

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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an appreciation

The Or Same'ach —
Fifty Years Later

an ethical dilemma

To Tell or Not to Tell

a vocational guide

Butchers, Bakers, Candlestick
Makers ...

a personal search

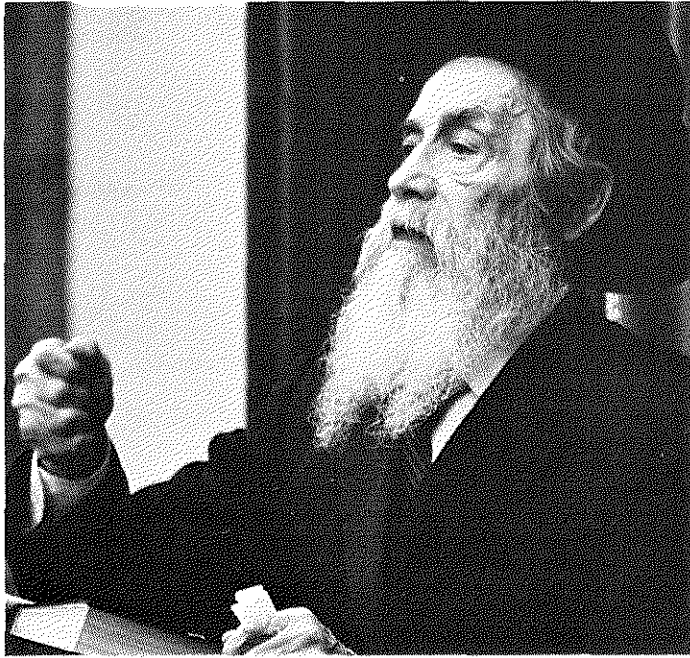
Letter From a Way Station
to "Emunah"



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THE JEWISH OBSERVER



AS WE GO TO PRESS, we record with deep sorrow the passing of the Noveminsker Rebbe, Horav Nachum Mordechai Perlow, זכר צדיק לברכה, on 9 Ellul, *Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Ki Seitzei*. He was widely recognized as a personality of singular piety, Torah scholarship and vision; and as possessing a unique dedication to the needs of *Klal Yisroel*, ever ready to respond to any call for service — as expressed in his active membership on the Presidium of Agudath Israel of America and his dedicated participation on its policy making body, the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages). He also served on the International Board of Governors of Chinuch Atzmai (Torah Schools of Israel), and on the presidium of the Agudas Harabbonim of America. He especially will be missed by the countless people who sought his counsel, warm friendship and guidance. The multitude of mourners that followed his *aron* in the funeral bore testimony to the great esteem and love in which he was held.

יהי זכרו ברוך

May his memory be a blessing.

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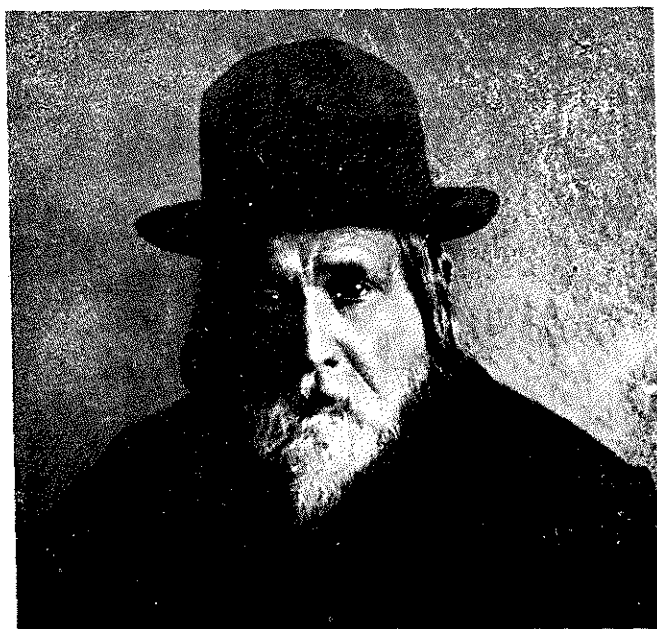
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Yaakov Feitman

The Or Same'ach
Reb Meir Simcha
HaKohein
זכר צדיק לברכה



5603 (1843) — 4 Ellul 5686 (1926)

— Fifty Years Since His Passing

Dvinsk — City of Gaonim

LIKE A WOMAN who has been forced into many unwanted marriages, the city has been known by many names. Yet, no one speaks of Daugavpils today; Dünaburg is mentioned only momentarily when one relates a *vort* from Reb Reuvele Dinaburger's *Rosh LaReuvaini*. Even the larger area of Latgale is forgotten, and Latvia herself lies silently anonymous in the belly of the great Russian bear.

But *Dvinsk* lives on. For as long as Jews study the monumental works of the Gaon of Rogatchov and Reb Meir Simcha HaCohen, the name of Dvinsk will be spoken with respect and a touch of awe! Indeed, in the century and a half of the existence of the Jewish community of Dvinsk, two of the Torah giants of all ages flourished there, in the same period: From 1888, when the Rogatchover assumed the position of Rabbi of the Chassidic community of the city, until Reb Meir Simcha's death in 1926, Dvinsk was a dual Torah center for the world.

RABBI FEITMAN is principal of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School — Staten Island. His "The Rogatchover Gaon — Genius in a Generation of Giants" was featured in the April '76 JO.

The Jewish Observer / September, 1976

Despite differences in approach to *halachic* problems, in personal temperament and in deportment, Reb Meir Simcha's and the Rogatchover's "constituency" was the same: *Klal Yisroel*. Letters from around the globe poured into Dvinsk seeking Torah guidance. It is no wonder that Reb Meir Dan Plotsky, author of the *Klei Chemda*, declared with unabashed admiration upon leaving the city: "I am envious of the city of Dvinsk for having merited the presence of two such great *Gaonim*."¹

The Two Half-Rabbis

THE PHENOMENON OF TWO RABBIS in a Lithuanian city was a common one, for almost every city contained two distinct communities, the Sephardic — here referring to Chassidim — and the Ashkenazic, also known as the Misnagdim. In the case of Dvinsk, the distinction was somewhat blurred because all factions of world Jewry claimed each of the two Torah giants as their own. Reb Meir Simcha had joked good-naturedly about the dichotomy:

Two rabbis who had come to visit Reb Meir Simcha were waiting in his study for him to rise from a nap. The Rebbetzin notified Reb Meir

*Simcha that two rabbis were waiting for him, but when he glaced through the door and saw who they were, he corrected her, "No, there is only one rabbi. Like me, each of them is only half a rabbi; thus only one is waiting."*²

The two "half-rabbis" of Dvinsk maintained a unique relationship, testing each other upon the most esoteric and abstruse Talmudic questions,³ and each humorously commenting upon the other's Torah knowledge and greatness:

*Someone once commented in front of Reb Meir Simcha that the Rogatchover had a phenomenal memory. "Nonsense," replied Reb Meir Simcha, "he hasn't any memory at all. A person with an extraordinary memory is one who many years later remembers something he studied long ago with the same freshness. Reb Yosef reviews the entire Talmud daily and is always in the midst of every portion of the Gemora. Is this memory?"*⁴

On another occasion, Reb Meir Simcha characterized the Rogatchover's myriad references to any Talmudic question in the following way:

*"When the Rogatchover cites ten places in the Talmud to elucidate a difficult question, one of them is a perfect reference which exactly fits the question as if the Rashba had been speaking. However, the Rogatchover himself does not know which one."*⁵

*The Rogatchover, too, would comment upon Reb Meir Simcha in a similar vein, saying, "Reb Meir Simcha claims that he has no knowledge of Achronim (later Torah authorities), but I know for a fact that he is an absolute master of every word in the Shach."*⁶

Of course, the witty exchanges between the two Torah giants were merely reflections of a deep inner mutual respect and affection. The Rogatchover Gaon paid Reb Meir Simcha the ultimate compliment when he sent all those who came to him for a blessing to Reb Meir Simcha. "Go to the *Kohain*," he used to tell all. And Reb Meir Simcha would often refer questions requiring great amounts of research and erudition to the Rogatchover. "I will have to toil all night over this," he would say, "but step in to the Rogatchover and he will answer you on the spot."⁸

The Enlightening "Light"

TODAY, WITH THE AID of a half century of evaluation, we can easily say that both the Rogatchover's *Tzofnas Paane'ach* and Reb Meir Simcha's *Or Same'ach* are true Torah classics. Yet, time has also shown that while the Rogatchover's *seforim* remain the domain of a select few, who have become accustomed to his terminology based on the Rambam's *Moreh* and the myriad references to every point, the *Or Same'ach* is the

cherished treasure of many a *ben Torah*. Terse, to the point, often resplendently brilliant in its original interpretations, the *Or Same'ach* is a "must" in countless *Batei Midrash*.

Torah classics do not achieve their status easily. There is no weekly best-seller list, and no published book review can grant instant status to a new *sefer*. Perhaps no other type of publication in the world receives as careful scrutiny as volumes of Torah *chidushim*. Experts in the field examine every thought and idea again and again, generation after generation. Talmudic discussions are not studied in moments of light reading, but from total immersion in one minute area of thought. Very few have survived such scrutiny and maintained their lofty status.

The names are engraved on our minds and hearts — the *K'tzos* and *Nesivos*, Rebbe Akiva Eiger . . . and the *Chazon Ish*, *Chidushei Reb Chaim*, and the *Achiezer* in many communities . . . and the *Or Same'ach* on the Rambam. A *talmid chochom* maintains a unique relationship with each of these classics. As he begins a paragraph, there is a picture in his mind's eye of a *gadol baTorah*, one of the *tzadikim* of the generation, a man whose Torah opinions have become integrated into the eternal Torah heritage.

And yet, as one examines a new *sevara* — a new concept — by one of these *gedolim*, the relationship is an intellectual one. Nothing is taken for granted, no explanation is accepted *because* Reb Meir Simcha has written it, or *because* Reb Chaim has said it must be so. Every word is reevaluated afresh, every concept dissected, every interpretation critically analyzed.

It is under these incredibly exacting conditions that the *Or Same'ach* is today considered an indispensable Torah classic.

The Tenth Man

ONLY ONCE DURING THE PERIOD from 1887 to 1926 did Dvinsk have but one rabbi. When World War I broke out, in 1914, the Russian Commander, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevitch (uncle of Czar Nikolai II) ordered the expulsion of the Jews from along the Russo-German Front. Dvinsk became dangerous for Jews, with famine and disease wreaking havoc. All who could fled the city. Even the Rogatchover was prevailed upon by his followers to escape.

But Reb Meir Simcha would not go. Neither the entreaties of his friends and students nor letters from *gedolim* around the world could persuade him to abandon his post. "As long as there are nine other Jews in the city, I will be the tenth for a *minyan*," he declared, and so infused hope and courage into his brethren. When he was reminded of the constant danger, Reb Meir Simcha declared, "Every bullet has a designated address and none will reach where there has been no Heavenly decree that it do so."⁹

A Reb Meir Simcha Sampler

Upon even the most preliminary study of the Mesech Chochma, one's first and continuing impression must be one of wonder at Reb Meir Simcha's absolute mastery of so many disciplines, styles and approaches, each brought into play precisely where it is needed and where it does the most to elucidate that particular passage.

The examples in this sampler were selected in an attempt to convey the incredible eclecticism of the Meshech Chochma. Within his commentary upon five passages, one may find a halachic interpretation of what seems to be merely a narrative; a deep philosophical essay; a profound discourse traversing all of Jewish history and relating the pasuk to contemporary problems; an eloquent call to morals and ethics worthy of the great Ba'alei Mussar; an excursion into the abstruse world of Kabbala; a light, almost humorous touch.

For the sake of brevity, we have selected only short commentaries.

Bereishis 13:4 — "To the place of the altar he had built earlier." The Talmud (Menachos 10a) states concerning another matter that whenever the expression "the place of . . ." is used, the subject (of —) is no longer in existence. Here, too, the place where Avraham had built his altar had been made into a center for idol worship. Therefore (Avoda Zora 52b), the altar itself lost all holiness and, indeed, became a forbidden object. However, the ministrations of the idol-worshipper could not defile the place itself (in accordance with Avoda Zora 45a), which retained its holiness.

Tehillim 26:8 — "L-rd, I love the dwelling of Your house and the place of Your Holy Sanctuary." As in the above passage, even in the absence of the Holy Ark and the Sanctuary, the place itself is holy.

One stormy October during this difficult period, terrifying news quickly spread through Dvinsk: "They're taking the Rav!" Everyone ran into the street and beheld the shattering sight of Reb Meir Simcha surrounded by burly Czechs carrying drawn revolvers. Only the serene visage and calm demeanor of Reb Meir Simcha saved the horrified crowd from hysteria.

Despite the incredible dangers of doing so, thousands of Jews and Gentiles signed petitions attesting to the nobility of the Rav's character and his vital importance to the well-being of all members of the city. That very day, Reb Meir Simcha was freed and was never molested again.¹⁰

The Respect of the Gentiles

THE ABOVE INCIDENT illustrates one of Reb Meir Simcha's more unique qualities: his relationship with the non-Jews of Dvinsk. A Gaon following the most ancient of traditions — spending virtually all of his time studying and teaching Torah — Reb Meir Simcha developed a reputation as a Holy Man among the Gentiles of the city. Indeed it is said that when Reb Meir Simcha was incarcerated by the authorities, a certain Christian tanner presented himself in the Rav's place, imploring, "Please do not harass this holy man. For the good of the city, let him go."

Reb Meir Simcha's reputation was so widespread that even non-Jews sought him to settle their quarrels. Some say his acceptability began with the case of the Jew and the gypsy:

A Jew and a gypsy had been business partners

when a major conflict of interests developed between them. Not being able to come to an agreement themselves, the gypsy suggested they go to Reb Meir Simcha for a decision. The Jewish man agreed and presented their case to the Rav. Reb Meir Simcha listened with particularly careful attention and proceeded with his own independent investigation. After satisfying himself about the facts, Reb Meir Simcha decided in favor of the gypsy. From that day forward, the word of Reb Meir Simcha's justice and objectivity spread throughout all of Dvinsk and indeed Latvia.¹²

Reb Meir Simcha was known to joke about this phenomenon and with a smile would say, "A Chassidic Rebbe often has many types of Chassidim, but I draw all types of followers."¹³

He Does the Will of Those Who Fear Him

ANOTHER ASPECT OF the singular esteem in which Reb Meir Simcha was held was the widespread belief in his ability to literally bring about miracles. A resident of Dvinsk relates the following:

"I remember when the Dvina overflowed its banks and threatened to flood the city. Gentiles and Jews alike swore by all that was holy to them that they saw Reb Meir Simcha mount the embankment, gaze at the swirling waters for a moment, murmur something very quietly and — the waters withdrew and the danger passed."¹³

Another such story was often related by an important member of the Dvinsk Koholisher Shul, where Reb Meir Simcha davened:

"Once, on my way to catch a train which was scheduled to leave shortly, I stopped in to say goodbye to the Rav and to notify him of my trip. Departing from character, the Rav began to ask me questions about this and that, seemingly unaware of my great rush. Every time I protested that I would miss my train, the Rav brushed aside my complaints and brought up another subject. Out of respect for the Rav, I could not simply leave, and I missed the train. Later, I found out that the train had derailed with many deaths and casualties."¹⁵

The Wise Judge

DESPITE HIS REPUTATION for powers bordering on the miraculous, Reb Meir Simcha's primary traits were his incredible wisdom, his genuine concern for people, and the eloquence and beauty of his every phrase:

In a din Torah brought before Reb Meir Simcha, both litigants claimed a piece of land. The Rav attempted to bring the two men to an acceptable compromise, but both stood their ground stubbornly. Suddenly the Rabbi announced that he wished to see the plot of land under dispute. When they were all standing on the contested ground, Reb Meir Simcha planted his walking stick into the ground and announced: "Here are two people, each has a valid claim and each declares, 'This ground is mine.' And here is ground which declares, 'YOU ARE BOTH MINE.'"

The words made a deep impression on both men and eventually they were able to compromise.¹⁶

In addition to his mastery of the technical details of *halacha*, Reb Meir Simcha had an amazingly accurate ear for discerning truth and falsity. This trait stood him in good stead during the Russian occupation of Dvinsk in 1919, when the Bolsheviks prohibited rabbis from adjudicating disputes according to the laws of the Torah. They were only allowed to act as arbitrators following secular guidelines.

Two butchers had submitted a dispute to Reb Meir Simcha for binding arbitration. During their presentations, Reb Meir Simcha discerned that one of them was presenting false evidence. Immediately, the Rabbi stood up and declared to the man in awesome and measured tones: "No doubt you are brazen enough to present your false claims because you know that my capacity here is merely that of arbitrator. But I am sure, that were I to tell you that as Rabbi of the city, I hereby administer to you a Biblical oath to tell the truth, you would not persist in your lies."

Reb Meir Simcha's powerful words, imposing stature and flaming eyes completely disarmed the

butcher and he admitted that his claims had been false all along.¹⁷

On another occasion, Reb Meir Simcha's keen insight into human nature rescued an innocent young man from a terrible fate:

The son of the rabbi of one of the villages in Latgale maintained a small grocery store, not far from the local church. A young servant-girl who worked for the priest regularly bought supplies from this store. One day, it became known that the girl had succumbed, and that she had imputed the act to the Jewish merchant. A paternity suit was swiftly brought against the young man and he was scheduled for trial the following week. Distraught and panic-stricken, the young man followed his father's advice and went to Reb Meir Simcha for counsel. After listening to the sorry tale, Reb Meir Simcha advised, "Announce before the judges that you are indeed the father of the child and are prepared to accept full responsibility for his upbringing as a Jewish child."

The Rabbi's advice left the pious young man thunderstruck, but he accepted the words as if they were written in the Torah itself.

The courthouse was packed and in the front row sat the accusing servant-girl and near her, the priest. When the young man stood up and announced his acceptance of paternity and his intention to bring up the child in Jewish tradition, the simple peasant-girl let out a cry, "Oh no, holy spirit, I cannot allow the son of such a man to be brought up as a Jew!"

The priest's face turned crimson and the truth of the child's paternity emerged.¹⁸

His Special Way With Words

IN SEEKING TO DEFINE the special quality of Reb Meir Simcha which allowed him to influence so deeply the members of his community, we may follow his own example in discovering the *uniqueness* of many *Gedolim* who had preceded him. For instance, he would single out the *Nodah B'Yehuda* for the clarity of his explanations, the *Tumim* for his intellect, the *Vilna Gaon* for the comprehensiveness of his erudition, the *N'sivos* for his profundity and Rabbi Akiva Eiger for his methodology.

A thorough examination of Reb Meir Simcha's Talmudic novellae in his *magnum opus* the *Or Same'ach*, is both beyond the scope of this writer and this biographical sketch. But a clue to Reb Meir Simcha's success in human relations lies in a line from his monumental posthumously published work on *Chumash*, the *Meshech Chochma*.

In Parshas Vayikra 5:20, Reb Meir Simcha explains a passage using the principle that "One of

A Reb Meir Simcha Sampler

Bereishis 12:16 — "And he had sheep and oxen and male donkeys, and men-servants and maid-servants and female donkeys and camels." One reason for this detailed list is to note that Avraham never intended to settle permanently in Egypt: he had not purchased horses. The Egyptians did not permit the export of horses (see Ramban on *Devarim* 18:16) and since Avraham would soon have to sell them, he did not buy any to begin with.

Bereishis 18:19 — The Biblical source for educating one's children in *mitzvos* is this passage and herein are included also one's daughters. The only other passage specifically mandating the education of one's children is the *pasuk* "and you shall teach it to your sons," which the Gemora (*Nazir* 29) takes to exclude mothers and daughters. However, this passage clearly instructs us, like Avraham, to educate our daughters in *mitzvos*.

the characteristics of the Torah is that statements are arranged in accordance with the beauty of the language."

This concern with not only the content of what is said, but with aesthetics of the framing of a statement, was a prime factor in Reb Meir Simcha's use of the spoken and written word. His every utterance radiated an elegance and refinement which granted every word he used a special and definitive meaning. Just as he believed every bullet had an address, he understood that every word had to speed directly to its target, else something infinitely precious would be wasted. Thus, in his dealings with transgressors of any kind, his words were not meant to hurt or destroy, but to nurse the spiritual wound and rebuild the ravaged soul.

One Shabbos, on his way to shul, Reb Meir Simcha met the son of one of the city's trustees as the young man was lighting his cigar. The disconcerted fellow stood riveted to the spot, the color quickly rising to his ears, as he was too frozen even to remove the cigar from his mouth.

"A Gutten Shabbos, Meirel," said the Rabbi serenely, "you've no doubt forgotten it's Shabbos. Yes, of course, 'Remember the day of Shabbos to keep it holy,'" and the Rabbi proceeded on his way as if nothing had happened.

The young man was later to say it was a lesson he would remember for the rest of his life.¹⁹

The Fruits of a Torah Life

REB MEIR SIMCHA'S ACUMEN in judging human beings was not simply a personal wisdom, developed through scientific methods, enhanced by the fortune of an excellent brain. Reb Meir Simcha's sagacity was *pure Torah*. He knew no other source of knowledge, and indeed he neither sought nor needed it. By the time he was seven, the *Tanach* was on his fingertips; by nine, he knew one-sixth of the Talmud thoroughly; by ten, he was teaching himself, for there was no longer a Rebbe in Baltrimitz capable of teaching him Torah.²¹

By the time he was in his teens, Reb Meir Simcha had become totally and completely . . . a vessel for Torah knowledge. His speech reflected statements in the Talmud, and indeed even in writings he never intended to publish, the cadences of *Chazal* are audible in every line.

An example may be found in a gloss written by Reb Meir Simcha in his youth upon a page of the *Responsa* of the *Chasam Sofer*. It was his custom to fill almost every *sefer* in which he studied with comments on the subject at hand.

In this particular responsum, the *Chasam Sofer* had strongly criticized a Talmudic discourse written by the author of the *K'tzos Hachoshen*, who was a *kohein*. Reb Meir Simcha prefaces his remarks in defense of the *K'tzos* with the words: "A *kohein* comes to the aid of a *kohein*."

If we did not know otherwise, we might dismiss such a line as a mere curiosity, or perhaps a young would-be scholar amusing himself. But we are speaking of Reb Meir Simcha HaCohen, the future *Or Same'ach*, to whom each word is precious, and indeed, Torah. Thus, not surprisingly, the Gemora (*Eiruvin* 105a and *Chulin* 49a) records that sages of the Talmud, also *kohanim* 'came to the aid' of their brother *kohanim* with appropriate interpretations of Scripture.²²

Especially noteworthy, Reb Meir Simcha wrote his comment on an old volume in the *Bais Hamidrash* of Baltrimitz, never dreaming that the glosses would one day be published. Why then abstruse references to obscure statements in the Talmud which are not even relevant to the subject at hand? Because even then Reb Meir Simcha *thought* in terms of the words of the Talmud. Reb Meir Simcha's *Sichas Chulin* (ordinary talk) literally came from *Mesechta Chulin*, as well as all the other Talmudic tractates.

Reb Meir Simcha in his teens was already a living embodiment of Torah — breathing, walking, and personally reflecting every line of the Talmud. What did he do then? *He sat down for twenty-seven uninterrupted years to learn Torah.*²⁴

When Rabbi Lipele Halpern, author of the famed

Oneg Yom Tov, passed away, the youthful Reb Meir Simcha was offered the vacated position of Rav of Bialystok. But Reb Meir Simcha felt he had to learn more, to delve deeper, to gain perfection, to become . . . a *gadol*.

Three Generations: A Chain of Fiery Holiness

AN EXAMPLE OF THIS ABILITY to stand back and view himself objectively, to remain steadfast and "not enter to see the holy place" may be seen in an incident which occurred during Reb Meir Simcha's period of learning in Bialystok:

A terrible canard had been circulated about Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin ל"צו, the Brisker Rav, and he was being brought to the capital city of Horodna for judgment. On the way to Horodna, the carriage carrying Reb Yehoshua Leib passed through Bialystok and all the Jewish townspeople went out to give honor to the great Rav of Brisk and to demonstrate their support. Reb Meir Simcha had wished to get close enough to Reb Yehoshua Leib to say "Sholom Aleichem," but upon nearing the carriage, Reb Meir Simcha gazed upon the holy visage of Reb Yehoshua Leib, who appeared to be more of heaven than earth, and ventured no closer.

Several years later Reb Yehoshua Leib conducted himself in a similar manner in relation to the Kosel Ma'aravi. Reb Yehoshua Leib lived within walking distance of the Kosel. He did not agree with those who maintain that it is forbidden to walk in the Kosel vicinity, yet, he never went. His close students relate that he was afraid that if he actually stood upon that holy spot, he would virtually faint from awe over the majesty of the place. On the one occasion he did almost reach the Kosel, his entire body shook with uncontrollable tremors and he was literally in danger for his life.²⁵

As if to complete the "triple braided chain which cannot be broken," it is told that when Reb Boruch Ber Leibowitz, Rosh Yeshiva of "Knesses Bais Yitzchok" in Slabodka, heard that Reb Meir Simcha was coming to Kovna, he put on his Shabbos clothing and went to meet him. However, when he reached the house where Reb Meir Simcha was staying, he could not bring himself to enter.

"How can I approach him?" Reb Boruch Ber said." The Rebbe Reb Chaim Soloveitchik ל"צו called him the "prince of the Torah." And he turned and went back to Slabodka.

Thus we have three consecutive generations of *Gedolim* who were so humble in their self-perception that they could not bring themselves to approach what

they perceived as unattainable holiness. . . . What shall we say?

Beyond Time and Space

DESPITE REB MEIR SIMCHA'S acute awareness of the decline of Torah greatness from generation to generation, when he was deeply immersed in learning Torah, time and space were totally irrelevant. Since he would often pace while pondering Talmudic problems, Reb Meir Simcha occasionally found himself far from home, *Gemora* in hand, when he emerged from his reverie. A contemporary *gadol* relates that his cousin was present when Reb Meir Simcha climbed a ladder to reach a *sefer* on an upper shelf. Opening the *sefer* while still high on the ladder, he soon became engrossed in its contents and did not realize his position until morning.²⁶

Thus we may observe in Reb Meir Simcha's work, and indeed in his life, a wonderful paradox. Living most of the day and night in the timeless universe of the Torah, Reb Meir Simcha was nevertheless one of the keenest observers and critics of the contemporary scene. His haunting prediction of the Holocaust and events leading up to it — "They will think that Berlin is Jerusalem" — is now famous and an integral part of any Torah-oriented syllabus of Holocaust studies.²⁷ In his comments on *Megillas Esther*, Reb Meir Simcha discusses the then-current situation in Morocco and Romania.

One of Reb Meir Simcha's most provocative statements in his *Meshech Chochma* concerns the deterioration of values in each new Diaspora, leading ultimately to the next one:

When they enter a strange land, they will undoubtedly be on a low spiritual level, a result of years of wandering and anguish. However, soon their inner, more noble and holy instincts will propel them to return, to learn, to advance, until their Torah knowledge and observance is on its highest achievable level.

Eventually, a new generation will have nothing to add in matters spiritual and sacred. They will slowly seek other areas in which to excel and to add to what their fathers have accomplished . . . leading to denial of the value of their ancestral heritage . . . [and] a storm of destruction follows.

Interestingly, a theory on literary criticism that has gained prominence recently seems to echo this very same theme explicated by Reb Meir Simcha several generations ago.²⁹

The Last Days

IN THE SUMMER OF 1926, Reb Meir Simcha became critically ill and telegrams were sent from Dvinsk to *gedolim* all over the world to pray for their Rav. Reb Meir Simcha was staying at the Metropol hotel in Riga, where he was being treated, and many *gedolim* visited

A Reb Meir Simcha Sampler

Bereishis 14:23 — "If I have taken from . . . a string or shoestraps . . ." The Talmud (*Chulin* 88b) relates that in the merit of this great act of Avraham, the Jews received the *mitzva* of *tzitzis* (strings) and *tefillin* (straps). It is eminently fitting that during *Shacharis*, the morning prayer initiated by Avraham, Jews are attired in their *tefillin*. This, too, is the reason for the *tallis gadol* worn at *Shacharis*.

Bereishis 15:8 — "How shall I know that I will truly inherit the land?" The understanding of Avraham's question lies in the knowledge that only a promise made by G-d through a prophet cannot be revoked (see Rambam, *Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah* 10:4 and *Introduction to Mishna*). A promise made to an individual can be rescinded due to that person's sins. Therefore, although Avraham knew that his children were secure because they would hear G-d's promise through Avraham the prophet, he was worried that his own sins could exclude him from participation in the promise.

Bereishis 24:7 — The fact that Avraham did not command Yitzchak to refrain from marrying

a Canaanite woman is proof of the Maharik's position (167; *Rama, Yoreh Deah* 240:25) that a son is not required to listen to his father concerning the woman he wishes to marry.

Vayikra 1:1 — Our early sages are in dispute concerning the reason for the commandment of bringing sacrifices. The Rambam, in the *Moreh Nevuchim* states that sacrifices are meant to prevent the Jewish people from becoming lured into idolatry by the enticement of following their natural inclination toward sacrifice. The Ramban, strongly objecting, states that sacrifices accomplish results of far-reaching universal significance, beyond the furthest reach of the human mind. A meeting point of these two views may be found in the understanding that only the permission to sacrifice upon a *bamah* (private altar) was granted to avoid Jewish enticement into idolatrous practices. In the *Beis Hamikdash*, however, the purpose of the *korbanos* was always to perform those esoteric functions of the cosmos, which only the Creator totally understands.

him there. Reb Elchonon Wasserman זצ"ל later recalled, that upon his suggestion that telegrams be sent to all yeshivos to say *Tehillim* in his behalf, Reb Meir Simcha responded characteristically with a statement from the *Zohar* that He who cares for all of Israel will watch over this one of His sons also.

One of Reb Meir Simcha's students, Rabbi Chaim Horash relates (in his memoirs *Simchas Chaim*), of his visit to Reb Meir Simcha's bedside on 2 Ellul, 1926, two days before Reb Meir Simcha's passing:

It was 11:00 at night and the Rav was laying in bed, his lips constantly moving. As I moved closer, I was able to hear that he was studying Taharos by heart. When he perceived someone's presence, Reb Meir Simcha looked up and said, "Is that you my son? Sit, my son, sit." Then he said in profoundly moving tones, "Oh Hashem, my suffering is great. I cannot study Torah properly." And then his lips continued to move with the words of Mishnayos Taharos.

The Final Tribute

HIS FUNERAL was well attended, but the greatest tribute were not the formal speeches:

The Chofetz Chaim, then the acknowledged elder sage of world Jewry, sat on the steps outside

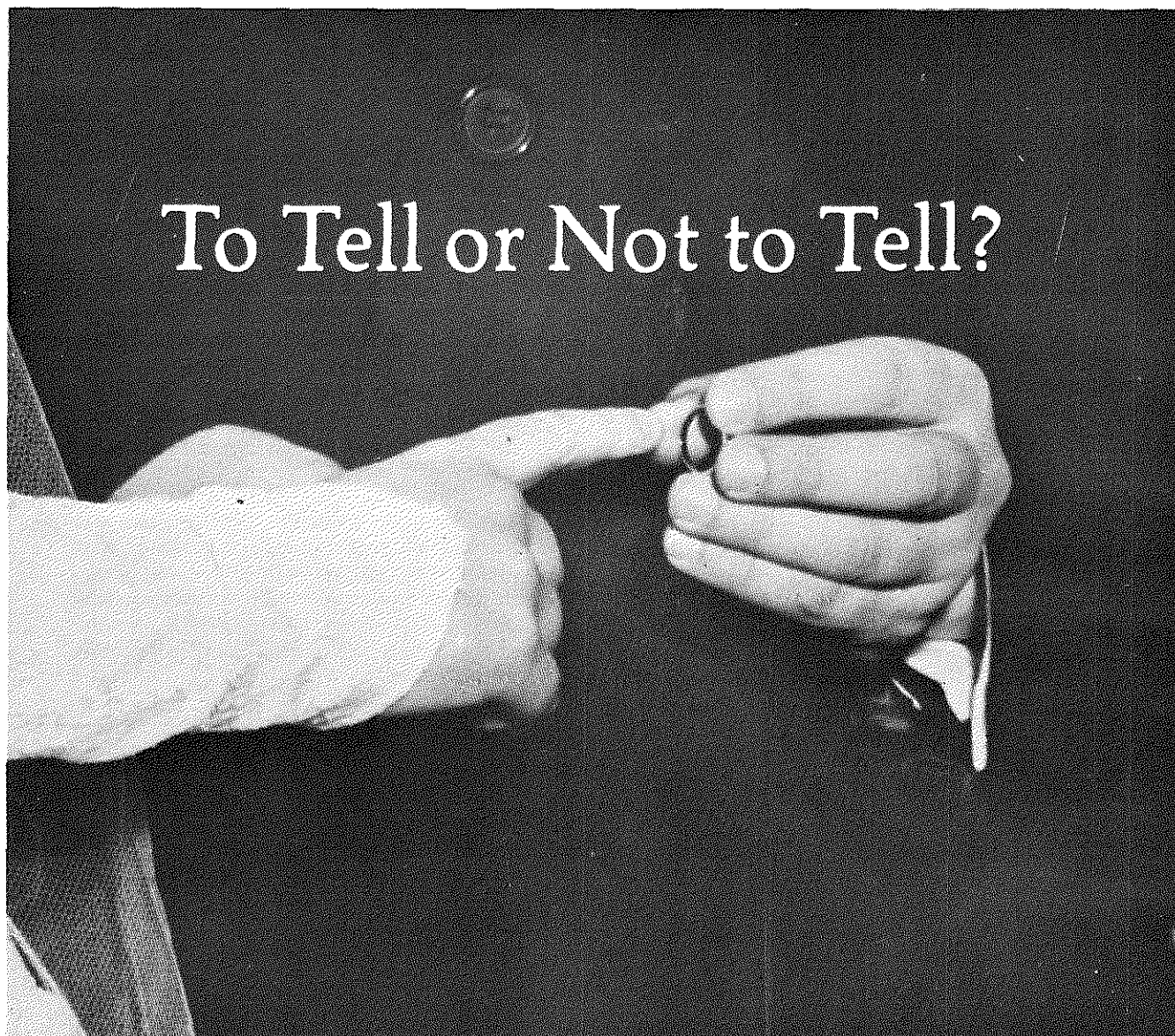
the Bais Hamidrash where the eulogies were being conducted (a kohein, he could not enter) and was heard to lament, after reciting the names of Gedolim who had recently passed on, "And now Reb Meir Simcha is also gone . . . who has remained to guide us?"

Even the Rogatchover Gaon, who dismissed the greatest scholars of his age with a word or phrase, paid Reb Meir Simcha the greatest posthumous compliment. Going to Reb Meir Simcha's cherished spot in the Bais Hamidrash, where he spent days and nights for almost half a century, the Rogatchover ordered that Reb Meir Simcha's shtender (lectern) be interred in the grave with him. The tradition of doing so is an ancient one but it is only performed where there is secure knowledge that the inanimate wood could testify in a Heavenly Court to its master's total dedication to Torah.³⁰

In Reb Meir Simcha's case, both the shtender and the Rogatchover Gaon were thoroughly knowledgeable of the true extent of his dedication to Torah.

It is but half a century ago, and yet . . . we no longer live in Reb Meir Simcha's world, nor perhaps even understand it. But we can yearn. ❏

Footnotes to this article are on page 25



To Tell or Not to Tell?

Most of us at one time or another are endowed with the power to reinforce or destroy a prospective undertaking, purely by what we say A hundred years ago, the CHOFETZ CHAIM set timeless guidelines for just such a dilemma.

"What Should I Do?"

The young man sitting across the desk from me was visibly perturbed. After exchanging perfunctory pleasantries, he blurted out his problem. "Rabbi," he said, "you keep telling us that Torah offers the guideline for any and all situations that may arise, that it is eternally relevant and modern. Well, I'm faced with a very serious dilemma, and I would really appreciate it if you can advise me . . ."

"We live in a two-family house, and the girl upstairs is dating a friend of mine. My problem is, Rabbi, that long ago he confided to me that he suffers from diabetes, from childhood. I know that the girl doesn't know. What should I do? If they ask me about my friend, should I tell them this? If they don't ask, should I offer the information anyway? What about my friend — I don't want to hurt his chance at happiness, but I feel guilty about hiding this from the girl. What should I do?"

It was not just the young man seeking advice who was unsure of what justice really demanded. There are many others among us, as well, who do not know the correct response. So I decided to explore the question with him and present the resolution in a way that would help him understand the principles behind the decision.

The Delicate Balance

MOST OF US at one time or another are endowed with the power to reinforce or destroy a prospective undertaking, purely by what we say. It was this type of situation — whether a *shiduch*, or a contemplated business partnership, or a job application — that Rabbi Yisroel Meir Hacohein, the sainted Chofetz Chaim 5"ץ, addressed in one part of his classic treatise, *Shemiras HaLashon*. Contrary to common misconception, this little gem is not "just another *mussar sefer*" for the ultra-pious. It is rather a brilliant analysis of the manifold circumstances under which one must guard one's tongue, both from sins of omission and sins of commission.

In a recent address, Justice Lewis F. Powell described the current thrust of Supreme Court decisions as "a more traditional and in my view a sounder balance . . . evolving between the rights of accused persons and the rights of a civilized society." When the Chofetz Chaim spoke from Radin, not Washington, a hundred years ago, it was precisely this type of delicate balance that he sought, realizing that while a diabetic young man seeking to marry has the right to privacy and confidentiality, the young woman is also entitled to know fully the circumstances of the situation she is entering. Only a *gaon* of the Chofetz Chaim's caliber could walk the

RABBI COHEN is rav of the Young Israel of Canarsie and is a rebbe in Yeshiva University High School for Boys in Brooklyn. His "Drugs — A Jewish Perspective" appeared in the Nov. '71 JO.

tightrope between the commandment not to speak evil of one's fellow man — "*Lo seileich rochil be'amecho*" — and the *mitzva* not to stand idly by as another person is being harmed — "*Lo sa'amod al dam re'acho*" (both in *Vayikra*: 19,16). The Chofetz Chaim's sensitivity and compassion were directed by a vast Torah scholarship that we see evident in extensive documentation and thorough footnoting — all attesting to his greatness of mind and spirit.

The Decision

I QUOTED THE CHOFETZ CHAIM'S decision: that one must tell a suitor or businessman about serious deficiencies in the prospective partner.¹ In rendering this *halachic* decision the author of *Shemiras HaLashon* was well aware of the controversy his words could generate. As if anticipating the challenges and arguments, he prefaced his *psak* with a detailed explanation of the reasoning and sources upon which he relied.

His decision, writes the Chofetz Chaim, is predicated upon two Talmudic sources: In *Sanhedrin* 73, the *Gemora* describes the Biblical prohibition "*Lo sa'amod . . .*" as referring to a situation when "one sees his friend drowning in the river or threatened by bandits (and does not help him)." Thus we see that one is obligated to try to save his friend not only from death but also from financial or other losses. A further proof is deduced from a requirement (stated in the *Gemora*)² that one *must* — not just *may* — publicize illegal land acquisition to protect the lawful owners.³

The Conditions

MY YOUNG VISITOR was quite surprised. He had been worrying that he was being tempted to resort to a most blatant type of *lashon hora* (tale-bearing) — and I was telling him he was not only *permitted*, but that he was actually *obligated* — morally and halachically — to tell what he knew. "Yes," I assured him, "your duty to save your fellow man from harm takes precedence, provided certain conditions are met."

The young man had been motivated by a conflict of two admirable instincts. In presenting the decision emphasizing one of them, it was essential that the other not be lost. So even while outlining his duty to "tell it like it is," I took special pains to stress the value of being on guard against wanton gossip and careless slander

1. The Chofetz Chaim does not elaborate upon a most vital point — at what point should one volunteer information about deficiencies in a prospective partner? There is certainly going to be a very great difference in the reaction of a girl who learns that a young man is seriously ill *before* she ever meets him — and that of a girl about to announce her engagement to the fellow. One obviously must consult a competent authority on such a matter.

2. *Baba Basra* 39b

3. *Ibid.*

— a much more prevalent vice than not saying enough. And even in this case, where “telling” is warranted, there are strict guidelines and limitations. I then offered the following stipulations, as outlined by the Chofetz Chaim:

a) Don’t exaggerate or dramatize the situation that you’re reporting. *Diabetes or heart disease are serious health problems — but just how seriously are the persons effected, and how greatly may their disabilities affect their children? Did the prospective bride have a brother who died of Tay-Sachs disease? That does not mean that she is necessarily tainted or even a carrier.* Keep things in perspective. One is obligated to state the situation simply, so that the person involved can then determine on his or her own the implications of the problem.

b) Weigh your words carefully. Don’t blurt out the first thoughts that come to mind. First ponder whether that which *you perceive* as a fault is *actually* a true flaw, or only your personal value judgment. — If Chaim is a quiet fellow, that doesn’t mean he is “depressed” or “odd.” — If Berel is a trusting soul, that doesn’t make him a naive simpleton. The information rendered must be *relevant and important to the decision being made.*

Surprisingly, the Chofetz Chaim did not stipulate that one must have first-hand knowledge of the problem before reporting it. On the contrary, even hearsay has to be passed on! The *Gemora*⁴ criticizes Gedalia ben Achikom, the Jewish governor whose assassination precipitated a total exile of Jews from Eretz Yisroel for he had been warned by a man called Yochanan that there were plots against him. But since they were “only rumors,” he did not give him much thought — and he indeed was murdered by those plotters. Even if one only overhears rumors that damage is being contemplated against another, he is bound by *halacha* to pass on these suspicions.⁵

c) In telling about these deficiencies or flaws, one’s motive must be *purely* to prevent some loss or damage to the recipient of the news, and not even incidentally to pass on a juicy piece of gossip or to satisfy a grudge against the offender. For example: *Rosenberg wants to hire Hilda as a maid. Levy knows that Hilda is a thief; moreover, she once insulted him. Levy must inform Rosenberg, to alert him against being robbed; but if he also wants to even the score with the insolent maid, he would be guilty of “tale-bearing.”* (The solution to this problem is not to withhold the information, but rather to purify one’s heart.)

If we are convinced that the detrimental knowledge will not sway the person to break the partnership or the *shiduch*, we are forbidden to tell him at all. Since we cannot ward off the damage, why heedlessly besmirch someone’s reputation?

4. *Nidah* 61a

5. *Ibid.* commentary of the *Rosh*.

d) Even if all the above conditions have been met, one should still seek an alternative to being the bearer of evil things. The Midrash⁶ tells us that when Joshua prayed to the Almighty to reveal to him who had taken from the *cheirem* (sanctified booty) of Jericho, G-d answered — *Do you think I am an informer? Draw lots and find out for yourself!* We need no clearer indication that the role of “tale-bearer” is an undesirable one. If there is information your friend *must* have, try to help him get it through some means other than directly informing him.⁷

e) Perhaps the most elusive and difficult condition to meet is the last one the Chofetz Chaim stipulates: One has to gauge the effect one’s words will have upon the person spoken *about*. Sometimes the harm that will come to the subject through such revelation will outweigh the prevention of harm to the other party. Recent studies have shown that people known to suffer from sickle-cell anemia or epilepsy or have had (successful) cancer operations are often sigmatized, fired from their jobs, and treated as pariahs. The person with flaws or deficiencies has rights, too, and they must likewise be protected.

If Reuven is considering entering a business partnership with Shimon, should I inform him that Shimon was expelled from school for forgery?⁸ Only if my words nullify the advantages that might have accrued to Shimon — becoming Reuven’s partner — but affect him no further. But if, by telling Reuven about Shimon’s past I not only prevent his promotion to partnership, but cause him to be fired altogether, then I am doing him more harm than I would have spared Reuven, and I must remain silent.

It is obviously impossible to lay down simple, universal guidelines to apply to all such cases. The underlying message must be awareness and restraint. How careful one must be, how cognizant of the irreparable damage that can be done to another human being by a simple slip of the tongue!

Laymen as well as rabbis have learned to depend on the *Mishna Brura*, the encyclopedic commentary on the *Orach Chaim* section of the *Shulchan Aruch*, for their daily *halachic* existence. The author of that brilliant and invaluable guide is the same one who penned the work we have discussed herein, *Shemiras HaLashon*. . . . *I will never forget the wistful tone with which the young man said to me, as he left the office: “If only I had paid more attention in Yeshiva when we studied this book!”*

6. *Sanhedrin* 11a

7. There is also no obligation to volunteer information that a person could easily ascertain for himself, if he would bother to investigate.

8. The Chofetz Chaim explicitly writes that in this case one must disregard the possibility that the offender has repented. The prospective partner has a right to know about events in his past that may shed light on his character.

City Vocational School Thrive as Jobs Tight

26% Fewer Job Offers For the Class of 1977

By EDWARD R. FISKE
 The city vocational schools are thriving as the throes of unemployment grip the nation. For the Class of 1977, the schools have received 26% fewer job offers than the Class of 1975. The schools are also receiving more applications from students than in the past. Unemployment in the city is expected to remain high for the next two years. The schools are expected to improve economic conditions. Cornell University predicted yesterday that October figures will be off by 22,000 over 1974's.

By JACK HOUSTON
 Skilled and unskilled workers face bleak job outlook. Employment Office says growth of its openings hire a specialist.

On Butchers, Bakers, and Candlestick Makers

The Way Things Are

The Good . . .

FROM ONE POINT OF VIEW the situation facing the young Orthodox Jewish job seeker is much improved over a generation or two ago.

Certainly the range of careers open to the *Shomer Shabbos* has been broadened significantly. No longer is it necessary to choose between religion and employment. Indeed, groups such as Agudath Israel and COLPA have ensured that the force of law protects the rights of the observant job holder. The once heard "If you don't come in on Saturday, don't come in on Monday" is a bitter memory of the past.

Perhaps even more important is the fact that the young person is not alone. Parents (and in-laws) who have been providing support through yeshiva are usually prepared to continue this support during career training and preparation.

The Torah community as a whole is committed to helping its young people find suitable employment. Thus Agudath Israel's involvement via COPE; thus the recent Torah Umesorah conference sessions dealing with the problem of careers for the yeshiva student; thus the innovative training programs in some yeshiva high schools; thus the boundless time and energy devoted by *Roshei Yeshivos* and other yeshiva educators, trying to help graduates establish themselves. The community has demonstrated a willingness to bring all its resources — political, economic, and intellectual — to bear on the problem. Unfortunately, however, these resources are not necessarily enough.

DR. FRYSHMAN, an Associate Professor of Physics at the New York Institute of Technology, serves as Chairman of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel. This article is based on a talk given at a recent Torah Umesorah Convention.

. . . and the Bad

NOTWITHSTANDING THE ABOVE, the total picture facing the entrant to the career marketplace is in many respects bleaker than at any time since the Depression.

- For one, we are just emerging from a recession; the entire economy has been traumatized by the Arab's oil machinations and for reasons too complicated to analyze here, it seems that a commitment has been made to a "slow or no-growth" economy. Another burgeoning, almost explosive growth cycle like that of the 1950's and 60's does not seem to be on the immediate horizon. The implications for the young job seeker are clear.

- The computer will have a serious impact on our young people — especially those whose job qualifications feature well-trained, alert minds. Although it is true that many will continue to find lucrative employment in the computer industry, as the range of computer applications broadens, an increasingly negative trade-off will soon become evident. Some of the traditional openings in the physical sciences and engineering have already suffered a considerable loss of jobs because of the computer; accounting, and drafting as well as other aspects of architecture are other examples of fields likely to lose jobs in the future.¹

- Affirmative Action programs are also adversely affecting the Jewish youth (in common with other white males) who are being asked to bear the burden of remedying presumed past discrimination against certain "minority" groups. Previous efforts to blunt the effects of these programs have met with but indifferent success, and it would thus be totally unrealistic to ex-

¹ See, for example, "Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity: An Overview," published by Agudath Israel of America, June 1976.

pect that our young people will be treated fairly in certain sectors of the job and career marketplace.

- Even without Affirmative Action, the competition for good jobs is rapidly becoming stiffer. We are no longer unique in realizing that education can be a means of upward economic mobility. Ever increasing numbers of young people from other ethnic groups are going to college, and the number of qualified applicants for jobs requiring advanced education rises perceptibly with every passing year.
- Nor is it possible to use credentials as a means to a secure career. The trivial ease with which some degrees can now be obtained means that vast numbers of individuals carry the same marks of "attainment." There is often no independent way to gauge quality; since there are more credential holders than there are jobs, the employer is in a position to demand something beyond the degree. And very often this "something beyond the degree" is impossible for the observant Jew to deliver. We do not have the flexibility of hours or location of our peers; nor do we have the ability to engage in the socialization which almost is *de rigeur* in many fields. The loss of value of the objective credential has diminished some of the competitive ability of the Orthodox Jew.
- While the law does protect the Sabbath observing job holder, the employer *can* circumvent the law and *not* hire the *Shomer Shabbos* if he so chooses. And many do so simply because they do not want to be bothered with the need to make special Friday afternoon and Saturday arrangements for a handful of employees. Even employers that were once ready to meet the observant Jew's special needs may no longer

be prepared to do so, now that there are more than enough qualified applicants without special needs. An excellent case in point of this change in attitude is the nursing profession. When there was a "shortage of nurses, hospitals were delighted to get *Shomer Shabbos* girls; currently COPLA has had to bring legal action to attempt to force hospitals to hire *Shomer Shabbos* applicants among others.

- We must include the decline of the major urban areas of this country as a factor that will seriously affect the economic stability of our community. Most observant Jews live in or around the large cities; our communal assets are invested there; and the young families anxious for the spiritual welfare of their children usually settle there. Increasingly, this involves serious economic and career difficulties because of the declining opportunities in the cities.²
- Not only is the employment picture changing radically, the college campus — traditionally the first step in attaining a secure career — has undergone an almost cataclysmic change. So much so, that for most of our young people the conventional college campus is a totally unacceptable environment.³ To an extent this need not concern us, since it is becoming evident that there is a rapidly decreasing correlation between college and career.

But only to an extent. It would be unrealistic to ignore the fact that many of our young people will find it necessary to earn some college credits (if not a degree) at some time in their career. That being the case, it becomes useful to search for alternatives within Higher Education — as well as alternatives without.

The Search for Alternative Paths

... Within Higher Education

IT IS NO LONGER NECESSARY to spend four years in college to earn a degree. Some campuses of the State University of New York have a regular three-year program. Other schools, especially private colleges, offer a wide range of summer courses, which enable students to save at least a year out of the usual four. [The nature of the campus in the summer time is a totally different problem; one which is best discussed in the framework of my earlier article.]

- Many colleges offer college courses to high school seniors. In a variation developed by the author, the New York Institute of Technology enables high school seniors to earn a full year of college credits at their own yeshiva high school. This was originally introduced to prevent the "Early Admissions" program from attracting eleventh graders to the college campus. Although the program being run by the author continues to be restricted to those yeshivos where the

positive effects are presumed to outweigh the negative, there are universities that have copied this approach and are offering it all over the country. Combining this program with summer school attendance can reduce the college stay by about two years.

- Another way to save time involves taking standardized examinations such as the Advanced Placement (AP) and the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests; virtually all colleges will give credit for passing grades in these tests.

² Interestingly, dedicated Torah educators working "out-of-town" for the *spiritual* welfare of the Jewish people might well be providing an *economic* salvation as well by making employment outside the major population centers an acceptable consideration for observant families.

³ In a companion piece, the author discusses this aspect of the problem. Readers can obtain reprints from *The Jewish Observer* by requesting "The Child You Lose May Be Your Own" (J.O. Feb., 1974).

For a generation most of our young people have been looking to post-secondary education as the key to a career. Now that the college degree is far less than a sinecure to a job, we must remind ourselves of alternatives that have been allowed to wither from disuse. It is time to explore civil-service, the trades, business, and community service.

- Many universities allow their students to attempt one form or another of challenge tests to validate independent study. The advantage to this challenge route is that it is possible to complete advanced courses in this way; CLEP and AP tests usually cover material taught in introductory courses only.
- Increasingly, colleges and universities are recognizing that yeshiva education is a legitimate form of post secondary education and are granting transfer credits as a result.
- Finally, there are schools that give varying amounts of credit for life-experience, such as working in a political campaign, raising a family, travel. The rules vary from situation to situation and from school to school.

Note that it is not possible to take advantage of all the above routes to shorten a college stay. As a rule, most good schools will require a minimum of 64 credits earned on campus, so that a realistic minimum amount of time a student need spend on campus is about two years, provided the degree to be earned is in a conventional mode.

- External degree programs such as that of the author's school (the New York Institute of Technology) require a two-week seminar on campus each year plus attendance at a local college for laboratory courses; everything else is handled by mail. There are other national external degree programs such as those offered by the University of Oklahoma and California State University. These programs generally follow a conventionally structured curriculum, as do the courses offered on television in the Midwest, and increasingly, throughout the country. Although conceptually this approach is a preferred one for members of the yeshiva community, it is necessary to keep in mind that there is a 95% attrition rate among correspondence courses enrollees.
- Another way to minimize on-campus attendance is to participate in less-structured programs, such as the "University Without Walls" and the "Empire State" approaches. There are some dangers associated with this category, which can offset the advantages of minimal on-campus study, and yeshiva students should be wary of some of these problems and are advised to consult a vocational guidance counselor of firm Torah commitment before considering such programs.

- Finally, it is possible to obtain a degree without ever setting foot on a college campus. The New York State Board of Regents has established a mechanism whereby an individual can have all his/her credits (no matter where obtained) listed in a "credit bank." When the student has earned enough credits, the degree is issued. Most people who use this route will take many of their credits through CLEP, and similar programs. To date, no credit is given for yeshiva work, so the total time to earn a degree would likely exceed two years.

There is one approach that the author considers optimal for the yeshiva community, which the Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools (AARTS) is trying to bring to fruition. Many distinguished educators recognize that the five years or so spent by a yeshiva student in his post-secondary studies are academically equivalent (at least) to the Baccalaureate degrees earned in conventional colleges. Such being the case, efforts are underway, in which Agudath Israel is playing a major role, to convince graduate schools to admit yeshiva graduates into Master's programs without having a conventional bachelor's degree. This is arranged in several programs at Long Island University, and this was the basis of the MBA program set up at Torah Umesorah by the author. There is every indication that this route will become even more established in the future and it is conceivable that today's students might well find a college degree superfluous for entering a professional (graduate) program.

... Outside Higher Education

FOR ALMOST A GENERATION most of our young people have been looking to post-secondary education as the key to a career. Now that the college degree is far less than a sinecure to a job, it is crucial that we remind ourselves of alternatives that have been allowed to wither from disuse.

- The Jewish community itself has an impressive number of openings for young people prepared to serve — mostly "out of town," but often within the large metropolitan centers as well. (There is a world of openings in religious service to the Jewish community. But these should be discussed in terms of "sacred obligation" rather than in terms of "vocational oppor-

tunities.") Community work, then, should be examined for its opportunities: many Jewish Federation agencies seem anxious for workers with a good Jewish background, and often these jobs are in cities with large Jewish populations. There are problems involved in working with these agencies, but a yeshiva person who retains close contact with his Rosh Yeshiva can do much for the Jewish community — and much for his own career as a community worker.

- Civil service is an area which has been seriously neglected by our community and although the recent job picture even here has not been a glowing one, it is nonetheless safe to say that in the long run civil service is a growth industry in the U.S. Even now there are large numbers of openings at all levels of the federal, state, and in some instances city agencies; the problem is that there is no central listing of such openings. Thus, a position in Chicago might go unfilled while a qualified applicant in New York remains unemployed. The Jewish community would do well by its young people were it to offer a program assisting individuals in preparing for Civil Service tests and then coordinate listings from across the nation.

It is important to realize that in some agencies it is better to enter at a very low level and to advance on the job than it is to try to earn credentials on the outside and then aspire to a higher level. Thus, in the Federal Government, a 21 year old yeshiva graduate with no college training might enter at a GS 6 or GS 7 level; five years later he might be eligible for a GS 12 or GS 13 level. The author is acquainted with an individual with a PhD and years of experience in a variety of fields who could not obtain any higher rating. Many federal agencies pride themselves on the number of "low level" employees they have raised to more advanced and higher paying levels, and there is no reason for the Orthodox Jew not to take full advantage of this.

Ideally, in this tight job market the recent graduate should attempt to get a job first and then obtain more advanced training and education to grow on the job. Clearly, this is not always possible, and in the past many would go off to college and graduate school to obtain the credentials necessary for entry to a secure field. As noted earlier, the credential approach is no longer viable. Even in fields where opportunities currently exist, the lead time between entry and completion is so great that there is every possibility of wasting as much as ten years of one's life in preparation.

- A more realistic approach would be to enroll in a vocational training program that takes no more than a year or so to complete and enables the individual to obtain an entry-level position. Once on the job, it is possible to grow to one's fullest potential, especially because of the recent emphasis on higher education for working adults.

- The idea of first landing a job and then learning while earning leads to another possibility — that of

business. Business has traditionally been a successful means for upward financial mobility in our community, and it is strange to find successful, well-to-do business people encouraging their children to enter the professions. We will discuss some aspects of this phenomenon, but we would point out that in the worst of circumstances there are young people who leave the yeshiva world and after a short hiatus strike off on their own in business ventures and do exceptionally well, indeed. The Williamsburg Chassidic Community has been especially attuned to this approach and has succeeded in getting a Small Business Administration program designed to help individuals go into business. This imaginative program deserves to be replicated throughout the Torah community.

The Community Protects Itself

THE QUESTION THAT NOW ARISES is "How, then, does the community protect its own future by helping its young people survive economically?"

Notwithstanding the current over-all bleak employment picture, the Torah community does have adequate resources to meet the needs of its own young people — primarily because no more than several hundred yeshiva graduates enter the job market each year (excluding the Chassidic yeshivos). Thus, some of the strategies outlined below should be more than adequate to generate sufficient positions each year.

- There must be an increased emphasis on supporting the *Shomer Shabbos* tradesman and worker. We are a large community generating a great deal of income. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be the realization that patronizing a *Shomer Shabbos* establishment results in jobs, ultimately for our own children. Unless we protect ourselves as a community, our own children will suffer.

- We must exert financial pressure to get jobs for Orthodox Jews. Certainly, in industries such as insurance, book-publishing, food, and the like, we represent a large enough market to induce the respective industry giants to accept a handful of executive trainees each year. Other, larger communities would perhaps consider this tokenism, but tokenism for our own community would make an impressive dent in our unemployment picture.

- Similarly, the *Shomer Shabbos* tradesman should deal with the *Shomer Shabbos* wholesaler. Political representatives should be made aware of the need of helping to provide appointive positions to some of our worthy young men. And those helped by the community should recognize their obligation to help still others. Once again, it is important to realize that we do not need huge numbers to meet our own needs.

- We must make full use of, and cooperate with professional agencies such as Agudath Israel's COPE, to generate jobs for our people. Further, we must take

No doubt having a job that offers stature, satisfaction, prestige, and recognition is highly desirable. But good jobs are vanishing. Yet, pressure from parents and prospective in-laws can make it virtually impossible for young people to select occupations that do not meet the community concept of "suitable."

full advantage of non-Orthodox agencies such as the various Jewish Federation agencies to open the door to some of the better paying positions available in the non-Orthodox Jewish community. So long as the Federation does not satisfy its obligation to serve the ethnic Jewish community through support of Torah education, we must exert pressure to obtain assistance in the other area of concern to us all — that of employment.

- One of the areas of interest to the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel is the possibility of obtaining professional licenses in a wide variety of fields *without* attending college. Thus, it would be possible to become an architect by substituting a certain number of years of experience for each year of formal education. The same would be true in Law and in several other fields. Of late, the professional schools have been playing an increasingly important role in determining who may sit for licensing examinations, and the various state legislatures have begun closing this non-college option, both in response to the pressures of the professional schools as well as the professional societies.

It is our feeling that the trend should be in the opposite direction; competence rather than credentials should be the touchstone for professional qualification and for hiring in general. There are some indications that this concept will meet ready acceptance, should there be pressure from the community. Certainly, the thrust of many civil rights decisions has been in this direction.

- Educators have a very special task. On the one hand, they must be prepared to give advice as if their students' lives depended on it. Educators must prepare their students with the three R's of responsibility, reliability, and resourcefulness. On the other hand, educators must be ever aware that employment counseling at too early an age can result in grievous harm to the yeshiva careers of their charges. They must be aware that whereas some high school students should be helped to prepare for their careers at the age of 17, others should not be distracted in any way from devoting the next five or six years exclusively to Torah. Clearly, career counseling should be undertaken by the most competent members of an institutions' staff.

Last . . .

AS ALWAYS, the most important role is to be played by the parents. First they should realize that their children are individuals. Their child's abilities and interests should play a major role in determining a career decision. Parents should devote a great deal of time investigating the occupational outlook of careers that seem suitable for their children.

At the very least, parents should do as much research in guiding the investment of their children's talents and years as they would when investing money in an unknown stock. Parents must not shut the doors on lucrative and honest employment by insisting upon the psychic rewards⁴ they so often feel are essential for their children's happiness. No doubt having a job that offers stature, satisfaction, prestige, and recognition is highly desirable. And all things being equal, young people should be steered into this kind of position. But all things are not equal. "Good jobs" are vanishing. Pressure from parents and prospective in-laws can make it virtually impossible for young people to select occupations that do not meet the community concept of "suitable."

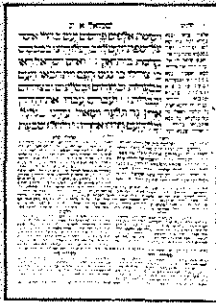
Is there any reason that a young person should be pressed into devoting the best years of his life (beginning at the age of 16 or 17) in the hopes that he will eventually gain admittance to a medical school, and then at the age of 30 or thereabouts begin to earn a fine living with "stature" in the community? Why should the same young person not be encouraged to spend many more years in the yeshiva and then become a tradesman? Why ignore projections that by 1980 the field of medicine will begin to experience the same overcrowding that has now overtaken the legal profession? Moreover, since when do recognition and stature in a Torah community depend on anything *but* Torah scholarship and contribution to community welfare? Many of the psychic rewards others consider important are totally irrelevant to those factors that Jews consider important.

And why, then, does the industrialist earning \$100,000 per year encourage his son to devote ten years of

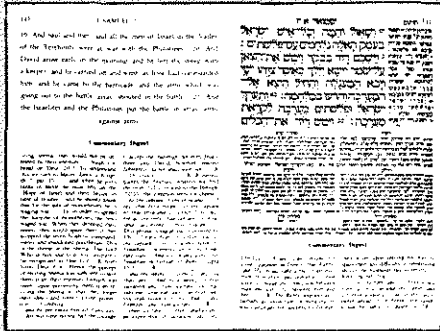
⁴ Psychic rewards or income refer to those aspects of a job that result in non-monetary rewards to the individual. Thus, community stature, congenial environment . . .

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his life to earn credentials that will enable him to obtain a university position, perhaps as an assistant professor earning \$15,000 a year? Undoubtedly, some of this pressure results from an inferiority complex, which their son's success can vicariously assuage. The respect (and even awe) of the worker/businessman for the professional plays a role in this. And certainly, some of the psychic rewards are attractive.

But it is a grave error to paralyze our young people into thinking that jobs outside the professions are unacceptable. Parents, friends, and in-laws must realize that it is a personal inadequacy that prevents them from recognizing that a grocery man has no less stature, in a Torah sense, than does a chemist — and that the contributions of a silversmith can be as lasting as those of an accountant.

... But Not Least

THE REASON THIS ARTICLE DEALT primarily with the problems facing boys was not because the author does not recognize the importance of meeting the employment needs of observant girls. To the contrary, women in increasing numbers in the Torah society have been assuming significant roles in "bread-winning": supporting husbands in *Kolel*, and returning to full employment after raising their families.

Finding a suitable career which can be interrupted and then returned to introduces constraints and considerations generally not present with men. But even more serious is the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find an environment where a girl, even with a modicum of *tznius*, can work, let alone train. It would be almost glib were the author to propose that observant Jews and institutions hire religious girls. The fact is that many such will be forced to work outside the community, and it is a tribute to their upbringing that so many are able to do this successfully.

In a word, the author feels inadequate to deal with the issue properly; perhaps reactions to this article will provide the basis for dealing with this crucial issue at some future time.

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A Letter from a Way-Station to "Emunah"

Gedalya Glatt, the writer of the following letter, had been working for the Jewish Federation of Southern Illinois. In summer, 1975, he was enrolled by the Federation in Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles to earn a post-graduate certificate in Jewish Communal Studies. While there, he had a chance meeting with Rabbi Simcha Wasserman, who supplied him with warm friendship, soft-spoken guidance, and provocative reading material.

After much reflection, he decided to enter the Conservative rabbinate. During the application period to the Jewish Theological Survivory in New York, he wrote:

Dear Rabbi Wasserman,

Many things have been happening to me since I spoke to you last and I am now in need of your advice as to how to proceed from this point.

I will explain in chronological order.

I received a package of material you sent to Pensacola for which I thank you.

My reason for applying to the Conservative Rabbinate centers around my long association with the Conservative Movement. I have always understood it to be an honest effort toward maintaining authentic Judaic tradition while at the same time applying that tradition toward modern life. Furthermore, I was under the impression that the Seminary faithfully abided by the traditional view of Yiddishkeit, albeit with some modification.

I love the observance of Judaism. And I thought that Conservative philosophy would allow me to be true to that love.

I came to New York over three weeks ago. In my subsequent conversations with students at the Seminary, I came to see that I was mistaken in my understanding of the Seminary's teaching method, especially as it regards Torah. They adopt the critical

GEDALYA GLATT, a native of Pensacola, Florida, is currently studying in the Yeshivas Chayei Dovid, an affiliate of Yeshivas Rabbi Israel Meyer HaCohen, Forest Hills, N. Y.

viewpoint and are more interested in explaining Torah from without than from within.

I began to understand the ramifications of the changes Conservative Judaism has made, changes which I had previously thought were relatively harmless. Once a change is made in the laws in order to accommodate modern life, the law loses its authority on the whole. I conjured up a vision of the future in which I, as a rabbi, forbid one of my congregants to do something which is a transgression of *halacha*. And he responds, "You have no basis on which to say that. After all, isn't riding a car on *Shabbos* also a transgression of *halacha*, and don't you allow us to do that?"

I also envisioned a growing number of alterations in the tradition, which would increasingly gnaw at me and frustrate me in my effort to maintain the authentic nature of Jewish observance.

Two other factors emerged which I had thought about in the past and had nonetheless put aside — first, that I much prefer to daven in an Orthodox synagogue; second, that all the Jews whom I know and respect as Jews are Orthodox. It seems a higher quality.

A couple of weeks ago I noticed a poster advertising a *P'gisha* at the headquarters of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and I made a reservation. The encounter was last weekend, and I was sufficiently interested to spend the next several days in Morristown, New Jersey, at the Lubavitch Yeshiva. I returned this evening.

I have now given up my intention of studying at the Jewish Theological Seminary. It is as if my encounter with the Chassidim was the final straw in my disenchantment with Conservatism. I was brought quickly and intensively into the swell of pious Yiddishkeit. There were none of the hesitations and half-apologies that even I myself was used to making when it came to explanations of Hashem. There was only strength and confidence and deep convictions that this was the truth, and the only truth. Once again (for it had been a long time since I had been told this) the Torah was from Sinai and Hashem listened to our prayers, and Jews were all required to live and observe as Jews.

One argument which I encountered almost im-

mediately upon my arrival was this — as a Conservative rabbi, what can you say to a young, searching Jew to cause him to adhere to Judaism? That was, I believe, the deepest cut. One of my fondest hopes is that in the future I will be able to transmit my love of Judaism to others. Yet when that question was put to me, I could only think of the draining away of Torah authority, the ambiguous concept of G-d, the lack of a solid and defensible philosophy in Conservatism.

By itself, the experience with the Chassidim would not have been enough to cause me to reject Conservatism. Yet when I couple the warmth that I felt with them, their strength, their persuasive argumentation, their success, with the misgivings that I held about Conservatism before even meeting the Chassidim, I have before me a rather undeniable picture of the way I have to go.

Let me add another argument against Conservatism that profoundly bothered me, an argument that was planted by the article you mailed to me. Conservatism doesn't work. Fewer Conservative Jews are living observant lives, in spite of all the changes that Conservatism is instituting to make observance easier. It appears as if of all the arguments one might use to persuade another to observe *mitzvos*, the ease of the observance is among the least effective.

I have written a long letter. I clearly remember your disaffection for writing letters, especially one that might require a long reply. Perhaps you could send me names and addresses of yeshivos for me to consider, and I would then call you so that we could talk.

I will close with one final comment: being able to come to you for guidance is an honor that I treasure.

Thank you.

With deep regard,
Gedalya Glatt

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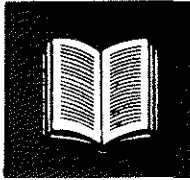
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BOOKS

HOW TO STOP AN INTERMARRIAGE,
by Kalman Packouz (Jerusalem, 1976, Intermarriage
Crises Conference, \$6.75)

THIS BOOK, AT FIRST GLANCE, strikes the reader who is sheltered within the four cubits of the Torah world as an oddity: surely of no interest (Thank G-d) to those who are within his world, and certainly of no influence upon those who are outside it. But this first reaction is very mistaken, and Mr. Packouz's work deserves serious consideration and wide distribution.

It is true that young people contemplating intermarriage will not respond to standard arguments about loyalty to Torah, and that (but for some very unusual exceptions) their parents are in no position to use such arguments, having failed to bring up their children in this spirit. But that does not mean that nothing can be done. These parents can be inspired to forcefully oppose intermarriage, and there are effective methods that they can be taught to use — or that we ourselves can use in dealing with the youngsters concerned. And we must realize that, with the present ferment in American Jewry, we are more than likely to encounter some parents and children, at some point, caught in the intermarriage crisis — even if we are not professional "outreach" workers or suburban or out-of-town rabbis and educators.

Mr. Packouz rightly emphasizes that stopping an intermarriage is only a very limited achievement — very soon the person in question may form another liaison with a gentile, unless he or she is worked with and is given a knowledge and appreciation of our sacred heritage. But stopping an intermarriage buys time; and the author has here put together a practical guide to help parents (and others) to achieve this goal.

Step by step, he analyzes what approach can and should be taken, paying due attention to both the intellectual and emotional factors involved (his advice on how to argue and how not to argue, for instance, is most cogent — and of equal value to parents who have a child threatening to forsake Torah observance).

He provides twenty typical and instructive case histories; a list of institutions in this country and in Eretz Yisroel, where young men and women of limited Jewish background can be sent to find out more about their Jewishness; a list of books about Judaism that they can be given; and even a list of rabbis in various parts of this country and overseas who have been recommended to the author as being effective in dis-

couraging intermarriages.

There are also chapters on what the community and the family can do to forestall intermarriage crises — and there is one point there that deserves underlining. The National Jewish Population Study of 1973 reports that "a strongly Jewish upbringing" is a strong factor in preventing intermarriage. This obviously means intensive Jewish schooling as well as *mitzvah* observance at home, "a home life consistent with the laws he learns in school." However, consistency between theory and practice is not only important to keep children from intermarriage. One may well wonder to what extent the problems that we have in the education of children are due to a conflict between the realities of home life and the values to which parents *profess* allegiance — honesty, *bitochon*, unselfishness and the like. It is not only that children may imitate their parents but be "turned of" entirely, *chas vesholom*, by what they consider insincerity or even hypocrisy. A good deal of heartsearching is in place.

THE TRUTH NEED NOT HURT by Pinchos Jung
(London, 1974, Judaica Press, \$2.50)

THE SUBTITLE OF THIS LITTLE VOLUME, "A fresh, original and down-to-earth approach to Torah thinking, aimed primarily at the teenage reader," at most hints at the truly remarkable value of the work, but does not really do it justice.

The great problem that we face in trying to perpetuate Torah values and outlook is not a problem of *content*; we do find explicit guidance in the Torah concerning all areas of our life. The problem is one of *communication* — how can we present the Torah's teachings in such a manner that they will be accepted by our audience? This problem is particularly severe when we deal with young people; if we want to reach them effectively, we must use the kind of language for which they have an ear. This is what the author of this volume has succeeded in doing.

He has taken many basic concepts of Torah thought and translated them into breezy, down-to-earth, brief essays, using examples drawn from the everyday world of the reader. For instance, in the first section of the book (called "Think! Don't Sink!") the essay titled "The Servicing Department" starts off: "Have you ever stopped to think about how much time we spend cleaning, mending and maintaining our property?" The author develops the thought further — and "suddenly it hits us. Everything physical gradually decays and disintegrates . . . They are not important enough to deserve to last forever." What is important enough? Obviously, our spiritual possessions, which are not subject to decay. "So next time you see your shirt being thrown into the washing machine, you can deliver a

profound philosophical discourse on the relevance of this exercise — provided your mother has the patience to listen."

Other sections of the book deal with such topics as *hashgocha* (and the healthy lesson we are taught when the weather does not cooperate with us), with *bitochon* (and our illusions about being self-made), and the *Yomim Tovim — Rosh Hashono* ("the identity parade") *Yom Kippur* ("the election campaign"), or *Pesach* ("kitchen conversions"). We find such characters as Sholom Shlemazel, pillar of the Rack and Ruin Demolition Company; the Lord Mayor presenting a chandelier to the home for retired horses; and Robert Jay "who died maintaining his right of way."

Yet behind the light touch lies profound thought. For the benefit of readers interested to delve deeper into the subject, the author provides source references at every stage (as varied as *Tanach* and *Gemora*, *Chovas Halevovos*, *Zohar* and *Tur*, and *Lev Eliyohu*). On the other hand, he sums up every essay with a little jingle designed to stay in the younger reader's mind.

"To-morrow never comes,
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Whether these simple verses are very effective may be debatable. But the essays themselves undoubtedly are a most effective tool for *mussar* and *hashkofo*. Most of them were originally published in Agudas Israel youth periodicals in Great Britain and their appearance now in one volume can only be welcomed most heartily. It is to be hoped that the author's humorous (yet really dead-serious) discussions of various aspects of the adult world (some of which have appeared in *The Jewish Observer*) will also be issued in book form before long.

AVI NAMES HIS PRICE by *Sheindel Weinbach*; illustrations by *Bracha Sorotzkin*. (Jerusalem, 1976, Feldheim, \$2.95)

IT IS A SIGN OF THE TIMES that we are privileged to see a growing flood of English publications espousing Torah ideas in literate and attractive form. Unfortunately, the situation is least encouraging in the field of juvenile literature. Children devour books at a remarkable rate — and very few are produced that will satisfy our needs. The kind of books that we want must not propound, or convey by implication, values and ways of life in conflict with Torah; but that alone is not enough — they should, in appropriate form, further our educational goals. For teenagers and subteens, some material (such as the books by Gershon Kranzler and the translated historical works of Lehmann and Shachnowitz) is available, though even here there is a great dearth, especially of books dealing with children of our time with

whom the readers could identify in preference to the Hardy Boys or the Bobbsey Twins. When we turn to books for younger children, however, we have almost nothing, except for the recent publication of a number of thin paper-bound books. They are very welcome and it is to be hoped that many more of them will appear; but they are not really enough. Needed are hardcover books that are glossy and attractive, able to rival what is available on the general juvenile market — and at the same time effectively teach a Torah way of life.

The volume before us happily fulfills all these specifications. It is most attractively produced; it speaks in the language that the child understands, and does not talk down to him; it introduces, painlessly, a

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large number of important concepts and mitzvos, ranging from the importance of thorough Pesach cleaning to the doing of mitzvos without expecting reward. But Mrs. Weinbach has done even more than this. The book introduces a project that the juvenile reader will be inevitably tempted to take up, and which will bring benefits long after he has laid down the book. In this book the author and illustrator have revealed creative talents which must continue to be used for the benefit of our children.

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Footnotes to the Article on "The Or Same'ach"

1. Rabbi Zev A. Rabiner, *Rabbeinu Meir Simcha HaCohen*, Tel Aviv, 1967, P. 192.
2. Rabiner, P. 174.
3. See my article on the Rogatchover Gaon in *The Jewish Observer*, March 1976, P. 19.
- 4,5,6 Rabiner, P. 193.
7. Rabiner, P. 43.
8. S. Levenberg, *The Jews in Latvia*, Tel Aviv, 1971, Pp. 225-227.
9. Rabbi S. Y. Zevin, *Ishim V'shitos*, Tel Aviv, 1966, P. 159.
- 10,11. Rabiner, P. 48.
12. *Ibid.*, P.38.
13. *Ibid.*, P. 173.
14. *Jews in Latvia*, P. 266.
15. Rabiner, P. 186.
- 16,17. *Ibid.*, P.35.
18. *Ibid.*, P. 187.
- 19,20. *Ibid.*, P. 175.
21. *Ibid.*, P. 17.
22. For a detailed explanation of this concept, see Rabbi Reuven Margolies, מחקרים בדרכי התלמוד והדיוחיו, Jerusalem, 1967, Pp. 89-90.
23. Rabiner, P. 204.
24. Chronology:
 - born: 1843.
 - married: 1860 (17 years old)
 - became Rav of Dvinsk: 1887.
 - passed away: 1926.
25. Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *Moadim Uzemanim*, Jerusalem, 1970, V. 222, note 2.
26. Heard from Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Haleivi Ruderman שליט"א, Rosh Yeshiva, Ner Israel-Baltimore.
27. *Meshech Chochma* on *B'chukosei* 26:44. A full translation appeared in *The Jewish Observer*, Sept. '73.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence* and *A Map of Misreading*.
30. For more on this custom, see Rabbi Shlomo Ashkenazi, *Doros B'Yisrael*, Tel Aviv, 1975, P. 309.

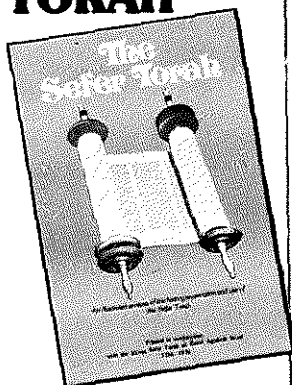
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Chicken a' la King

by Sheindel Weinbach

Quiet, modest, unassuming,
Eyes perennially downcast,
Portrait of the porter, Tuvya,
Shoulders bowed, misfortune-blast.

No complainer, gentle Tuvya,
Always happy with his lot.
Nor does Gittel, his "*kenegdo*"
Strive for what she hasn't got.

Pumpernickel bread with onion
Is their fare, day in, day out.
And if luck decrees *that* "extra",
Occasionally, they'll go without

Simple people, simple strivings,
Simple tastes and simple dreams.
Mute and meek and mild and tranquil,
So they'll end their lives — it seems.

But gentle Tuvya has a yearning,
A burning, unexpressed desire,
A one-time fling, a sole departure,
A flirt with fate, ere he expire.

"We have lived our lives together,
Sixty years is quite a spell.
And now that we are eighty, Gittel,
There is something I must tell.

"Our lot in life has yielded pleasures
Few and very far apart,
And though I've been, thank G-d, contented,
One lone temptation rends my heart.

"Temptation of the Yetzer Hora?
Fearful fancy of a sinner?
A taste of heaven, think I rather,
For what I crave is a chicken dinner.

"Through eighty years of earthly toiling,
I wish — just once — and not again,
To satisfy this crazy craving,
To taste a tender, juicy hen.

"See here, Gittle, is the money,
Pennies saved up, one by one.
Buy the biggest, best and fattest,
Fittest fowl, surpassed by none!"

Shoulders squared and head uplifted,
Glint of laughter in her eyes.
Is this Gittel? merchants whisper.
Shurgging shoulders in surprise.

Squeezing, pinching, poking, patting,
Gittel finally makes her choice.
"Here's the chicken that I'm after,"
She exclaims in new-found voice.

Mission done to satisfaction,
Gittel shyly asks, "What next?"
Seek in vain the verse or chapter,
This occasion has no text.

To the shochet, to the slaughter,
Expert hands must do this motion,
And after that — another problem,
Of kashering, Gittel has no notion.

Eviscerated and defeathered,
Juicy morsel of a bird,
Duly kashered, next the cooking,
Foreign process, quite absurd.

Perplexed, poor Gittel, and bewildered,
But Tuvya knows just what to do.
"The yeshiva cook will roast our dinner
For a pennyworth or two."

Proudly bearing steaming platter,
Tuvya beamingly announces,
"Set the table fit for princes,
With the trimmings and the flounces."

Cloth and napkins, crystal stemware,
Borrowed most — a little bought.
As they are about to banquet,
Tuvya suddenly has a thought.

"Are we pigs or are we gluttons
All alone with none to share?
Just you and I to dine in splendor?
Without a guest to join our fare?"

"Let me, Gittel, call a poor man,
Even better, make it two,
Then we'll *bensch* "mezumon." Surely
That's the proper thing to do!"


The guests come gladly to the dinner,
A rich aroma fills the air,
They eat with gusto, so expressive,
And stuff themselves as much they dare.

Tuvya ponders, Tuvya puzzles,
He still is not quite satisfied,
And after he recites "hamotzi",
He motions Gittel to his side.

"The eighty years that I have waited,
Have seemed quite long, I must admit,
But now that I have realized my dream,
To indulge — and eat — does not seem fit.

"I hope you understand, dear Gittel,
I hope you don't think this a waste.
Let's let our guests enjoy their fill, once.
I'll wait for heaven for my taste."

Quiet, modest, unassuming,
Tuvya, Gittel, sit and dine,
Pumpnickel bread and water,
With the taste of fowl and wine.

In the eyes of the beholder,
Is beauty's last and final test,
And so does taste yield ambrosiac flavor,
In meanest crust — by heaven blessed. 

MRS. WEINBACH, a resident of Kiryat
Matesdorf in Jerusalem, is the author of *Avi
Names His Price*, which is reviewed in this is-
sue.



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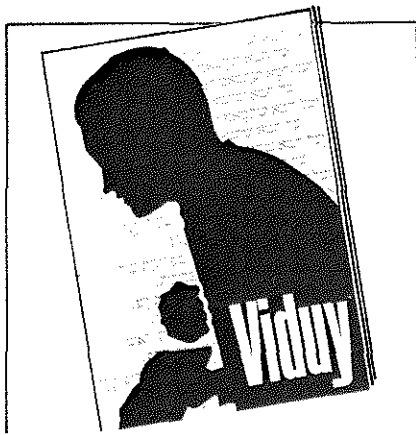
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second looks at the jewish scene

Entebbe and the Four Who Bless

"Four are required to express gratitude (to G-d for being spared): travelers over seas, ... through wilderness, a man who recovers from a serious illness, and a released prisoner" (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim: 219). That a man whose life is thus spared is obliged to express his gratitude, is inferred from the chapter in Tehillim (107) that opens with "Praise G-d for He is good, His mercy is eternal." It describes all four ordeals, punctuating each with "Praise the Lord, for He is good, and His wonders are bestowed upon man."

* * * *

HOW BOUND UP we all were with the fate of one-hundred-plus travelers aboard the Air France plane that was hijacked to Uganda! How deep was our anguish those dark days when they were held hostage! And how intense our excitement and relief over their daring rescue by Israeli commando forces!

They traveled over rough waters and dangerous terrain... They were imprisoned with very real threat to their lives... And — as was feared — some required the hospital facilities set up for them in Nairobi.

In the time of the *Bais Hamikdosh*, any Jew who had emerged alive from such experiences would have brought a *korban toda* — a sacrifice of gratitude: "Praise Him, for His mercy is eternal." Today, a Jew cannot visit the *Bais Hamikdosh*, but he does say the *Birchas Hagomlin* at the *Sefer Torah*: "*Baruch ... hagomel lachayovim tovos* — Blessed ... Who granted beneficence to the

guilty, and bestowed all goodness upon me..."

The derring-do of the special Zahal task force that rescued the hostages has proved to be a source of admiration to all — especially to Jews the world over. *Pidyon shevuyim* — redemption of prisoners — is a *mitzva* of top-most priority, and those who performed it in spite of staggering odds and at incredible personal risk are deserving of our gratitude and appreciation.

But our overwhelming response must be one of *Hodu Lashem* — Praise to G-d, Who is indeed responsible for the rescue: And this must be accompanied with an analysis of our own shortcomings that put the travelers into such jeopardy — the "*chayovim*" factors, for which we are all accountable; and a concerted effort to intensify our relationship with our Creator who governs our affairs.

"Honors to Zahal" for performing the rescue? — Why not? But not as the focal point of the celebration. This has within it the pitfalls of focusing on "the might of my arm," and can end up in a foolish strutting about in narcissistic chauvinism, which can only invite further hostilities against us, from both a political and a metaphysical understanding of events.

Our primary reaction must be from a *Birchas Hagomlin* frame of mind: A recognition of how spiritually impoverished we are, how empty our lives are without the *Bais Hamikdosh* as our personal and national focal-point, and how insecure we are destined to be until the advent of *Moshiach*. ✡

"Neshira" and Closed Gates

THE SOVIET UNION is in many respects a police state, and every Jew who succeeds in gaining release from there — regardless of his destination — should be cause for celebration, as long as he can finally live openly as a religious Jew.

There had been ugly rumors afoot that the Jewish Agency and Israeli government leaders only view the plight of Soviet Jewry and its ultimate resolution in the context of *aliya*: If the Russian Jew makes it to Israel, where he can live out the Zionist dream, his problems are solved, and the hardships and risks of attempting to get out of the U.S.S.R. would be proved worthwhile. If not, if he does not take advantage of the *aliya* opportunity, then — they ask — what significance is there in his release from the Soviet Union? ... Why expend energy on getting him out?

To have accused the Zionist establishment of such a bitterly narrow approach to *hatzalah* would have been to dabble in divisiveness, and to recall similar (documented) charges against the same offices when lives could have been saved from the destruction of Nazi Germany at the expense of the Zionist dream. (Or to cast a spotlight on more recent, but equally shameful statements by the American Jewish Congress (March '76), that rejected Assad's offer to release Syrian's 4,000 Jews to freedom in exchange for a pledge that they not emigrate to Israel. The AJC condemned this offer. Why? — Because limiting choice of destination would be "undemocratic"! So Syria's Jews are still incarcerated in a hostile land.)

So these charges had been whispered rather than shouted. Then a recent meeting in Jerusalem, described in a J.T.A. release, was so replete with suspicious innuendoes that it only made one wonder about these rumors. We quote:

SOLUTION SOUGHT ON SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRANTS WHO DO NOT GO TO ISRAEL

JERUSALEM, July 18 (JTA) — *The problem of "Neshira" — drop-out of Soviet Jewish emigrants en route to Israel which has been topping 50 percent — was discussed here last Thursday at a top-level meeting of government and Jewish Agency leaders. A terse communique, deliberately unrevealing on this sensitive matter, said all present had agreed to set up an eight-man committee, representing all parties involved, which would report back.*

The sources would not reveal details of the discussion. They said representatives of the Joint Distribution Committee and of HIAS — two organizations which have been rendering assist to the "noshrim" — were present. Almogi and others have warned that a 50-percent plus "neshira" rate could endanger all Soviet emigration.

Two Solutions

SINCE THE JULY MEETING, another top-level deliberation took place, openly considering two "solutions":

One proposal would involve greater selectivity by Israel in granting visas to aliya applicants while they are still in the USSR. The alternative is that when a person possesses an Israel visa he can no longer be considered a refugee by any Jewish organization, including HIAS, and the organization will not request a refugee's visa from the U.S. for him.

This is how most Jews currently get to America, and the drop-out rate is between 40 to 50 per cent of all those reaching Vienna.

JERUSALEM POST, August 17, 1976

The first "solution" would be an outrageous act of perfidy against Soviet Jews who in effect, would be

sentenced by fellow Jews to remain in an impossible situation only because they do not share the Zionist dream.

The second "solution" reflects a deliberate closing of the eyes of the Israeli leadership to the intolerable pressures that new *olim* must face, and the total frustration of their ambitions to lead fully Jewish lives that they suffer once they arrive in Israel.

If there is a solution to the "Neshira" problem, it does not lie in playing diplomatic tricks or indulging in "White Paper"-type blackmail. The answer lies in taking the Immigration and Absorption Ministries away from the Communist Mapamites; and in recognizing that *Dos Pintele Yid* that has refused to be smothered out of existence in sixty years of Communist oppression is a spark of *emunah* — a belief in G-d; and that it is an oft unarticulated, but deep, intuitive recognition of Jewishness as something far more than just another national identity. Limiting Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel, only to expose them to anti-religious pressures once they arrive, is an unforgivable act of perfidy. Only when Yiddishkeit becomes the Absorption policy of the Jewish State will would-be *olim* no longer drop out.



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Surveying Assimilation:

The Word Game

"SURVEYING THE AREA OF CONCERN" is usually the first step in a scientific approach to solving a problem. And since such an approach should yield the most effective solution, why do people frown at the survey response to pressing problems, often ridiculing the mere mention of the word?

There are several reasons. The surveyors are often insensitive to deeper aspects of the problem, for when dealing with human phenomena in quantitative terms, one tends to lose sight of qualitative essentials . . . And at times, the surveyors only select data that reinforces their preconceived notions, ignoring significant data that may challenge pet theories. . . . Worst of all, gathering and processing the data can become so time-consuming, so expensive, and so gratifying to those involved, that it leaves no time or funds, no psychic energy or interest for going any further. The means — the survey — becomes a dead-end.

So ask not why people scoff at the survey approach. It has an affinity to breed cynicism.

When the survey deals with a narrow sampling of informed opinions, it is re-named a "symposium." The data becomes more qualitative in nature — some of it pretentiously so — but the end results are no less fulfilling to the sponsors, and no less abortive. Symposia also tend to become dead-ends.

An "Action-Oriented" Symposium

THUS, A SYMPOSIUM by Haifa University with the participation of internationally prominent historians, sociologists and other academicians, among them President Ephraim Katzir, dealt with a gravely serious problem. Yet as serious as the probings were, and as

startlingly refreshing as some of their words seemed, they do not seem to be bringing the solution any closer. The topic "Assimilation and its most serious consequence, intermarriage" a problem which, they believe, "poses a far greater threat to the survival of Israel and the continuity of the Jewish people than another war or the worst assaults perpetrated by terrorists" (quotations from JTA release).

Scanning reports of the proceedings, one is convinced that, aside from assiduous notetaking, surreptitious doodling, and polite applause, the discussants do not listen to each other. Tune in to some very impressive statements:

Prof. Shmuel Ettinger of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem noted "the paradox of renewed Jewish solidarity going hand-in-hand with increasing cultural, social and political assimilation. Even in Israel, where Jewish culture is based on Hebrew and an educational curriculum that includes many basic elements of Jewish history and tradition, the influence of Western values is very much felt while Jewish content recedes," he said.

Ettinger questioned whether the creation of the State of Israel, the development of Hebrew and the revival of Jewish group consciousness would be sufficient to strengthen Jewish religious values and spiritual enrichment. Memories of the Holocaust and the hostility of the gentile environment are not strong enough to prevent cultural and social assimilation," he said.

Obvious, then, that the assimilation process can work with equal devastation in the State of Israel as in the diaspora. The key is "religious values and spiritual commitment."

Can this be anything but a signal for launching an all-out effort to


imbue Jewry the world over with Torah knowledge and values? Is this what Katzir meant when "he said Israel had to cooperate with the diaspora for the benefit of the latter and for itself so that Jewish youth can be inculcated with Jewish traditions and the highest moral values of Judaism"?

This was neither the conclusion nor the final suggestion of the heavy-weight symposium. The discussions — the means — were the ends.

Aliya and Education

ANOTHER DELIBERATION, much more action oriented, was taking place "not far away, in Jerusalem, where the powerful Jewish Agency was pondering decreasing *aliya* and the peril it posed to the Jewish State." (Here we quote the *Boston Advocate* of July 26):

This caused it also to examine the subject of Jewish education, certainly one of the prominent factors causing assimilation which in turn removes an important sector of the population from any consideration of aliya. Yosef Almogi, chairman of the Jewish Agency, pointed out that of the 1,650,000 Jewish students between the ages 15-17 in the free world, one million received no Jewish education at all, half a million received only a brief nominal Jewish education and only 175,000 received a full, proper Jewish education.

The mulch of poor and inadequate Jewish education, a lowered motivation to remain Jewish, leading to assimilation, the weakening of free world Jewish communities and their failure to strengthen Israel through the required material support and aliya, will within the next decade be reaching crisis proportions. In a free society Jewish survival can be based on individual desire to remain Jewish, and this grows from understanding and appreciation and enthusiasm for what Judiasm stands. 

New Style Talk, Old Style Action

HOW REFRESHING this self-criticism from the ivory towers of the Establishment! How different from the rhetoric of years ago when the leadership of the State only had words of scorn for traditions of the past! How encouraging the prospect for the future, if the words of Haifa — and Boston, for that matter — have impact in Jerusalem!

But in truth there is no cause for optimism. The symposiasts do not listen to each other and surely do not move policy makers to alter their bitter action patterns of the past. Even if they succeed in their goals of raising *aliya* figures, there is no apparent reason to assume salutary changes will set in:

* *Aliya* — elevation — can only describe the geographic ascent of immigrants from other lands to *Eretz Yisroel*, but it is an ironic misnomer for the devastating drop in Torah observance and, resultantly, civilized conduct that *olim* undergo in their secular indoctrination at the hands of the Absorption Ministry (*still* in the hands of the Communist oriented Mapam) and a Torah-less education.

* The fruits of 28 years of denuding *olim* of all *Yiddishkeit* — from Yaldei Teheran to Yaldei Morocco — is now all too evident: a recent report of the Department of Criminology at Bar-Ilan University stated: "The incidence of criminals and criminality among Asian and African immigrants and their children is far above their representation in the population and comes close to that of the Negroes in the United States" (Crime and Social Deviance Vol 3 No. 1. Spring 1975). These facts are known to the Government and yet no changes are being made.

* The Education Ministry's student subsidies continue to heavily favor secular students: yeshiva dormitory students receive 900 IL annually, a kolel fellow — 1,000 IL, a

student in a *hesder yeshiva* — 2,400 IL . . . university student 20,000 IL. Obviously, the government still looks more favorably on the secular schools that promulgate "Western values," than they view the yeshivos that perpetuate "Jewish religious values."

* Of the *shlichim* (emissaries) that the World Zionist Organization dispatches all over the globe to indoctrinate young Jews with love for Israel and desire for *aliya*, far too many are members of the leftist Shomer Hatzair. These are doing a far better job of selling Marxist doctrine, contributing to the ranks of local insurrectionists than in bringing about an increase in *aliya* — let alone inspiring respect for tradition, or fidelity to Torah and

mitzvos. Thus, the lion's share of the \$3½ millions the Jewish Agency has allocated for a three-year Latin America educational campaign is earmarked for anti-Torah left-wing undertakings.

AFTER ALL the surveys and symposia are over, the only meaningful way in which assimilation can be stemmed is when the "tradition and moral values" of the word-people's reference are firmly rooted in a commitment to Torah; and the bitter actions of the past are totally replaced by policies that reflect the sweet, spoken words. Then we will celebrate with the "Torah that comes forth from Zion," instead of mourning the tracts of *Das Kapital* that are emanating from Jerusalem.

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Letters to the Editor



Of Course, Yiddish . . .

To the Editor:

I agree with Rabbi Shimon Susholtz ("Who Needs Yiddish?" J.O June '76) that there is a need to have good command of Yiddish and to perpetuate it wherever possible.

The reasons presented are valid. So valid, that one wonders why nothing in fact, is being done to spread or keep up the language among us Yidden. It is true that most of us did learn to speak Yiddish at home, at school, from the storekeeper around the corner etc. However, many individuals, for one reason or another were left out of this 'inner circle.' If Yiddish is indeed "a link in time between generations," if it is "a powerful chain linking the *neschama* of a person to the *neschama* of Klal Yisroel i.e. the Torah" as Rabbi Susholtz points out, shouldn't we be seeking to spread the knowledge of this important language? Shouldn't we be setting up classes all over to teach Yiddish to those whom Yiddish has for some reason or another passed by?

If the *frum* community does truly value the preservation and perpetuation of Yiddish as the common Jewish language, then let us see this value operationalized in the establishment of readily available courses for both men and women in conversational Yiddish. לא המדרש העיקר אלא המעשה.

(Mrs.) MALKA WIKLER
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Yiddish? — Why Not Hebrew?

To the Editor:

The article by Rabbi Shimon Susholtz, "Who needs Yiddish?" prompts me to ask, "Why Yiddish?" Yiddish is a German patois and in of itself has no *kedusha*. The *kedusha* normally attached to Yiddish arises because it has been the language used by *Roshei Yeshiva* and *Gedolim* of the past few generations. Yiddish, while it does somewhat connote *frumkeit*, has a much broader cultural connotation; e.g. Farband, Workmen's Circle and the Yiddishisten.

Rabbi Susholtz mentions the Midrash's three reasons for the Jews in ancient Egypt meriting *geulah*. One of the reasons is that they did not change their language. They did not speak the language of the Egyptians. Surely they did not speak Yiddish! They spoke *Loshon Kodesh*, Hebrew.

In spite of this Midrash, the modern Jew finds himself speaking the language of the country in which he resides. Jews in the United States speak English; Jews in France speak French; and, Jews in the Arab countries speak Arabic. Admittedly this is not the ideal situation and I full concur with Rabbi Susholtz that there should be an international language in which Jews can communicate.

What about *Loshon Kodesh*? Its name itself implies *kedusha*! It is the language of the Torah. It is the language of the *Mishna*. It is the language of the *Shulchan Aruch*. It is the language of myriad works on *mussar*. It is the language of countless responsa on *halacha*. What more can one ask of a



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LETTERS CONTINUED

language for Jews? It has the added plus of including *both* Ashkenazim and Sepharadim, not just Ashkenazim as Yiddish would.

How many frum Jews would be helped in their learning given a strong background in *Loshon Kodesh*? The advantages of *Loshon Kodesh* over Yiddish surely outweigh whatever sentimentality Jews have for Yiddish.

SHOLOM J. PARNES
Jerusalem, Israel

Speaking Yiddish: Impure and Impractical

To the Editor:

Rabbi Shimon Susholtz (June issue) could have advocated the retention of Yiddish for purely emotional reasons. He would then have gone without rebuttal. However, he presents three reasons, which in fact, rebut his own thesis.

He states that Yiddish links the Jews of the world. Wrong! English is a far more universal language.

Rabbi Susholtz writes that Yiddish links us to past generations. What *sefer* did he study in yeshiva which was written in Yiddish? What was the written language for all the *Gedolim* throughout the generations? — It's obviously Hebrew, not Yiddish. Hebrew links us from the Torah given on Sinai to present day *seforim*.

His last reason is that Yiddish links the individual *neshama* with *Klal Yisroel*. This is a reason which is historically falacious. The spoken language of the Jews was the language of the power which governed them. In Babylonia it was Aramaic. With the rise of Mohammed, it was Arabic. For Rashi, it was French. And German was the language of the Holy Roman Empire. Why doesn't Rabbi Susholtz

argue that Aramaic or Arabic or French links the *neshama*?

Thus, every reason stated by Rabbi Susholtz to support the use

of Yiddish, is, on the contrary, a reason for disuse of that language.

Three additional arguments may be made against the use of Yiddish.

CAN YOU READ THIS? to the end? . . .

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Yiddish: One of the Few Remaining Vestiges of the Glory of Pre-Churban Europe

Why should Jews speak Yiddish, which is a hybrid language, made up of the languages of the most rabid anti-Semites: Germans, Poles, and Russians?

Why should a yeshiva *bachur* already burdened with the study of secular subjects waste more time from Torah learning by having to know another language?

And wouldn't it be more productive for a yeshiva *bachur* to concentrate on a better knowledge of Hebrew in order to understand *Tanach*?

Let us all recognize that the historical era of Yiddish died with the Holocaust.

RABBI ARON PESSIN
Staten Island, New York

Rabbi Susholtz replies:

Mr. Parnes and Rabbi Pessin share one main theme: Why not *loshen kodesh*? The topic is complex and should not be permitted to distract from the merits of Yiddish. For that reason, I *did* state clearly at the outset of my article that I did not intend to go into that question, and that my stress on Yiddish was based on practical considerations. I will, therefore, limit myself to comments on individual points raised by the writers.

First, Mr. Parnes:

1) Hebrew, while it is the language of the Torah, can also be understood as having a "much broader cultural connotation"; e.g. Achad Haam, Hashomer Hatzair, Uri Avneri and his *Haolam Hazeih*. . . Which only goes to prove that this line of argument is worthless.

2) In my Yeshiva experience (and, I am sure, in that of others as well) command of spoken Hebrew in High School had no visible affect on the caliber of one's Talmudic study.

Now, to some of Rabbi Pessin's points:

1) I do not have access to clear statistical data (if, indeed, there exists such. . .). However, I have lived in Belgium, France and Switzerland before coming to the United States. And nowadays, I have occasion to meet newcomers from Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Rumania, and so on. In all these circumstances many of these Jews do not understand a word of English; yet, I have been able to converse with most of them — in Yiddish.

2) To rely on *seforim* for a generational link is to miss the true meaning of *Torah sheb'al peh*, the oral tradition, whose very basis and life-flow is the face-to-face, mouth-to-ear, *rav-talmid* relationship. The live encounter with generations past — with the geographic and spiritual terrain of pre World War II Europe — that a Yiddish discussion or *shiur*

offers cannot be duplicated in any other language. Bear in mind, if you will, that Torah has been taught and studied in Yiddish for close to one thousand years!

3) Why should Jews speak English — or French, or Arabic, or Spanish, or Turkish . . . which is the language of the most rabid anti-Semites? Yiddish, at least, has the redeeming grace of being a hybrid . . . therefore *our own*.

For the sake of brevity, I refrained from quoting the sources referred to in the article, hoping that anyone with a more than general interest in the subject would look them up for himself. In the responsum cited, the *Chasam Sofer* writes: "I maintain that our forefathers, too, were proficient in the Gentile languages, but intentionally corrupted them because of the eighteen *gezeros* (prohibitions) mentioned in *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Shabbos* Chapter I) . . . (one being a prohibition) on their (the Gentiles') languages. . ."

4) Nowhere in the article do I advocate that a Yeshiva-*bachur*, or anyone else, spend time to learn Yiddish.

5) "Let us all recognize that the historical era of Yiddish died with the Holocaust." I must say that Rabbi Pessin has succeeded in stating the case for Yiddish more forcefully in one sentence than I have done in a whole article. For we all know, if we but not willfully blind ourselves, that the bit contact we have with true Yiddishkeit is but due to those few individuals and institutions that by the grace of God, did *not* die in the Churban: If Yiddish, by virtue of being a part of that vestige of our pre-Churban glory, can preserve for us even one *ma-shehu*, one iota, of that magnificent world, then we had best make every effort to keep it alive.

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Agudath Israel Brings Torah Advancement To Argentina



(Left) Part of the overflow crowd at the Third Latin American Conference of Agudath Israel in Buenos Aires. (Right) Among the dignitaries that graced the dais (from left to right): Rabbi Joseph Oppenheimer, a leading rabbi in Buenos Aires; Rabbi Shmuel Aryeh Levin, Rosh Hakolel; Avrohom Hirsch, Secretary General of the



World Agudah, Jerusalem; Rabbi Zelig Prevalsky, chairman of the Latin American Agudath Israel; Rabbi Yirmiyahu Cohen, Rabbi of the Agudath Israel Community of Buenos Aires; Joshua Raciak, an official representative of the Buenos Aires Jewish Community; and Rabbi Moshe Sherer, executive president, Agudath Israel of America.

An encouraging account of a sudden upswing in the levels of Torah education in Buenos Aires was rendered by Rabbi Moshe Sherer, executive president of Agudath Israel of America, in a report to the organization's national administrative council, upon his return from a religious mission in South America. The Agudath Israel leader stated that since his previous visit to that region six years ago, a new generation of Torah-loyal Argentine-born youth has developed, in large measure due to the full-day Yeshiva and Kollel (graduate school) established in Buenos Aires six years ago by the local Agudath Israel organization. They have "carved out a mini Boro Park" in Buenos Aires, he declared.

Rabbi Sherer reported that the new swing towards Yeshiva education can also be attributed to the current political climate in Argentina. "Argentina has become the most fertile breeding ground for genuine Torah education in the entire world, because Jewish parents there clearly witness how secular 'Jewish education' has not been able to stem the drift of sizable numbers of their students towards extreme leftist groups and outright assimilation," Rabbi Sherer stated. "When some Jewish parents see their own children identifying with left-wing terrorists, and the central morgue in Buenos Aires contains the bodies of young Jews slain by the Argentine army during the daily battles with Communist guerrillas, these brutal facts have opened their eyes to the bankruptcy of secular education," he asserted. The Orthodox leader charged the World Zionist Organization with "committing a grievous and unpardonable offense" in including among the 85 "shlichim" (emissaries) from Israel currently in Argentina, members of the leftist Shomer Hatzair "who poison the

minds of Jewish youngsters."

Rabbi Sherer also charged that the "South American Program" started in that hemisphere by the World Zionist Organization with a three and a half million dollar appropriation over three years, is "misdirected because the bulk of these funds are spent for Jewish education programs not based on traditional observance." "A Torahless Jewish educational effort is an exercise in futility, because it simply cannot fire the soul of the Jew with the desire to continue living Jewishly in a hostile society, which is the avowed purpose of the 'South American Program,'" Rabbi Sherer stated.

During his visit, Rabbi Sherer addressed the 25th Anniversary Dinner of the Torah institutions, sponsored by Agudath Israel of Argentina, which embrace a Bais Yaakov School and Bais Yaakov Teachers Seminary for Girls, an elementary and secondary school for boys, and a post-high school Yeshiva Gedola and Kollel, of which the Rosh Yeshiva is Rabbi Shmuel Aryeh Levin, a dynamic Torah scholar who returned to his native country after studying 17 years in Israel's Ponovezh Yeshiva. Among the students are 30 young men who study Torah all day and into the late hours of the night. The Argentine Agudah, under the dedicated leadership of its president Dr. Rafael Kugielsky, also sponsors evening study groups throughout Buenos Aires and its suburbs and two daily Daf Yomi Talmud study courses.

Rabbi Sherer particularly lauded the accomplishment of the Agudath Israel organization in Argentina to reduce the cost of kosher meat by 18% and of chickens by 25%, thus helping introduce kosher food into

peripheral homes which had been discouraged by the high price of kosher meat. In order to create this sharp reduction in prices, Agudath Israel, three months ago, embarked upon a bold project of establishing its own *shechita* (kosher slaughtering system) in Buenos Aires, which has created a revolution in the kosher meat industry by radically reducing meat prices. The Argentine Agudah also sponsors summer camps for boys and girls, and has created a special office, headed by Rabbi Yirmiya Menachem Cohen, to open new Yeshivos and organize Orthodox Jews in Latin American countries. Rabbi Cohen, a distinguished young Jerusalem-born rabbi, also serves as the rabbi of the Agudath Israel in Buenos Aires and supervises the new non-profit kosher meat venture.

As the guest of the third Latin American Conference of Agudath Israel, Rabbi Sherer spoke to thousands of Jews in a series of mass meetings and public functions. American Ambassador Robert Hill tendered a reception for him, attended by key Jewish leaders from the community, and he was also received by the local Jewish Kehilla (AMIA). In all these gatherings, the American Agudath Israel leader emphasized that the Agudath Israel organization of Argentina is literally saving the lives of Jewish youth by constantly offering new opportunities for intensive Torah education.

The national administration of Agudath Israel of America, after hearing Rabbi Sherer's report, decided to forward to the 54th National Convention of the movement, which will be held in Atlantic City over the weekend of November 25-28, his recommendation to establish a new division: "Commission for Latin American Jewry" to formally structure the Pan American Torah activities of the Agudath Israel movement.

Agudath Israel Alerts Kosher Consumers on New Protection Bills

While praising the series of new consumer protection laws to help observers of kashruth, the Commission on Legislation of Agudath Israel of America warned consumers not to abandon the traditional personal vigilance required for ascertaining whether or not a product is kosher. Dr. Bernard Fryshman, Chairman of the Commission, cited as an example a new New York State law promoted by Assemblyman Howard Lasher, which requires food manufacturers to state in the ingredients-listing on the label whether a shortening derivative is pure vegetable or animal. Dr. Fryshman stated: "This law, despite its merits, might lead some consumers into the relaxed belief that the shortening clarification is a satisfactory indicator of a product being kosher, while in reality it is possible that it is not kosher for other reasons."

The Agudath Israel leader stressed that a listing of ingredients on the label is in no way sufficient to determine the genuine kashruth of a product. Says Dr. Fryshman: "Consumer protection laws, which have forced food manufacturers to list ingredients, may be helpful to those shoppers who possess an intimate knowledge of food derivatives, but can be extremely misleading to the average housewife consumer who is not an expert on technical terminology, nor is aware of how the product was prepared."

The Agudath Israel statement cautioned Jewish consumers to continue to search for testimony of responsible rabbinic supervision as the only true indicator of the kashruth of a product.

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Agudath Israel Elections in Eretz Yisroel

The Agudath Israel Organization in Israel held elections on July 20 for the national executive and local committees throughout the land. Polling booths were open in 24 towns to allow the 19,000 registered members of Agudath Israel to cast their votes for the list of their choice. Just over 14,000 men did vote.

Results for the national election showed that the Siya Hamerkazit led by Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Alter had taken first place with 27.75% Second place went to the Shlomei Emunim list headed by Rabbi Menachem Porush with 24.88%.

The two other main lists were Gush L'ziyus V'hagshama led by Rabbi S. Lorincz with 21.36% and the Siya Hameuchedes led by Rabbi Efrayim Fishel Klein and Rabbi Shlomo Yaakov Gross which obtained 12.5-5%.

The first election held by the Agudath Israel in the Holy Land for over a quarter of a century, it attracted the interest of the whole country. The Torah leadership issued a call for unity to the various factions within the Movement, with the expectation that the newly organized forces of Agudath Israel will undertake new assignments with renewed vigor.

A national convention of Agudath Israel is planned for shortly after Succos.

JEP's Reach-Out Programs Involve 3,000 Children

In a year end report of its activities, the Jewish Education Program (JEP) of Zeirei Agudath Israel of America, announced that its reach-out programs in the past '75-'76 school year involved 3,000 children.

During the past school season, the year-end report noted, JEP sponsored release-hour programs in 17 public schools throughout the city with 250 children participating each week. In addition the Jewish Education Program (JEP) sponsored 14 Shabbatons for 404 Talmud Torah students this past season. Subsequent visits by JEP activists have involved more than 750 Talmud Torah students.

In its special program for Day School children in an effort to enroll them in yeshivos, JEP sponsored 13 Shabbatons for 217 Day School children. Subsequent visits by volunteers of JEP reached over 2,000 children in this past school season. This year, Jewish Education Program also added 150 public high school students to its list of youth who participated in various programs.

Project COPE Graduates Seminary Girls As Medical Assistants

Twenty-five girls from seminaries throughout the city graduated this month as medical assistants as part of the Vocational Education program of Project COPE (acronym for Career Opportunities and Preparation for Employment), the career guidance and training agency of Agudath Israel of America. The graduates received financial scholarships to attend a specially arranged course at the prestigious Mandl School for Medical Assistants.

Agudath Israel Hails Textbook Aid To Yeshiva Students

An amendment to the new New York State Lottery law which includes non-public school children as beneficiaries of lottery funds was hailed by the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America "as a constructive measure by the state on behalf of education." The new lottery law, recently signed by Governor Hugh Carey, allocates an additional \$5 per child in kindergarten through twelfth grades over the \$10 currently earmarked under the Textbook Law.

Dr. Bernard Fryshman, chairman of Agudath Israel's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action, which played an important role in drafting the amendment to include children of the non-public schools, applauded the measure "as an exemplary piece of legislation which gives well-deserved recognition to the needs of the non-public school child in his quest for a quality education."

The Agudath Israel leader expressed the hope that the New York bill will serve as an example for other states to give consideration to non-public school children in their lotteries. Dr. Fryshman added: "It is only fair that any state fund to which all citizens contribute should share its wealth with all sections of education."

Agudath Israel's 54th Convention: November 25-28

The 54th national convention of Agudath Israel of America will take place in Atlantic City over the weekend of November 25th-28th, it was announced by a spokesman of the national Orthodox Jewish organization. The theme of this year's convention will be "The Challenges of Freedom: The Lessons of 200 Years." Major sessions will be devoted to an historic evaluation of how Jews fared under our unique system of government and what moral and ethical lessons can be drawn from that experience for the future.

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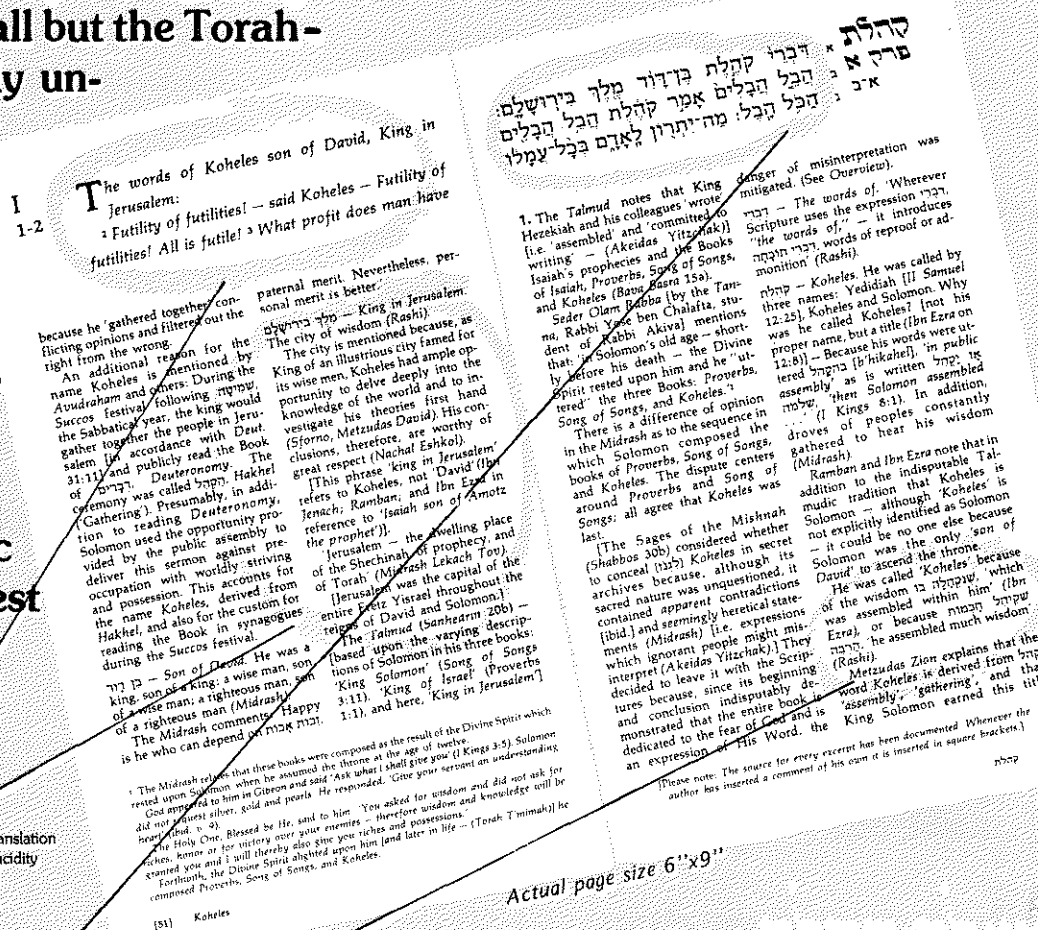
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