctor because of the shame associated with addiction, or because of the fear of being thought peculiar for having this kind of problem. Those of us who are Orthodox in Alcoholics Anonymous or Pills Anonymous programs have tried to carry the message of recovery to our coreligionists in need, but we have found ourselves up against a wall of resistance because of a lack of familiarity with these programs.

We have found ourselves dealing with the potential client's fear of getting involved with foreign spirituality and his reluctance to get into a very close relationship with a secular crowd and with members of other faiths, for the success of these programs is based on peer interaction, encouragement and support.

Actually, many members report becoming closer to *Yiddishkeit* as a result of the Alcoholics Anonymous and Pills Anonymous programs. Addicts usually are beset with a vague yearning and searching feeling, and these therapeutic programs encourage them to get closer to their own cultural background. They then are more ready to partake of the rich spirituality of *Yiddishkeit*—that is, to experience such things as *emunah*, *tefilla*, and *tzeddaka* (faith, prayer and charity) on a gut level. In addition, since many of us succeed in recovering from our character defects and are able to give up our resentments and the feeling of isolation that we tend to cling to, we begin to experience a very strong sense of identity with our community.

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I personally had spent a number of years in yeshiva and also had a good deal of psychotherapy, both with limited success—I felt that both were terribly deficient, each in its own way; neither had really gotten to me. It was only when I began my own recovery and I found my own spiritual core that I realized that yeshiva was wonderful and all-important. Psychotherapy also was useful for those in need. After searching within myself for the source of my problems, I was ready for the next step of changing my attitude.

### A Matter of "Special Interest"

To get help to religious people in need, a "special interest" AA group has been founded for Orthodox Jews who are suffering from any form of chemical dependency including pills, alcohol, marijuana, or any form of addicting substances. While AA does not permit religious separation in its sessions, special interest groups are formed on the basis of professions (lawyers, doctors, or artists who are reluctant to mix with others) or some other mutual need. Similarly, there is a special interest AA group for Orthodox Jews.

One of the purposes of a program of this sort is to encourage those who are afraid to reach out for help for fear of being disclosed. They need only call, not giving their name, and a member of the group will be happy to speak with them at length. When individuals join a group, all precautions are taken to safeguard the member's anonymity. Similarly, individuals who only require information concerning a relative or a friend with an addiction problem, or those who have doubts about their own medication use, can feel free to call for information.

A community such as ours is mature enough to face up to its problems, regardless of whether they are of our own making or represent an invasion of foreign influences. In either case, our response must be one of reaching out to help those in need instead of retreating in a defensive posture of denial. As individuals, we must help others with problems—ourselves, if that be the case—to face these problems and deal with them. As members of the community, we must endeavor to make space available for PA and AA groups and offer them encouragement and legitimacy. Candor—recognition of a problem—has always been the first step in effecting a cure.

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# The "Oisher" of Williamsburg

## In Tribute to Reb Chaim Gelb

### Waiting For Reb Chaim

It was shortly before *Mincha*. The crowd was gathering inside the big *Beis Hamidrash* and in the hall of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath on Wilson Street. The school bell had just rung and down the steps came the classes of kids, released from long hours of sitting still and trying to pay attention. Scores of mothers, brothers, and other relatives were lined up outside, receiving their charges in various stages of disarray, buttoning their jackets, straightening out a tie, or helping to close open hats, briefcases, or coats. And there, as usual, was Reb Chaim Gelb watching over his troops of Yeshiva boys, making sure that no one was left behind crying, or getting into a squabble or fight. How they loved him!—even though some cynical older people poked fun at him when he lined the children up behind the last row of the *Beis Hamidrash* to hand out candies for saying a *Bracha* or answering *Omein*.

We were standing in the hall near the wide open door when two young newcomers came in hesitantly, looking around, obviously searching for something or someone. It did not take much insight to guess that they had come off the boat in the past few days. "Can we help you?" asked one of the bystanders.

"We are looking for a big *Oisher* who lives here in Williamsburg." The other one—judging by his newly sprouting beard, the older of the two—added: "For years he has been sending our mother money to feed her *Shtub* full of orphans."

Now, an *Oisher* is a rich man, a man of status and recognition, and we were all curious as to whom this proud epithet was applied when the young man pulled

out an old, crumpled envelope bearing the return address of Reb Chaim Gelb. One of the bystanders looked at it, read the inscription, shook his head once, twice, looked at it again, and burst out laughing. "Why? What's wrong?" asked the newcomer, obviously upset. "Who is he and where can we find him?"

"Oh, nothing easier than that," replied the amused bystander. "Just wait a minute or two."

He looked through the wide open entrance, and as expected, there was Reb Chaim coming in on the run after he had made certain that none of his young friends had been left behind or in trouble. Then only was he ready for action, his shiny velvet *yarmulke* upended, resting on his open palm.

"*Zerizus* (zeal), *zerizus*, my friends. "*Tzedakah tatzil mimoves*," (charity prevents death) he chanted in his inimitable way, beginning his usual rounds of his favorite customers. He greeted them with a smile, a friendly word, a pat of encouragement, while bestowing on them the gift of accepting their pennies, nickels, or dimes, according to his judgment. And if you had already given him your allotment that day or the day before, he would refuse a second coin. It took me a long time until he accepted a quarter from me, according me the honor he reserved for special friends only.

"Ah, *der Daitch*"—as he was wont to call me since my first appearance in his turf—"Where have you been? I haven't seen you for a long time. Today you may give me a quarter." And it was only years later, on one of our frequent trips back "home" to Williamsburg when I took my sons to the *minyán* in the Yeshiva, that Reb Chaim asked me for a dollar. As much as I pressed him, he would not accept more. "Who is this man that you are so anxious to give away your money to?" asked my little one.

"Don't you know Reb Chaim?" answered my older son, who had spent his first school years at the Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and had many-a-time benefitted from

---

Dr. Kranzler is a professor of sociology in Towson State University. This article is condensed from a chapter in a forthcoming book on the Williamsburg community in Brooklyn, focusing on its Post-World War II status when it was in transition to its present state, as a primarily Chassidic community.

Reb Chaim's helpfulness, ... like the day when his grandmother was late with his lunch; or when he had lost the nickel he needed for his English class project; or when some big bully had frightened him while he was waiting to be taken home, and Reb Chaim had come to his rescue. "Dad is right. It's a privilege to help him do his *mitzvos*."

So, when the two young newcomers who had arrived in this country just ahead of the tanks of the Nazis asked

for "the *Oisher* of Williamsburg" and it turned out to be this not too prosperous looking man rushing about the length and width of the huge *Beis Hamidrash* collecting *tzeddaka*, they looked crestfallen. Having canvassed the last row on both sides, as well as the middle, Reb Chaim Gelb came over to us, looking at the newcomers with a friendly smile and a broad "*Sholom Aleichem*," stretching out both hands to them. They looked dubiously at his kindly but haggard face with the wispy beard and prominent nose.

"Are you Reb Chaim Gelb?"

"No doubt about it," kibbetzed a bystander. "He is the *Oisher* of Williamsburg."

"Shahhh!" threatened Reb Chaim, affably pushing his sweat-clouded glasses up onto his forehead, took the old envelope in his hand, and looked at the address. "Why, let me see," he said pensively, turning the envelope to the front, spelling out: "Mrs. Fraida Adler, ... Kosice, Czechoslovakia ... Hmmm, I can't seem to recall that name right now." Again the face of the eagerly waiting young men fell. "I tell you what. I live right nearby in the house at the corner. You go over there; tell my *baaleboste* I'll be home in a short while. And over a good hot supper we can *schmuess* better. Perhaps I'll call some friends and see if they have work for you. Meanwhile, I can check up in my ledger why I would write to your mother."

The eyes of the young newcomers lit up, and even the most skeptical among us smiled with satisfaction as Reb Chaim rushed on to complete his rounds.

### The Ledger

Years later, an acquaintance sitting next to us in the *Beis Midrash* commented that he had seen Reb Chaim Gelb's legendary, multi-volumed ledger. Its pages carried not only an accounting for every penny he collected over the years; but also the names of many of his special friends, now respectable businessmen or professionals whom he had supported in the months after their arrival until they made good and moved to Boro Park, Flatbush, or the more prosperous suburbs of the Island. Recorded were the famous *Roshei Yeshiva* or *Rebbs* who had settled temporarily in Williamsburg until they were able to establish their yeshivos or *batei midrash*. Reb Chaim was a *Chassid* who did not limit himself to any one of the small or the great leaders who arrived in this country after escaping from the camps, the gas ovens, or the DP centers. He graced their *Tischen*, was always

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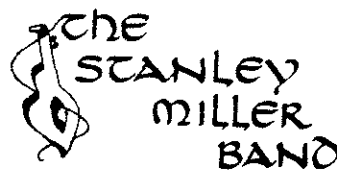
one of the first to volunteer his help, encouraging or enlisting others' help, and lending a hand even to those who were not major attractions of Williamsburg, those who lived in the shadow of the famous to whom everybody flocked in the years of the postwar period.

But Reb Chaim was most in his element in the happy, joyous parades up and down Bedford Avenue when a new *Beis Hamidrash* was opened; as when Torah Vodaath moved to its then-new location on South 3 Street in the early 40's; and when there were mass rallies, protests, or campaigns for *Shmiras Mitzvos*, especially for *Shmiras Shabbos*, and *Hatzalah* work. Reb Chaim was the general, running circles around and about everyone else, making certain that everyone marched in line, and that everything proceeded just right. He was also there when the plain and unknown little people passed on to their Creator and saw to it that the *levaya* was respectful. But best of all Reb Chaim loved a Simchas Torah, or a wedding (before the collections became an obstacle course for the guests). The years slowed him down, and he began to limp. Only then would he permit us to take him to a *Simcha*. But his spirit was bubbling, and his *brenn*—which he imparted to the kids when they *davened* too quietly in the back of *Beis Hamidrash*—lit up faces and lifted spirits,

warming up the most worried or depressed with his *bitachon* and faith.

### Cold Brownstones, Warm Humanity

Recently I read a brief article about Reb Chaim, which reported the honors bestowed on him as the first inmate of a new nursing home for the elderly in the middle of the neighborhood where he had lorded over the kids, the poor, the needy and the downtrodden who were his best friends. Appropriately, the article was titled "Mr. Williamsburg," and briefly sketched his career from his arrival as a child in this country, to his



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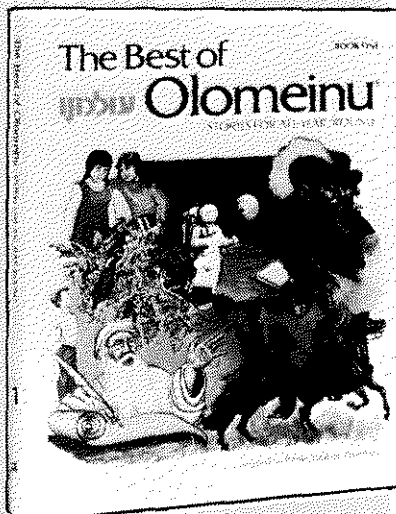
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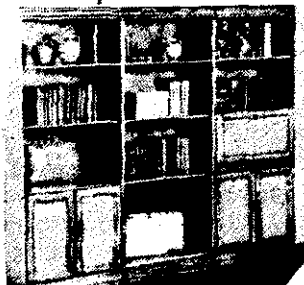
becoming a crackerjack salesman, touching the highlights of his unique function as a *Baal Tzedakah*, accepted by all—the “Amerikaner” as well as the refugees and survivors of the camps that crowded into Williamsburg over the decades.

I read the column over and over. And then it struck me. Every word was true, and then some. And the picture of the old man in the white beard walking into a battery of popping flashbulbs, face turned aside, to the applause of a groups of friends, well-wishers, and officials, was a reasonable facsimile of what he looks like now, only faintly reminiscent of the dynamo that had

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rushed up and down Bedford Avenue, Lee Avenue, and Division Avenue and their cross streets on his daily rounds. But something was missing, something that is more than the bare facts, the very essence of what had made him so special; something that had carved a special niche in the feelings and memories of all those who had been touched by his role in the daily dynamics of the Williamsburg of old. For a moment I was wondering whether nostalgia did not color or distort simple facts. Then it dawned on me that there was a reality of the spirit that is more real than facts, more concrete than the dismal streets of Williamsburg with their endless rows of stooped or stoopless brownstone houses—(though many have been removed to make room for new projects, and some have been dressed up with marble-fronts and balconies of the Boro Park variety). It is the simple people like Reb Chaim Gelb—genuine, permeated with humaneness and mutual concern, as with their *Yiddishkeit* and *Mesiras Nefesh*—that transcend and transform sober, cold facts with the magic touch of an inner beauty, the fragile web of a historical past, present, and future, with the strong warp and woof of a metahistorical texture, independent of time and place.

This deeper, inner layer of the stuff of which legends are made, emerges whenever and wherever the name of Reb Chaim is mentioned when Williamsburgers get together and reminisce. A young, brilliant Washington lawyer, assistant to a prominent legislator, said it recently when someone dropped Reb Chaim's name in the conversation:

*"I am one of his boys, though I never attended Yeshiva Torah Vodaath. It goes back to the time my grandfather took me to the small house in Williamsburg where he lived in the basement after his arrival in the U.S., before he became a highly successful jewelry dealer. 'Whenever things were rough in those early months,' my grandfather said, 'and I went to daven to pour out my burdened heart, someone would stuff a few dollars into my coat pocket—just enough to get me by. How he knew and how he did it I never suspected until one morning I saw Reb Chaim walking out through the narrow hall of the basement Beis Midrash on Hewes Street and fill some pockets unobtrusively, after he had finished his rounds of collecting nickels. For years he refused to take the money back. 'Give it to someone who needs it,' he would shout and rush on!*

*"I don't know how often my grandfather told us kids this story and we never tired hearing it. I myself grew up in Boro Park where there are dozens of people like Reb Chaim Gelb collecting for all kinds of worthy causes. But I have never met anyone who engendered the love and admiration that my grandfather and father had for Reb Chaim Gelb."*

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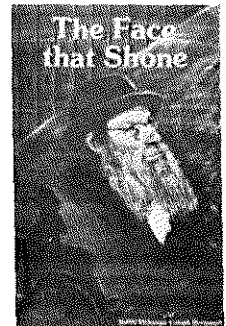
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## The Real Rebbi of Wilson Street

Hardly had the lawyer finished when the serious, middle aged man sitting opposite me in the warm atmosphere of the Bostoner Rebbe's *Beis Hamidrash* stopped looking into his *sefer*. His eyes shone with the smile of an inner bliss as he spoke quietly:

*"To me, Reb Chaim Gelb is the real Rebbi of Wilson Street, to whom I owe much more than the nickels or dimes, the brenn to daven with my heart and my mouth. You see, it happened to me more than once because my father was poor and there was many a time when he could not spare the few dollars for the s'char limmud (tuition). I was sent out of class by the administrator who was hard-pressed to raise enough money to prevent the teachers from striking because their paychecks were long overdue. There I was, standing in the*

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We wish to thank

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for his involvement in this problem and his personal intervention on our behalf. He is truly

**ראש וראשין לכל דבר שבקדושה**

in seeing, and inspiring others to see, that the problems of "Klal Yisroel" are the problems of Agudath Yisroel.

**Rabbi Aharon H. Fried, Ph.D.**

Dean

hall, sobbing, when Reb Chaim came out of the Beis Hamidrash with tallis and tefillin. Somehow, he had a special ear for boys in need or in trouble. And no voice ever sounded sweeter than when Reb Chaim gave one look at me, and said: 'Yankeleh, what's de matter? Why aren't you in class, as usual?' He did not even wait for an answer. A pat on my back, he wiped the tears off my face, and stormed into the office, pulled himself up to his full height, his eyes flashing, and placed a few crumbled dollars from his pocket on the high wooden counter that kept the idle and the kids from interfering with the office work.

"Look here, my friend," he said sternly in his affable manner that disarmed even the most hostile opponent. 'My young friend Yankeleh wants to learn, and don't you keep him out of class again! I am good for the money until his father can raise the s'char limmud.' Without saying a word, knowing that there was no purpose in contradicting Reb Chaim, the administrator, who hated to send any child out of class anyway, wrote an admit slip. Taking me by the hand, Reb Chaim walked me up the stairs, straight to the office of Rabbi Stern זצ"ל. A glance of understanding passed between these two kindred souls, the superior scholar and Mechanech, and the simple man of faith and heart. Rabbi Stern brought me back into the class and the Rebbi said how glad he was that I did not have to miss the new Gemora. —How easily I could have been turned off," said the scholarly man, and turned back to the sefer that was always before him.

### Not to be Topped

We were still silent, digesting what he had said, when another man, down at the end of our table, broke into our musings with his contribution:

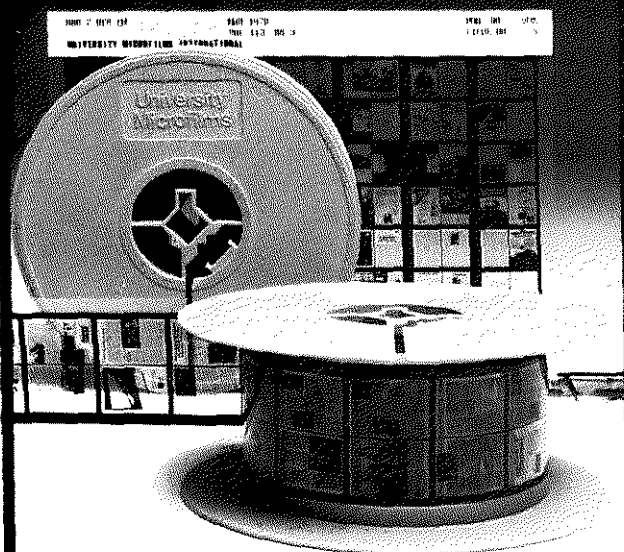
"Well, my friends, if you think this is something, I wish Reb Aaron Kotler זצ"ל were here to tell you of the greatest surpris of his life. Once when things were very tough in the early years of his Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, he went to Williamsburg to appeal for funds. Few were able to refuse the Gadol Hador when he approached them. But, as he told us when he came back to say his Shiur, he had learned a lesson in Chessed from a plain person in the street outside of Torah Vodaath who came over to him, after he had finished his appeal, and said: 'Rebbe, I heard you need funds to keep up your wonderful Yeshiva. Here are a few dollars I saved up just for such an occasion. Let me have the zechus to share in the learning of your talmidim.'

"The few dollars turned out to be \$3000.00, and the simple Jew was none other than Reb Chaim Gelb. Nothing Reb Aaron said to dissuade him from giving such a huge sum would change his mind. . . . Over the decades, many a rich man gave large sums to our Rebbi, but no contribution and the spirit in which it was given, moved him as much as this generous gesture of Reb Chaim Gelb. Now his grandchildren are learning in Lakewood and in other Yeshivos that his nickels dimes and quarters helped build."

This is the essence of the life and work of Reb Chaim Gelb, may he live to a hundred and twenty. And when

the Moshiach will come soon in our days, there will be Reb Chaim, leading the parade to meet him, as we march up Bedford Avenue. In fact, I can hear him now, shouting: "Zerizus, my friends!"

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# second looks at the jewish scene

## ERA Comes Home

We've been saying it so loud and for so long that it scarcely needs repeating—except that the situation we are addressing has deteriorated to the extent that a leading spokesperson for the opposition has recognized it, too:

Increasingly, married women are finding it necessary to work away from home—some for emotional reasons, others responding to social pressures, but most because of simple economic realities. More than

ever, it takes two paychecks to keep one household fiscally solvent. Functioning as a working mother can be a tremendous strain on a woman—keeping house, raising children, and caring for a family is a demanding career unto itself and great sensitivity and care must be exercised to make certain that each sphere of activity gets its due. The key to a smoothly running home, then, is the ordering of priorities: a job is a job, and not a career competing with husband and children for attention and loyalty. And as parents learn to compensate for the limited quantity of available time slots by enhancing their quality, they and their children

come to appreciate each other and the values they are perpetuating together. Should the day arrive when the extra paycheck is unnecessary, there is nothing shameful or self-demeaning for a working woman to retire from the marketplace and become "just a housewife." In fact, she may well experience greater fulfillment of her feminine self to the benefit of all concerned.

Today especially, the working woman's income is crucial to so many aspects of the Torah home—whether as principal wage earner in a Kollel family, or co-earner in a tuition paying family—that one cannot summarily dismiss the "second job" as an indulgence. It must be accepted for what is gained as much as for what is risked. By the same token, though, the onslaught of foreign values in the street and on the media make every surrogate parent—whether a hand-chosen baby-sitter, a local day care center, or Sesame Street and the Electric Company—less than a passable substitute. Similarly, the spiritual toll on the work-

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ing woman from time spent away from home as part of the broader society cannot be underestimated. (See Rabbi Elya Svei's "Raising a Torah Society", JO April '81.) There is no time in memory that has witnessed such crumbling of public morality and the institution of marriage and the family. Thus, we should exercise every safeguard conceivable to insulate our lives from all corrosive influences.

For this reason, we have taken strong exception to the feminist movement. Of course, we have welcomed their agitation for equality in compensation for working time and effort (the average working woman brings home 65¢ for every dollar her male counterpart earns), but the feminist stress on "personhood" and fulfillment in ways outside of the conventional feminine roles has been so strong as to undermine the family and traditional values.

### Some Changes Taking Place

After so many years of being a lonely voice in the crowd, some changes in the public attitude are taking place. Chances of passing ERA appear to be diminishing as the deadline approaches, for the broad public is rejecting the amendment because of the excesses of the feminist movement. In fact, it has now become fashionable to bemoan the disappearance of the family, which of course is civilization's prime conveyor of personal security, culture and social stability. Divorce rates are skyrocketing (up to 40% of all mar-

riages by latest calculation), single parent households are commonplace, abortion is a matter of personal choice, and (according to an Oct. 26 NY Times story) the incidents of births from unwed mothers have risen 50% in the past decade—all to some degree attributable to the emphasis of individual fulfillment at the expense of the family. As a result, hosts of committees, commissions, surveys, and task forces have been launched to study The Family, either bemoaning the situation or outlining ways of institutionalizing "the great family fault," and make the inevitable acceptable—surfing on the foam of the wave of the future.

Now another voice is joining the rest, calling for a revision of the goals of the Feminist Revolution: Betty Friedan. Ms. Friedan is considered by many to be the grandmother of the Feminist Movement, having prodded a wide awareness of what she considered inequities between the sexes in all aspects of life, with her *The Feminine Mystique*. In that book, she attacked the concept that women exist to take care of their men and look after their homes, smashing the pedestal on which they had once been reverently placed. To Ms. Friedan, the pedestal was a cage.

### Too Far The Revolution

Now, in her recently published book, *The Second Stage*, she declares that the Revolution had gone too far in pursuit of "personhood," for in

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the process women have shed their feminine distinctiveness. Furthermore, they have permitted radical elements to assume the forefront of the movement, which became identified with a pro-abortion stance, against "right-to-life"-ers, and became thought of as being for deviant life styles, and anti-family. "We're also pro-life," she now maintains. "We believe in the family, and we're in favor of conventional relationships between the sexes. We only wish to keep other options open, and to recognize personal preference in private matters."

It's not that Ms. Friedan apologizes for the errors of the past. She simply dismisses them as inevitable excesses of the first stage of the revolution—like the cutting edge of any revolution. But now she is ready to publicly recognize the harm inherent in perpetuating these excesses, and she is expressing concern for the well-being of her followers, who are suffering from various types of anxieties, identity crises, and an inability to meet conflicting, overbearing demands. She attempts to disavow "the Red Herring of Sexual Politics," which has man (rather than the system) targeted as the enemy, either polarizing him or intimidating him in the process. And in a final burst of revisionism—totally renouncing the slogan "biology is not destiny"—she now maintains that family involvement should not be postponed indefinitely, for "children and biology will not wait."

### A Full Return?

No, Ms. Friedan has not called for a full return to the principle of "The glory of the royal daughter is within." (In fact, she may very well be engaged in a tactical retreat, simply stepping backwards for a pause while the rest of the country catches up with her . . . until she lurches forward again for Stage Three . . .) Nor does she necessarily speak for the rest of the movement. In the meantime, she is only speaking for Ms.

Friedan. But her book does recognize that one does not treat lightly six millennia of family life. Moreover she certainly has not as yet come full circle. She does not accept that role assignments based on sex are *not* simply products of one or another set of social conditions; and that they are *not* the marks of privilege versus subservience.

In the meantime, our goals remain unchanged. The Jewish family must

be protected. The integrity of Jewish womanhood and her modesty must—yes, remain on a pedestal, where they are to be respected and even revered. And should the economic realities of the 1980's continue to send both parents into the marketplace, let them be ever conscious of the risks and the trade-offs involved, and let them cherish the treasure entrusted to them that must be preserved, at all costs. **T**



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## . . . When Relatives are Distant

A New York family may have members in a kollel in Toronto which means no month without a three-figure phonebill; or on the West Coast, which could result in spending a *Shavuot* in Los Angeles. And why not? "Out-of-town" is really quite civilized after all, and not a spiritual wasteland, as once perceived. (You can even get *Cholov Yisroel* yogurt in Fairfax.) A second generation of yeshiva graduates now populate those former outposts



Members of the Australian Kollel at their departure for Melbourne and their families.

of *Yiddishkeit*, and they recognize the need for resident Torah scholars in the tradition of the proverbial *asava batlanim* to raise the level of Judaism in their locality, and to improve chances that their own offspring will settle closer to home than they might otherwise.

Fine: Stamford, St. Louis, Denver, Mexico City . . . but jet-reach has its limits too. That is, it appeared to have limits until early this November when my friendly caller prodded me to write these lines. It was then that the first contingent of a twelve family group took off for Down Under, to bring a ready-made, thriving, self-contained Torah community to the other side of the world.

## Early Beginnings

Where do we find the beginnings of the concept that "our backyard," where our responsibility extends, should not be limited, but must grow? The *Midrash* says that the Great Sanhedrin bore the responsibility for the thousands of Jews that lost their lives in the incident of *Pilegsh b'Giva* (*Shoftim* 19-21) because the members of this august body had sat under their grapevines and their fig-trees, and had waited for the

people to bring their problems to them. Instead, they should have raised their tunics and traveled from place to place, and instructed the populace in the ways of Torah. Had they done so, the populace would have been more civil and the tragic incident would have never occurred.

In a more modern context, when Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, the famed disciple of the Vilna Gaon, founded his yeshiva in 1804 to serve the entire region, it was an historic step forward in the dissemination of Torah. Yet he shed tears because the European continent was not to be the final resting place for Torah before *Moshiach's* arrival. It would suffer yet a further *golus* in the wilderness of the American continent. Volozhin would have a "backyard" on the other side of the Atlantic.

The American *golus* never was an easy conquest for Torah. In the year 1900, the *Radvaz* (Rabbi Yaakov David Wilavsky זצ"ל) came to America to raise funds for the completion of the new edition of the entire *Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem Talmud), with his own commentary as well as the classic standard ones. While there, he was drafted to become Chief Rabbi of Chicago. His experiences and tribulations, as well as his incisive observations of American Jewry, its

institutions and *rabbonim*, fill the *Hakdamos* (prefaces) to his *seforim*. When he left—in failure—to settle in Tzfas, where he became *Rav Harashi*, he noted that if he had had the means to bring ten of his better *talmidim* from Slutzk (Russia) to Chicago to sit and learn, he would have been able to establish a foothold for Torah in the community. One man alone—no matter how great—could not accomplish it. He spoke not only with *Daas Torah* (Torah perspective) as one of the two leading *gedolim* then in America (Rabbi Yaakov Yo-seif in New York City was the other); he was drawing from his own first-hand experience from the establishment of the famed Slutzker Yeshiva in his city: fourteen “*Kossakim*” (lit. Cossaks) headed by Rabbi Isser Zalmen Meltzer זצ”ל were dispatched by the “Alter” of Slabodka in 1896 upon the *Radvaz’s* request, to establish a yeshiva in Russia. It worked in Slutzk and it could have worked in Chicago.

### The “Chicago” Dream in Lakewood

It was over forty years (1943) before the time was ripe for the establishment of the first successful *makom Torah* for mature *hnei Torah* to continue learning in America—in Lakewood, by Rabbi Aaron Kotler זצ”ל, Reb Isser Zalmen’s son-in-law. It had been the Rosh Yeshiva’s conviction that once America develops its own genuine *talmidei chachomim*, they would be possessed of the spirit and responsibility that goes with their status, and would move on to other communities—to their extended backyards—and they would change the complexion of the land. (There had been a small yeshiva established in New Haven by Rabbi Yehuda Levenberg זצ”ל in the early

20’s, but it did not take root. It remained quite small, and after relocating to Cleveland in the early 30’s, it closed down completely.)

In the years since then, the Beth Medrash Govoha model was duplicated by other yeshivos—first, Bais Medrash Elyon, then Torah Vodaath, Mir, Telshe, Ner Israel. . . . Then, as the next step, some kollelim have been founded with a different format and some new functions. Rather than isolate themselves from the distractions of surrounding communities, they situated themselves in the heart of their host cities, and as “community kollelim” have become involved in their spiritual affairs—lecturing, teaching and learning with local people (see JO Oct. ’79)—just as Reb Aaron had anticipated.

And now, in a quantum leap, geographically speaking, Beth Medrash Govoha is engaged in a global outreach to the relatively small (70,000) Jewish community of Australis—in a general population of 14,500,000—

cut off from their fellow Jews worldwide by what had been termed the “tyranny of distance.” Despite improved communications and faster and more reasonable travel, they remain isolated from the mainstream of *Yiddishkeit* in America, England, the Continent and *Eretz Yisroel*.

### No Longer a Stopover

In spite of its isolation, Melbourne is a community that has come of age. Once only remembered as an exotic stopover for World War II refugees, it has become a Lubavitch stronghold, has a Satmar community, plus tens of thousands of non-affiliated Jews. Nonetheless, it has been a continent with limited horizons. The Torah success stories of Australian children—Act I—generally end with a session in an Israeli yeshiva as Act II. There is no Act III . . . they seldom come home again to stay.

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cided that their community should not be discounted as a spiritual outland, or a bedroom suburb of Jerusalem, without a Torah industry of its own. Investing a vast amount of money, time and energy, they are hosting the twelve kollel families, they have secured housing for them and are underwriting all expenses for the initial year.

And the community-minded, farsighted leadership of Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey, and twelve altruistic families are ready to leave the comfort and convenience of home—twelve of the foremost scholars in a community of scholars are ready to rough it for the sake of a community that has come of age and recognizes the vacuum that only Torah can fill.

Before hanging up on my informant, I was curious as to his own involvement in this enterprise.

"So one of your children is going to journey to Australia?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "but I remember a comparable situation a generation ago"

—Buenos Aires? Winnipeg? Dallas?

—"in Detroit. Thirty-plus years ago, Mr. Mendlowitz\* grabbed hold of me in the Mesivta corridor and told me that I should join a contingent of mature talmidim going to Detroit to convert the city's afternoon school to a yeshiva day school. I objected: 'I'm still single. Detroit is not a place to find a shidduch. Nor is it a place to have children, raise a family, or live like a Yid. I can't go out there!'

\*Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, מנהל of Mesivta Torah Vodaath and founder of Torah Umesorah.

\*\*Today Detroit has a complete educational system from nursery and two day schools through high school as well as two kollelim, and countless Detroiters in yeshivos all over the globe, including some thirty in Lakewood.

"Mr. Mendlowitz did not answer my specific fears: history did.\*\* But he gave me some food for thought: 'There's a gold mine in your backyard. You should dig out that ore. If you don't, someone else will. It's just not going to stay buried.' . . . 'My backyard' is now all the way out in the South Pacific, and thank G-d our people have the good sense to get out there and dig. With G-d's help, they're going to strike gold."

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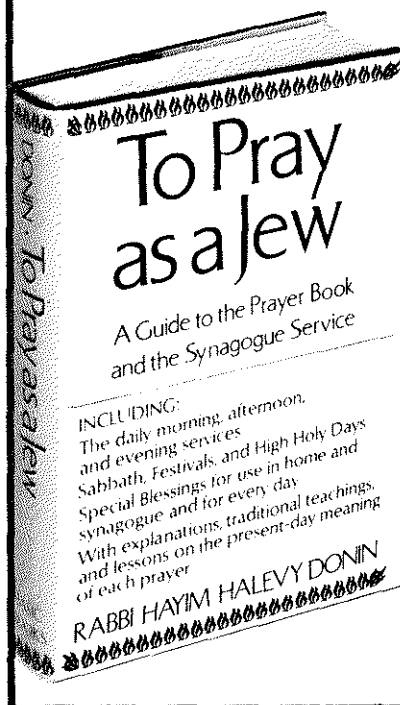
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# P.S.

## A Non-Disappearing Rebbe

Rabbi Hillel Belsky

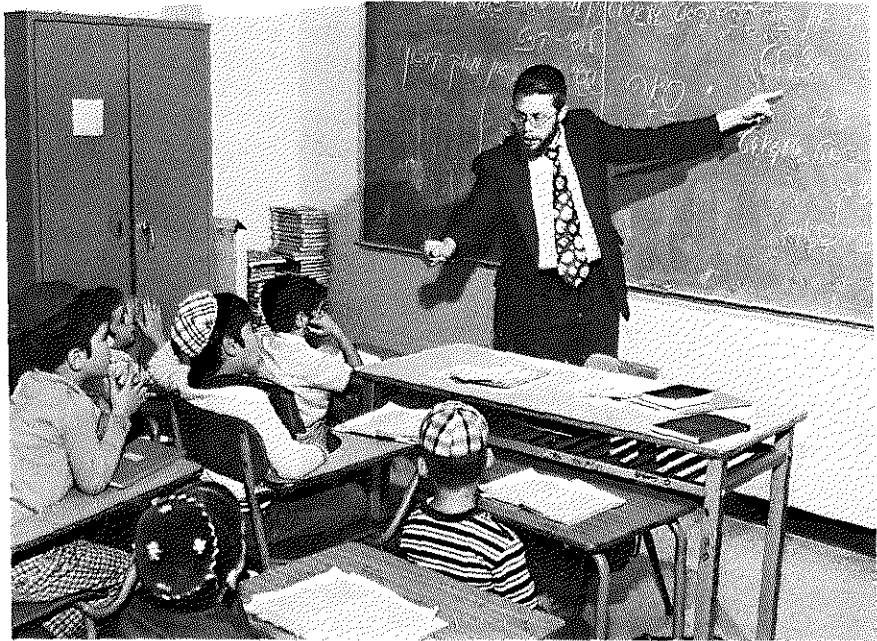
Permit me to introduce myself properly. I am the great-grandson of Reb Yehudah Laib of Zhaludok, Russia. I only knew him for the last nine years of his long life during which he resided in the Home of the Sages of Israel on the lower East Side of Manhattan. He did not speak English, although he had been in this country for over forty years. To communicate with him beyond a hello and a good-bye, one had to talk to him in learning, for he only left the *Beis Meidrash* to say hello and good-bye to his relatives who came to see him.

Reb Yehudah Laib was a very talented Jew, and in his youth he had tried his hand at many different types of business in an attempt to provide for his family. At each venture, he sustained serious life-threatening injuries. The Rebbe finally told him that apparently Heaven had decreed that he be a *melamed*, and a *melamed* he became.

I am his great grandson, and I, in

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Rabbi Belsky is Rosh Mesivta in the Yeshiva of the South and Menahel of the Goldie Margolin School for Girls, in Memphis.



my way, consider myself his spiritual heir, because I, too, am a *melamed*—not with the special drive, perhaps, that triggered his choice; but then again, one cannot be a *melamed* without a sense of mission of one type or another—only the context changes.

It was with great interest that I took note of the recent display of interest within these pages in the life of the *melamed*. On one level, I experienced excitement that the social and financial concerns of the *melamed* were being brought into the open. But as I read, I experienced increasing sadness. I felt that the grandeur of the life of the *melamed* was being diminished. There is no question that the community at large is liable for their treatment of *melamedim*, but at the same time I feel that the *melamed* needs to be reminded who he is. In a world of overwhelming materialism, it is important for perspective to be maintained, and for this perspective to sustain the *melamed* through his social and financial struggles.

### A Group Apart

There has always existed in Klal Yisroel a group whose lives represented the ideal of how Jewish life

should be lived. This group was the Leviim, and the *Mitzvah* that isolated them was *havdolas haleviim* "election of the Leviim".\* Back in Egypt, the Leviim steadfastly studied Torah and managed to escape the fate that befell their brothers. Pharaoh calculated that the Leviim would starve, because he would not feed anyone who did not work, and they were sitting and learning. Rations were so meager that Pharaoh was sure that the Jews could not sustain Levi. But the Leviim sacrificed for Torah, and *Klal Yisroel* sacrificed for the Leviim. Reb Elya Lopian זצ"ל in *Lev Eliyahu* cites this *mesiras nefesh* as one of the merits for which *Klal Yisroel* received the Torah.

And so it continued in the *Mishkan* (Sanctuary). The *Mishkan*, too, represented life as it was meant to be—no contact with death, or any reminder of death. The *lechem haponim* (showbreads) remained fresh from *Erev Shabbos* to *Erev Shabbos*—the *Mishkan* was a replica of life in its more perfect state. The figure in this setting was the Levi. He did not work for a living; he did not own property. He was set aside for *Avodas Hashem*—Divine Service.

We have no *Mishkan*. We have no

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\*הבדלת הלוויים: והבדלת את הלוויים... והיו ליהוים

*Mikdash*. The Abarbanel explains that the role of Levi was transferred to the *talmid chacham*. *Havdolas Haleviim* became *havdolas talmidei chachamim*. The *talmid chacham* now is the

figure that is to represent life on a more perfect plane—life as it was meant to be, so to speak. The *talmid chacham* of *Torasam Umnasam* (Torah is their sole occupation) stature is to

be supported by the community in exchange for offering the community the star for which to reach, the image with which to grapple, and in some measure, perhaps, to attain. From the point of view of the community, I imagine, its appreciation of the *talmidei chachamim* could be measured by the degree of esteem and support—financial and otherwise—that it gives them. But to the *talmidei chachamim* themselves, their lives were elevated—they were bringing a piece of heaven down to earth—and were thus separated from the materialism that surrounded them.

### Beyond Professionalism

Learning has many faces. The *Mishna* says that more than one learns from his *Rebbeim* and his friends, he learns from his students. Teaching is learning. By the same token that the separateness of the *Leviim* was transferred to the *talmidei chachamim* who learned, it was transferred to those who taught. As the Levi did not “earn” his *Maaser* by performing his services, and money could not compensate for his services, a *melamed* cannot be truly compensated for his services. As a great man once said to me in response to my need for encouragement, if a *melamed* introduces one word of *Yiras Shamayim* into the mind of one student, he justifies the whole world’s existence. To discuss the *melamed* in any professional or statistical terms is to deprive him of his uniqueness. (In general, there is too much talk of professionalism with regard to *melamdim*. *Melamdim* are surrogate parents and I never heard of professional standards for parents. For a more detailed discussion of the difference between *melamdim* and teachers, one needs to turn to *Divrei Rabboseinu* by Moreinu Rav Yitzchok Hutner זצ”ל).

All areas of Torah are facing the same problem. In an environment as wealthy as ours, sacrifice is a difficult concept. This is evident in our *Kollelim* as well as in our *Yeshivos*.

*The Jewish Observer* / November, 1981

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One needs to remember that

—תורה וגדולה במקום אחד—

spiritual and material wealth on one table—is a unique blessing, not a norm. I do not know what the future holds. We need to go back to the lessons of Egypt. The Leviim sacrificed for Torah, and *Klal Yisroel* sacrificed for the Leviim. Together we made it. It was, and remains, a communal responsibility—to sustain and to be sustained. I am frightened, for one of the last prophecies is הנני מסיר מירושלים ומיהודה משען ומשענה —“I will remove support from Jerusalem and Judah”—our “Levi,” our example, will be taken from us. On the other hand, this is a warning of doom that we can avoid, if the community treasures its *melandim*; and if our *melandim* treasure themselves. 17

## Justice and the Digs

The archeological season—usually concentrated in the summer months—has come to its close, and the dust has settled around Area G of David’s City in Jerusalem (see “Digging for Roots” JO Sept. ’81). The scientists have packed up their spades and brushes, the demonstrators are back in the religious sections of their cities, and the cops have put away their truncheons. One cannot predict with certainty what will happen next summer, when the archeological digging season begins anew, but it can be expected that the Begin government will honor its coalition agreement with Agudath Israel. This includes Point 45, which calls for much stricter controls over archeological excavations. Specifically, the clause calls for legislation to set up a review board, consisting of three rabbis and two scientists, to pass judgment on the possibility of the existence of graves in dig sites, and then to render binding decisions. This will make totally irrelevant some of the more intemperate remarks made during the confrontation.

Outstanding among them is a ruling, with the force of law, issued by Israel’s Attorney-General Yitzhak

Zamir overruling the Chief Rabbis’ declaration of the site of the archeological excavations in David’s City as an ancient cemetery. Zamir stated:

1. Rabbis have no right to determine what is a Jewish cemetery;
2. No one, rabbis or otherwise, has the right to prevent the excavation of a cemetery if it is suspected that the excavation “may reveal things of major scientific and national importance.” As stated, legislation should render these remarks simply academic. Nonetheless their tone will stand in stark contrast to situations elsewhere.

### International Implications

Communist countries are not known for respecting religion, or for treating any artifacts from the past with any special deference, unless they relate to the glories of the Peoples’ revolution. It is very much in character for them to create playgrounds or housing complexes over burial grounds, as the Russians did over the Babi Yar ravine in Kiev, or to lay a highway across a cemetery as the Czechs did over the *kever* of the revered Chasam Sofer in Bratislava (Pressburg). Yet, with diplo-

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macy and persistence, Orthodox representatives have been initiating and maintaining negotiations with various Communist regimes to respect Jewish burial places, with an appreciable degree of success (see Dr. Isaac Lewin's "The Struggle to Protect Jewish Cemeteries in Poland"—JO Dec. '76).

Recently, an unusual degree of progress was made in this area. Funded in part by a \$90,000 grant

from the Polish government, Warsaw's long-neglected 200-year-old, 75-acre cemetery will soon benefit from an extensive care and rehabilitation program. A good case can surely be made for the Poles to care for these 200,000 graves as a belated gesture of contrition and concern toward the Jews who had suffered so much during their nine-hundred-year-sojourn in Poland.

On the other hand, now that the

Israeli government decided that at times there are considerations other than respect for the dead that override respect for cemeteries, couldn't the Poles, with all their pressing problems, find *their* overriding concerns—and at least ignore the cemeteries' needs for upkeep? Yet the Communists understand international public opinion. Let the left-wing Laborites in Israel do no less.

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### Letters to the Editor




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#### How Dangerous Is the Novel?

To the Editor:

Dr. B. Fryshman's "On Losing One's Mind" (May 1981) builds on the premise that because the entertainment value of fiction lies in the ability of the author to elicit identification with the protagonist, the reader (viewer) "ends up a willing receptacle for the conclusions of the author," and his mind becomes "the temporary property of the author." Dr. Fryshman views this as a form of mind control. . . . Free time, for which the author can find no use, is seen as "an aberration in the history of man," a *chessed* largely responsible for this "loss of our minds."

Much could be said of this theoretical framework: that it generalizes without drawing distinctions, that it finds voluntary action a form of control, that it views human beings as far more malleable than they are, that it fails to appreciate the lengths to which people have gone for a little bit of "free time"—life which does not have to be lived to fulfill the ancient curse attached to the ground because of Adam's sin, that it lacks a thesis (does Dr. Fryshman believe that fiction should be prohibited, censored by the State,

reviewed by him prior to publication, or merely abstained from by the public of their own volition?), and so on. However, we will content ourselves with just a few points.

#### Trash or Fiction?

To begin with, Dr. Fryshman continually blurs the distinction between fiction *per se* and trash. His theory opposes all fiction, but his examples are "Batman and Robin," so-called "in" language, the arguably anti-Semitic *Merchant of Venice* (by which the great Shakespeare is written off), a missionary film, and *Exodus*, not to mention sympathetic treatments of murderers and homosexuals. From this obviously unrepresentative sample, the author attacks the "clean" movies watched by the "finest" families, and the "innocent" novel which enhances the writer's ability to manipulate minds all the more. If Dr. Fryshman would confine his attacks to books and pictures which are insensitive, factually inaccurate, anti-Semitic, biased, or otherwise faulty, however, he would be saying nothing that hasn't been said for hundreds of years. The idea that television, radio, printing presses, or any other

means of communications is "dangerous" because of what may be communicated is true in just the same way that butter knives, ploughs, and other domestic implements are dangerous. The same could be said for the *forms* of communication: dialogue, novel, essay, and so on. I would hardly attack all essayists and readers because some essays are wholly lacking in intelligence or style.

Yet, it is claimed, the novel is different and so is television because of the uncritical way these media are taken in and because of the great malleability of the individual. . . . The Moral Majority opposes the things that Dr. Fryshman finds objectionable; yet a survey shows that only a minority of its members favor a TV boycott. Further, the overwhelming majority of its members watch television. Obviously, a great many people read things and watch things but stick to their principles. Millions of Americans "exposed to serious dramas depicting homosexuals . . ." nevertheless continue to view the practice as disgusting and do not change in "the long run in their feeling toward . . . the way of life of these people."

#### "They Are Called Children"

Now there are persons with great malleability and without the capacity for critical thought: children. But, again, if Dr. Fryshman would merely suggest that the intellectual diet of children be checked over, most reasonable people already agree. Instead, we are told that we are *all* unable to evaluate material



with which we may identify, and we become "a willing tool in the hands of the movie director." The view that we, as Orthodox Jews, have towards much of the material released nowadays is empirically incompatible with Dr. Fryshman's view of malleable man. On the contrary, in a world governed by Dr. Fryshman, we would lose our capacity for thought as more and more of our intellectual activities come under his interdiction. Perhaps the author should speak with educators who say: "If only the child would read a novel," precisely because the novel requires active not passive participation by the child who all too often spends too much (any is not too much) time in the raptures of television. Our minds remain ours not when they are purged of all influences and experiences, but rather when they are formed from our experiences and vicarious experiences with the help of our rational faculty, given to us by G-d to guide us in freedom. It is quite a mistake to maintain, as does Dr. Fryshman, that life free of books and pictures is a life more authentically ours.

### Care For the Unfulfilled

Finally, the article shows as little concern for people as the writings of coercive utopians may be expected to show: real people with real needs, not the mythical, malleable, uncritical, mindless characters who people "On Losing One's Mind." Not ivory-tower intellectuals who write fiery denunciations after work, but people who just want to relax a bit after a day's hard work of providing for their family and their nightly *Seder* (study schedule). Older people who haven't the ability to study ... bored and lonely, alienated from a society which no longer affords them satisfaction. Children whose own imaginative potential may be sensitively improved with the proper novels and shows and in whom good values as bad can be inculcated by these means. The common folk who buy the books, look at the tube, and

go to the movies, because they feel the experience worthwhile. Does Dr. Fryshman care if the lives of these people are less fulfilled—as they see it? Novels, television, and movies are human artifacts and can be used for good as for bad. Their invention has brought happiness, comfort, and satisfaction to millions.

Let those who would arrogate unto themselves the right to eliminate these marvelous creations work on their own improvement first, for it can hardly be contested in this late age that "the evils flowing from the duperies of the people are less injurious than those from the egoism of their agents."

JOSEPH S. FULDA  
NSF Fellow, New York University  
New York City

*Dr. Fryshman replies:*

No, I am not insensitive to the needs of the "bored and lonely," the "alienated from society which no longer offers them satisfaction." But unlike Mr. Fulda I don't believe the answer lies in providing them with "happiness, comfort and satisfaction"; a blissful escape from reality is the domain of the "Lotus Eaters," not that of the Torah.


I quite agree that we have rational faculties to protect our minds; indeed people are far from "uncritical, malleable, mindless characters" when they are aware of the influences around them. But where do we find rational and critical faculties being used when intellectual activities are

interrupted by the passive pap of novels, movies, and TV?

We need only to point to the changed attitudes and reactions to such as "gay lib," co-ed dormitories, pornography, and the Feminist movement to begin to appreciate how malleable people as a whole can be. . . .

Nowhere in my piece did I propose censoring the media; I did propose that Torah observant Jews un-

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## LETTERS CONTINUED

dertake self-censorship. Nor was my purpose to outline a program encompassing the activities of every individual; I did hope to raise the consciousness of those addicted to TV, movies and the novel to the nature and implications of their addiction.

### Focusing on the Novel

I must admit to no little difficulty in following the rest of Mr. Fulda's piece; certainly to attempt to respond to each of his allegations and appellations would be fruitless. I will however focus on the novel—the one item of which he seems particularly protective.

No doubt there is a difference between fiction and trash. Salacious material arouses emotions and raises images that violate any number of *issurim*—but to the extent that “good” novels present perspectives and attitudes not in keeping with proper *hashkofos* to a reader who has suspended critical judgement, fiction can be equally objectionable.

Even works we would all denote as classics will fall into this category. A young boy reading *Huckleberry Finn* will invariably sympathize with Huck's desire to escape the strict rectitude of the family he was living with. He will read *Robin Hood*—and cheer a complete litany of robbery and crime! As an aside, one wonders whether the reader, glorying in Robin's meeting his true king,

Richard the Lion Hearted, realizes that this is the person in whose name Jewish *Kehillos* across Europe were slaughtered in the Crusades. Hopefully neither work will play an important role in the boy's ultimate character and attitude. But is there anyone who would deny that there are many adults in whom the vestiges of Huck Finn and Robin Hood still lurk?

### Where Are the Good Novels?

Where then do we find the “good fiction” my correspondent speaks of? Is it in the Westerns, the War Sagas, or the Detective Novels—where so many of us learned to accept violent death (in print) with equanimity and sometimes with anticipation? Is it in the “Capers”—where readers find themselves, willy-nilly, hoping the charming thieves will end up living “happily ever after” with their ill-gotten wealth? Or is it in novels in which the hero is a religious person of another faith; in which protagonists meet and fall in love in a “clean” but totally anti-Torah way; in which people who are kind and good are rebelling against a legitimate government or king?

Each book leaves its indelible mark, usually with values unlike (or antagonistic to) the pure Torah *hashkofos* we should at least aspire to. Which is not to say that after a lifetime of reading classics, a person will end up leaving the Jewish religion; nor would one say that a person after spending a lifetime viewing salacious material will end up violating a woman. In both cases, however, the person has been

changed in a way we would all find undesirable were we able to objectively examine the new thought patterns and processes that result. All of the above effects, by the way, are even more pronounced when movies or TV serve as the purveyor of the material. People who expose themselves to a mental pacifier do not escape scot-free!

Mr. Fulda's injunction that I “work on my own improvement first” strikes a very responsive chord, coming as it does hard on the heels of several *Shabbos Shuva* messages I have heard and read. Will Mr. Fulda at least agree that this improvement will come neither from the novel—or movies—or TV?

Dr. BERNARD FRYSHMAN

### More Ways to Lose One's Mind

To the Editor:

Congratulations on publishing, in the Iyar-Sivan issue, two articles (by Rabbi Scheinman and Dr. Fryshman) concerning the insidious influence of the media upon our thinking. In recent years, I have become increasingly convinced of the need for driving this point home to today's Torah Jews, particularly those dwelling in media-pervaded U.S.A.

My own emphasis has shifted to the medium of the printed word, and I was pleased to find references in both articles to this stumbling block. I, too, fear that the modern Torah Jew, secure in his boycott of movies and freedom-from-televisionset, may not take sufficiently to heart warnings of the danger lurking in his bookshelves.

Why, even to phrase such a suggestion is to arouse the sensibilities of most of us—educated as we have been to revere Books, Knowledge, and Broader Horizons. (With what pride would most Jews quote Dr. Fryshman's statistics on public libraries and such, as evidence that we are still the People of the Book—totally unaware of the misinterpretation of this ancient phrase!) I have observed many a parent pointing out with satisfaction that—in contradistinction to the television

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watcher of ill repute—his child is an avid (even an “omnivorous”!) reader. It is precisely this approval which, to my mind, renders the book a greater pitfall than either movies or television programs.

Consider: How possible is it for today's Jew to isolate himself entirely from all media but those bearing the unadulterated message of Torah? It would seem to be the advice of both authors that, while attempting to minimize exposure, we should also prepare for it by taking effective immunization and protection measures.

Commanded always to keep our distance, we are faced here with the challenge of maintaining *intellectual* distance—a formidable task, indeed. I believe that ever present awareness of the hazards, even just a constant appreciation of the abyss which separates a Torah attitude from *any other*, can constitute a barrier—a protective shield which will reduce the detrimental impact of media messages. In the case of television, most movies, and trash novels, disapproval of parents and Torah authorities is more likely to be part of the consciousness of the viewer or reader. (Often here, the very manner in which characters are physically portrayed contributes to barrier-erection and interferes with full hero-identification.) How much

more perilous, then, are the “clean,” “innocent” novels Dr. Fryshman mentions—to say nothing of explicitly “educational” materials, “classics,” etc.—meeting as they do with the smiling approbation of misguided parents.

How I wish I could agree that “alert people usually read newspapers with a jaundiced eye.” In my experience, a newspaper article that is articulate and sufficiently polysyllabic is basically accepted as Truth by even the most Torah-true, though they may claim to see its “slant.”

Years of sanctioned reading-for-the-sake-of-knowledge have enabled concepts utterly foreign to a Torah Weltanschauung to creep into our consciousness, disguised as mere vocabulary words. Once entrenched, such ideas are almost impossible to recognize, let alone uproot. (Consider, for a start, “rights” or “guilt complex.”)

I see evidence of the insidious effects of reading even in Dr. Fryshman's own final paragraph. For what is “leisure time” to a Jew but an inroad of alien thinking and mores? We search our sources in vain for an authentic Hebrew term for the concept. Like most problems, of course, this one requires no new solution. The prescription is familiar to all the readers of JO, but it behooves us all to rededicate ourselves to its application.

“יפה תורה עם דרך ארץ”  
“שיגועת שניהם משכחת עון”

(אבות ב, ב)

“Beautiful is *derech erez* with Torah, for exertion for both causes forgetting of sin.”—*Avos* II, 2.

S. SLATER  
Jerusalem

#### Federation and Russian Jews

To the Editor:

I read with great interest “Reaching the Russians: An Historic Obligation” (June '81) and would like to offer for your readers one correction and some additional information.

On page 15, mention is made of

NYANA (New York Association for New Americans). It states that the agency is sponsored by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies in New York. While our agencies work closely and cooperatively with NYANA, it is, in fact, supported by National UJA and not our Federation.

I am sure that your readers will also be interested to know that Federation as a recipient of the Federal Block Grant for the Resettlement of Soviet Jews has been able to assist Project RISE, FREE and many of its own local neighborhood service centers such as Project ARI in Brighton Beach, SCRIQ in Central Queens and the Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst by directly conducting funds to these agencies for resettlement and acculturation services.

Moreover, Federation has been able to assist Be'er Hagolah in its most important work. Through the previously mentioned Federal Block Grant, English-as-a-Second-Language tutors have worked in the yeshiva. Finally, we are particularly proud that Federation, through the Fund for Jewish Education, has provided significant support to Be'er Hagolah since its inception.

WILLIAM KAHN

Executive Vice President

Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York

#### Another Effort Toward Helping Soviet Jewry

To the Editor:

The article regarding “reaching the Soviet Jews in America,” (June '81) was most interesting. Among the many organizations listed, mention should have been made of the Torah Vodaath—Boro Park Minyan, under the leadership of Rabbi Laibel Katz and the work it is doing. In the past two years this volunteer group arranged and financed 53 *Bris Milos* and nine weddings; they also have the largest clothing center for the benefit of Russian emigrants and others in need. The group runs a day school with an enrollment of

### New Lower Manhattan Mincha Minyan Guide

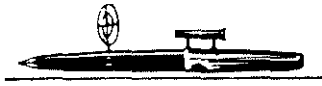
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178 students and their summer-school camp had 343 youngsters. The "Save Russian Jewry Education Institute" surely deserves at least some passing mention.

JUDAH MUNK  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

### Josephus—A Sadducee?

To the Editor:

Rabbi A. Scheinman's thoughtful article "Masada Revisited" (J.O. Iyar-Sivan 5741) contains many valuable points and insights. I was amazed, however, by his statement that Josephus was a *Tzedduki* (Sadducee). Josephus himself writes that he is one of the *Prushim* (Pharisees); what evidence does Rabbi Scheinman have to the contrary?

ELIYAHU BELLER  
Bnei Brak, Israel

Rabbi Scheinman responds:

It is interesting to note how easily people accept Josephus's claim that he was a *Prushi* without asking any questions. The lion of Jewish history, Hagoan Rabbi Yitzchok Issac Halevy ז"ל in vol. 2 of *Doros Rishonim* (first section, from page 358 onward), and the noted historian Rabbi Tuvia Tavyumi ז"ל in the *ספר הזכרון* both make this point clear and prove without doubt that *Josephus was not a Prushi in the sense that we use the term today.*

Let me explain: The ways of the *Tzeddukim* as such had gradually evolved into almost different forms of religious practice. Their practice was as different from *Prushi* practice as *Reform* practice is different from

Orthodox. Also the *Tzeddukim* had become hated symbols of corrupt and oppressive tax collections, and no one would willingly associate himself with them. However, a new group had been formed which historians have for some reason overlooked, and have been coined by both above historians as *יהודים חיצוניים* (secular Jews) or *מתיונים* (Hellenists). Their attitudes were perhaps crystallized by Pliny the Elder, and Alexandrian Jewry was their stronghold. In *practice* they were similar to *Prushiim*, but their viewpoints and attitudes were outright heresy. They did not see the Torah as G-d given edict, but rather as an excellent philosophical system or the custom and culture of the nation. Although they followed ancient rabbinical ordinations, they did not look up to the Rabbis of their generation as its leaders.

(Shmuel Shnitzer, the editor of the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, although a nonpracticing Jew, usually defends the Orthodox position on most issues. On a T.V. debate with a Reform rabbi, he once described himself as a "non-practicing Orthodox Jew"!)

In contemporary terms—assume there was a synagogue called "The Orthodox Center of North Central Texas," which pays dues as an affiliate of an Orthodox association. Yet it has no *mechitza*, and the Rabbi drives in on *Shabbos*. Is it considered Orthodox simply because it's labeled itself so?

I used the term *Tzedukki* to denote a Hellenized Jew who does not accept the authority of *Torah She'ba'al Peh* and whose *da'os* (ideology) make it impossible to classify him as a *Prushi*.

A. SCHEINMAN

### "Opening Up"—To Old Timers, Too

To the Editor:

I address my comments to the writer of "Opening Up To New Immigrants to Judaism" (Summer '81). I must confess to experiencing

a strong angry gut response to your "demand" to the *frum* community to expedite *shidduchim* for *baalei teshuva*. Whether you "deserve it" or you're not being "taken care of" or you are "prejudiced" against is not the issue. Do you really think it's so easy for the FFB in this area? Many of my friends, male and female, of slightly "advanced" ages (25-35) are in a plight similar to the one you describe. They and I experience the constant frustration of looking for the *besheirt*, and finding the search full of hills and valleys. The valleys of depression seem even deeper when we observe our contemporaries occupied with their growing families, an experience we have not as yet had the opportunity to have.

I want to marry for the same reasons a *Baal Teshuva* wants to—to have my own family and have my chance to *mekayem* the *mitzvah* of establishing a Jewish family. I too am upset that it's taking so long, but I reason with myself with a strong, sincere *Gam Zu L'Tovah* (this too is for the good). G-d has his ways of leading us onto the path toward goodness and *frumkeit*. This big step in a person's life is a great *nesoyon* (challenge) and can be seen as one of the major turning points in a person's lifetime. We all need an enormous amount of *Bitachon B'Hashem* in this area, as in all other areas.

When I feel the lowest, I think and aim the highest.

FFB, 28andSS (STILL SINGLE)  
Brooklyn, New York

### In Defense of the F.F.B.s

The *baalei teshuva* movement has made a "big bang" in the Orthodox community during the last half decade. Tremendous human as well as financial resources are being invested in an effort to help us. As a B.T. who returned somewhat independently, sorting and absorbing influence from various sectors of the religious Jewish community, I would like to argue *sanegoria* (defense) for the F.F.B.s.

1. The dedication and *mesiras nefesh*

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which I have witnessed in *rabbonim* and *rebbitzens* who work full time with *baalei teshuva* is incredible. From morning to late evening, students stream in with their *sheilos*, personal problems, and reports on *shidduchim*. Do we B.T.s ever realize that they need time for their *own* children as well?

2. We often take for granted the hospitality extended to us on *Shabbat* and *Chagim*. After a few years of nearly taking these invitations for granted, I am trying to renew my appreciation of people who open their homes, hearts and minds to multitudes of complete strangers.

3. We can't place all the blame on the *shadchanim* if their all-too-often off-target suggestions drive us *meshuggeh*. Many B.T.s went through previous experiences in life that built up heavy psychological barriers against commitment to marriage... and if we don't sort out and express our priorities and personal tastes to the matchmakers, they can only work by trial and error. *Beyameinu*, we have no *neviim* or *baalei ruach hakodesh* to pick out our *besheit*.

4. We can't expect every Orthodox Jew to be a *malach*. They are human beings of varied intelligence and capabilities with their own obligations, interests, fears, needs and

problems. Some have no *chashek* to intervene in the lives of others, or don't wish to accept the responsibility it entails. Some well meaning people interfere too much. We can't expect every *shomer mitzos* to be a perfect model for *baalei teshuva*.

5. As one who has gotten dizzy from visiting good Jews in various Orthodox factions, tipsy from weighing the advantages and disadvantages of various *shitos* and *miflagos*, and nearly distraught at feeling the tension between *yueshivahnikim* and *baalei battim* which exists in some communities, I would like to *dan lechaf zechus* and end with the hope that that all these *machlokos* are *l'shem Shamayim*.

F.F.B.s as well as B.T.s are searching. Their generations are moving

up and down, around and around. May we all be blessed with *shalom* and *achdus* in the year to come.


SUELLEN VERNOFF  
Rehovoth, Israel

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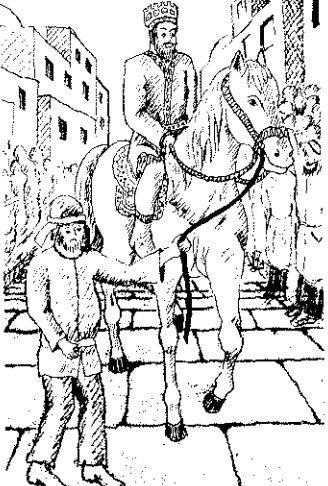
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## American Roshei Yeshiva on Fact-Finding Tour of Chinuch Atzmai-Torah Schools in Israel

Immediately after Succos, three American yeshiva deans flew to Israel for a fact-finding tour of Chinuch Atzmai-Torah Schools across the length and breadth of Israel. The delegation—which included Rabbi Levi Krupenia (Kaminetz), Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum (Mir), and Rabbi Shmuel A. Faivelson (Bais Shraga)—visited schools in Jerusalem as well as in Beer Sheva, Yerucham, and Dimona, to the South and Tiberias, Beth Shaan and Rosh Haayin to the North. Interviewing staff and administration, testing classes, and discussing problems with central supervisory personnel and leading Roshei Yeshiva, the committee found the system performing a service crucial to the future of Klall Yisroel in Israel, yet severely hampered by lack of funds to support important programs not funded by the government.



**Head table at Reception at Chinuch Atzmai Headquarters in Jerusalem:** (left to right) Rabbi S. Berenbaum (speaking), Rabbi S. Faivelson, Rabbi Elchonon Sorotzkin (Chairman of Ch. Atz. Board of Governors), Rabbi Shalom Noach Berzovski (Slonimer Rebbe), Rabbi Elazar Shach (Ponevez), Rabbi Levi Krupenia (Kaminetz), Rabbi Shraga Grossbard (Director General of Ch. Atz.). Obstructed from view is Rabbi Shmuel Weinberg (Ass't. Dir. Gen. of Ch. Atz.).



Students greet visiting delegation.



A Gemora class in Bayit Vegan.

## RISE Aids Bucharian Jews in Boro Park

Bucharian Jews now living in Boro Park are making strong efforts to organize their group in the community, according to a report by Mr. Willie Wiesner, chairman of Project RISE (Russian Immigrant Services and Education) of Agudath Israel of America, and Rabbi Yisroel Verschleiser, its director. The Bucharian Jews already had organized a daily *minyán* but were unable to find permanent quarters to *daven*. Project RISE arranged for the group to use the facilities of the Agudath Israel Center on 14th Avenue during the month of August and worked out an arrangement with the Tomor Dvora School for the *Yomim Noraim*.

The effort to keep the Bucharian Jews together proved successful during the *Yomim Noraim* when more than 150 of their members participated in the Rosh Hashana *tefillas* and more than 200 for Yom Kippur. As a result, the Bucharians with their unique customs and *nusach* were able to continue to observe religious life. Leaders of the Bucharian Jewish community in Boro Park had expressed concern that if appropriate arrangements were not made quickly to organize the Bucharians, the youth would be lost to *Yiddishkeit*. For the month of November, temporary quarters were found, and tables, chairs and *siddurim* were supplied through the efforts of Project RISE. In addition, Project RISE has distributed several dozen Mezuzos and many pairs of Tefillin during the last three months. RISE is working with the group to find a suitable permanent location.

The activity on behalf of the Bucharian Jews was in addition to RISE's efforts to involve Russian Jews in the activities of the

recently concluded High Holy Days. 7,000 bulletins were distributed through 90 distribution centers throughout the country. The bulletins, which appear on a regular basis, consisted of important information on the *Yomim Noraim*, which proved invaluable for the new immigrants.

In other activities by Project RISE during the *Yomim Noraim*, a list of synagogues ready to accept Russian immigrants without a seating charge was distributed to the Russian immigrants, as well as several hundred special *Machzorim*, courtesy of the Al Tidom organization. 650 Russian immigrants took part in special audio-visual presentations sponsored by Project RISE discussing the significance of shofar and other customs related to the holidays.

During Succos, RISE distributed a Russian translation of the story "In the Streets of Moscow," telling how an American Jewish boy found out about his heritage when he witnessed Simchas Torah dancing in front of the Moscow synagogue. A large number of children, many of them from the Be'er Hagolah Institute, joined with Pirchei Agudath Israel in their annual outing to Asbury Park, New Jersey. During Chol Hamoed, more than 150 people attended a special *Yom Tov* celebration in the Kensington section of Brooklyn. RISE distributed over 1,500 specially prepared Simchas Torah flags for Russian school children throughout the city, including a message in Russian which said: "If we live the way the Torah teaches us, we will be happy! Let us rejoice that we have the Torah."

## Daf Yomi Concludes Menachos

Thousands of participants in the Daf Yomi (Talmud folio-a-day study) program internationally marked the *siyum* (completion) of Tractate *Zevachim* on Sunday, October 18th (*Chol Hamoed Succos*) with special celebrations, it was announced by Rabbi Chaskel Besser, chairman of the Daf Yomi Commission of Agudath Israel of America. Daf Yomi students began a new tractate (*Chulin*) on Monday, October 19th (*Hoshana Rabba*).

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## Coercing Russian Jews to Choose Israel Is Unjewish, Agudath Israel Declares

Although Russian Jews should choose Israel as their destination for emigration to avoid the "relentless forces of assimilation" awaiting them in other countries, nevertheless the new Jewish Agency policy to halt assistance to those heading for the diaspora is "coercion, an approach totally foreign to Jewish tradition." This charge was made in a statement released by the chairmen of the Agudath Israel World Organization, Rabbi Moshe Sherer of New York and Rabbi Yehuda M. Abramowitz of Jerusalem. The Agudist leaders stated that "there is no guarantee that Jews forced to settle in Israel will remain there."

The statement by the leaders of the Agudath Israel World Organization reads: "The Agudath Israel World Organization views with deep concern and regret that large number of Jews now leaving Russia—Jews who have lived their entire lives in a society marked by inexorable forces of assimilation—are deciding, after their many years of spiritual exile, not to settle in Israel.

"Undoubtedly, the prospects for them to live a Jewish life are greater in Israel than in other countries, where they will continue to be subjected to the relentless forces of assimilation and total alienation from Judaism. Israel, then, should be the destination of these emigrants.

"Nevertheless, the Agudath Israel World Organization cannot agree with the position taken by the Jewish Agency and several other groups to deny assistance to Russian Jews who, because of their unfortunate lack of Jewish awareness or for other reasons, choose to emigrate to countries other than Israel.

"Taking into account the critical status of Jews in Russia and the foreboding possibilities for their future, the primary goal of world Jewry should be to save Russian Jews by

encouraging as speedy and large an exodus as possible from Russia. Any step that in any way can discourage and thereby diminish the flow of immigration of Jews from Russia—which is truly in the category of rescuing Jewish lives—is therefore unacceptable, quite apart from the traditional Jewish obligation to extend help to fellow Jews in need, under all circumstances.

"Russian Jews cannot be encouraged to settle in the Holy Land through coercion—coercion is an approach that is per se totally foreign to Jewish tradition. In addition, there is no guarantee that Jews forced to settle in Israel will remain there and will not join the flow of the 'yordim' currently plaguing Israel. The only way to encourage Russian Jews to opt for Israel and to remain there is to create a religious absorption atmosphere there, which would establish a spiritual bond between new immigrants and the Holy Land. Experience has demonstrated that those Russian Jews who have had the good fortune to encounter such an atmosphere in Israel have remained there, while others have later abandoned the country.

"The main purpose of helping Jews leave Russia—a goal that Jews have universally adopted since the possibility first arose—is to rescue as many Jews as possible and to secure their Jewish future; to ascertain that after they have left Russia they have the opportunity to live lives fully as Jews. This is consistent with the dictates of Jewish conscience, Jewish moral tradition and Jewish brotherly concern. This should be the guideline for all Jewish organizations dedicated to helping Jews in need. Making choices for the emigrants is out of place. Coercion certainly must not enter the picture. At a time when we are dealing with rescuing Jewish lives, no other considerations should enter, as important as they may be."

## Reshet to Open Second Evening Bais Midrash

In response to popular demand in the Parkville area of Brooklyn, Reshet Shiurei Torah (Torah Education Program), the *hafotzas Torah* arm of Agudath Israel of America, is opening the second in a series of neighborhood evening *batei midrashim* to be established in the New York metropolitan area.

The success of the first *bais midrash* in the Agudath Israel of Flatbush/South in bringing neighborhood residents together for Torah study prompted many calls from other neighborhoods for similar programs.

The new evening *bais midrash* is located in Congregation Nefesh Yonathan, 748 Ocean

Parkway (between Parkville and Foster). It will be open every evening, Sunday through Thursday, at 8:00 P.M. Maariv is at 9:45 P.M. Currently, there is a *shiur* Tuesday evening at 8:30 P.M. given by Rabbi Moshe Bryss of Yeshiva Bais Hatalmud. More *shiurim* are planned for the future.

Reshet serves the Jewish community through its *chavrusah* matching service, *shiurim* guides, and the organizing of *shiurim* and *batei midrash*. For information about Reshet or help in finding a *chavrusa* or tutor, please call Rabbi Labish Becker at (212) 791-1851.

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In addition, Chizuk—The Torah Link each morning at 7:30 AM (Monday through Thursday) on 91.1 FM gives you your "Morning Chizuk," hosted by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser Chizuk director, featuring a Torah view on contemporary Jewish living, *divrei Torah*, laws and customs, stories and parables.

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## Notice to our English subscribers:

In an experiment to expedite the delivery of THE JEWISH OBSERVER to our loyal British readers, we had the Summer 1981 edition shipped by air freight. Because of technical reasons, this resulted in a delay instead. The situation has since been rectified; we ask your indulgence.

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*VSHEE-NON-TOM Volume II*, by Rabbi Elias Schwartz, reviewed in the September 1981 issue, had the price listed incorrectly. It costs \$15, and is available from the author at 2109 83rd Street, Brooklyn NY

### Agudath Israel to Health Facilities: Provide Kosher Food

Health care facilities in New York State were urged to supply kosher food for their Orthodox Jewish patients in accordance with a New York State law, in a statement issued by Shmuel Prager, general counsel of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America. The call was made as the legislative commission disseminated copies of the new regulations signed into law several weeks ago by Dr. David Axelrod, the New York State Commissioner of Health.

The new regulations require residential health care facilities to provide kosher food to their Orthodox Jewish patients. These regulations implement Chapter 486 of the laws of 1978, which amended the New York State Public Health Law to give Orthodox Jewish patients the right to request kosher food. The legislative commission of Agudath Israel played a major role in the passage of that law after receiving numerous complaints from Orthodox Jewish patients.

The facility must establish a plan for obtaining, preparing and serving kosher foods and must incorporate the provision of kosher food into the patient's plan of care, except to the extent medically contradicted. Employees involved with the patient's plan of care must be trained in the procedure that satisfies Orthodox Jewish dietary requirements.

### Agudath Israel: Yeshivos to Receive City Health Programs

The New York City Board of Education has agreed to include nonpublic schools in its immunization arrangements with the New York City Board of Health, it was announced by Shmuel Prager, the general counsel of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America. After studying a widely publicized arrangement between the Board of Education and the New York City Board of Health, the Agudath Israel legislative commission fired off a strong protest letter as to why yeshivos were not included in the plan to immunize children on the site of the yeshivos.

In his response, Marvin Weingart, the assistant superintendent of the Office of Pupil Personnel Services of the N.Y.C. Public School System, informed Agudath Israel that "the Department of Health will shortly be issuing a notice to all nonpublic schools affording them the same level of service being offered to children in public schools." The arrangement followed earlier meetings between Agudath Israel leaders and Dr. Rei-

naldo Ferrer, the Commissioner of Health. In negotiating for this response from the city agencies, Agudath Israel received a major assist from City Council President Carol Belamy, who intervened on behalf of the yeshivos.

The Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America had represented several yeshivos that were issued summonses for admitting students to their school without proper immunization. Agudath Israel had lodged a complaint that the yeshivos were not receiving the same level of services as the public schools and therefore should not be held responsible for their failure to comply. At the same time, Agudath Israel warned yeshivos of state laws which prohibit them from admitting students who do not have immunization records. Mr. Prager expressed the hope that the new arrangement between the city's Board of Health and the Board of Education including the yeshivos will help facilitate better health care for the yeshivos.

### Agudath Israel: Gay Rights Bill Disaster for City

The New York City Council was urged to give up its repeated attempts to pass a Gay Rights measure, in a statement released by Professor Aaron Twerski, chairman of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America, on the eve of hearings scheduled by the Council for November 20th. The Agudath Israel leader warned that passage of Council Bill 1017 "would be a serious blow to the City's resurgence towards previous lofty status amongst cities."

The statement continued: "If the City Council will now adopt a Gay Rights bill, it would further deteriorate the moral tone of the entire community and severely damage New York's image in the eyes of our nation and the entire world. A law which bestows legitimacy upon a practice which the Torah condemns as an abomination, which mandates that teachers, policemen and camp counselors can all be overt homosexuals, will result in ever-increasing numbers of children concluding that homosexuality is a legitimate alternative life style.

"It is a red herring to charge that those who refuse to hire homosexual teachers are violating their civil rights because society has the right to protect itself against any group or individual whose conduct and practices violate religious and social mores."

Agudath Israel's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action announced a stepped up campaign against the Gay Rights measure.

### Agudath Israel: No More Nursing Exams on Shabbos and Yom Tov

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing and the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America have agreed on a schedule of practical nurse licensing examinations until 1993 so that the dates do not conflict with Shabbos or Yom Tov. Despite this agreement, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing had refused to change the date for an examination this year which fell on Shemini Atzeres, but following weeks of negotiations with the chief counsel of the Agudath Israel legislative commission, Shmuel Prager, and the New York State Education Department, an alternate testing date was set.

The new agreement reached between Agudath Israel and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing will not pose any problem for Orthodox Jewish nurses for the next 12 years. Agudath Israel's legislative commission is also in the process of reviewing the dates of all state licensing examinations to avoid any conflicts with the Jewish Sabbath and Jewish holidays.

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Rabbi Nisson Wolpin, Editor  
The Jewish Observer



## Agudath Israel: Daylight Savings Bill Problem For Religious Jews

The sponsor of a bill to extend daylight savings time to 8 months was asked to modify his bill because it would "wreak havoc in the praying schedules of religious Jews," by the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America. In a strong appeal to the bill sponsor, Congressman Richard Ottinger, Rabbi Menachem Lubinsky, director of Government and Public Affairs of Agudath Israel of America, explained if daylight savings time were to begin as early as the first Sunday in March, it would delay the earliest time for morning prayer which would seriously disrupt the lives of religious Jews who must leave for work early. Rabbi Lubinsky said that a review of sunrise schedules issued by the U.S. Naval Observatory points out that a delay in the implementation of the bill for several weeks would be acceptable to the religious Jews.

In a letter to Agudath Israel explaining his bill, Congressman Ottinger said that the measure to extend daylight savings time "would result in significant energy savings, according to a study conducted by the Department of Transportation during the 1970's. Such savings would amount to roughly 100,000 barrels of oil per day. I believe that it is essential that we reduce our vulnerability to OPEC blackmail by taking advantage of this energy conservation opportunity." In its statement, Agudath Israel lauded the motives of Congressman Ottinger, but said that religious Jews need the slight modification of several weeks in March so that their religious rights are not compromised by this bill. The bill has already passed the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

In explaining the dilemma for Orthodox Jews, the Agudath Israel commission noted that under Jewish religious law, the earliest time when morning prayers can commence is one hour before sunrise. From sunrise charts issued by the U.S. Naval Observatory, it is apparent that in several cities daylight savings time in March would delay the commencement of the morning prayers. In Los Angeles, for example, "davening" on March 2nd could first begin at 6:21, which is 22 minutes later than the latest time that one can pray during the year, which is on January 1st. In Miami, the earliest time would be 6:44 A.M. or 36 minutes later than the time permitted on January 1st.

In urging the Congress to modify the bill, Agudath Israel noted that in 1969, in 1971 and in subsequent attempts in New York State to extend daylight savings time for the entire year, the bills were withdrawn by the sponsors when they learned of the religious implications involved.

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**Boro Park Condominiums to Save Middle Class Community,**  
*Mayor Koch, Government Leaders, Tell Ground Breaking Ceremony*

New York City's Mayor Edward I. Koch led a long list of government officials in ground breaking ceremonies of Fifteenth Avenue Gardens, a major community development project sponsored by the Southern Brooklyn Community Organization (SBCO) of Agudath Israel of America. The Mayor, who had lavish praise for the sponsors of the 56 unit condominium complex on 15th Avenue between 38th and 39th Street, also spoke of the importance of strengthening the City's middle class neighborhoods. He called Boro Park "an example of a strong middle class community in the City," and appealed for more federal funds to finance similar projects.


In introducing the new project, Rabbi Shmuel Lefkowitz, executive director of SBCO, said: "This project represents the first time that two federal housing programs, Section 235 and UDAG, have been utilized by a local self-help group to provide leverage for over \$4 million in private financing for housing in New York City. Fifteenth Avenue Gardens will provide housing for large low-moderate income families and will help preserve one of the City's middle class neighborhoods."

Greetings from President Ronald Reagan were delivered by Jacob Stein, special advisor to the White House.

In introducing Mayor Koch, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel of America and chairman of its world organization, expressed the gratitude of the entire Orthodox Jewish community for the Koch Administration's support for the project, "which will save the largest Jewish neighborhood outside Israel."


"Large families are on the verge of being forced out of the community because of the exorbitant prices of housing in the interior of Boro Park," said Henry Hirsch, president of the Boro Park Community Development Corporation, the project's developer. "This project will help keep these people in their own neighborhood." Mr. Hirsch praised the Greater New York Savings Bank for its commitment to the community by providing the project with \$4 million in private financing.

Rabbi Shabse Meisels, spiritual head of a local synagogue and a key community activist who helped rally support for the project, said: "Because so many people worked together unselfishly, without any desire for personal gain, we can once again look forward to a viable community."



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Other speakers at the gathering included Borough President Howard Golden, City Council President Carol Bellamy, Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin, Congressman Stephen Solarz, Council Majority Leader Thomas J. Cuite, HUD Regional Director of Housing Walter Johnson, Mr. Menachem Shayovich representing Governor Carey, City Housing Commissioner Anthony Gliedman, Sylvia Deutsch, chairperson of the New York City Board of Standards and Appeals, Frank Wille, chairman of the Greater New York Savings Bank, District Leader Evelyn J. Aquila and

Noach Dear, District Manager of Community Board # 12.

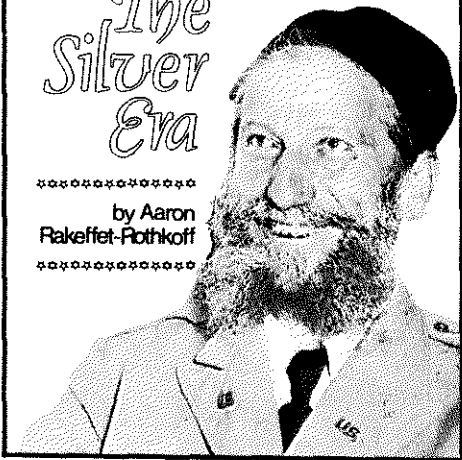
The Southern Brooklyn Community Organization was established in 1977 by Agudath Israel of America to promote the preservation and improvement of middle class communities, including Boro Park, Kensington/Ocean Parkway, and Bensonhurst in the southern tier of Brooklyn. Initially funded by the Ford Foundation, its activities include housing redevelopment, commercial revitalization, community organization and neighborhood promotion.

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