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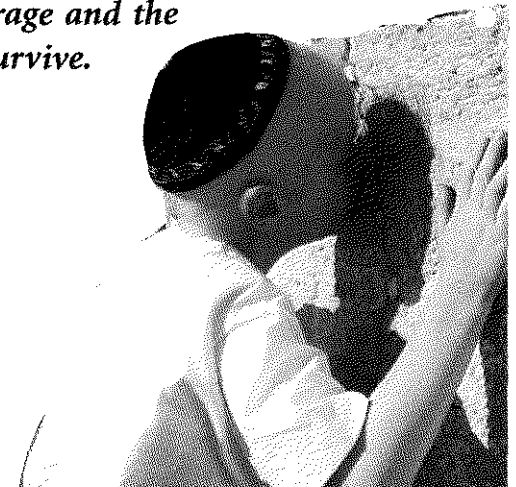
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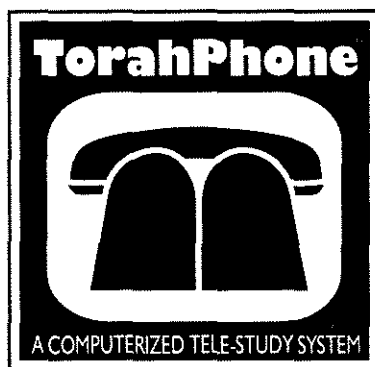
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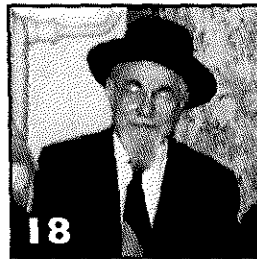
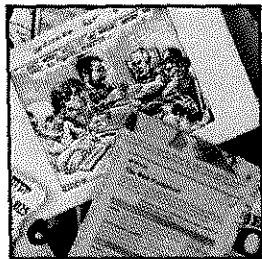
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BACK FROM THE BRINK

ISRAELI ELECTIONS 1996

THWARTED PLOTS

Czar Nikolai I once asked Reb Itzele of Volozhin to explain the two verses constituting Psalm 117: "Proclaim *Hashem's* praises all nations; sing His praises all peoples. For His kindness has overcome us. . . !" If *Hashem's* kindness has preserved Israel from all her enemies, the Czar noted, it is she who should sing *Hashem's* praises, not her vanquished enemies. Reb Itzele answered that only the nations of the world know the full measure of *Hashem's* chessed, for only they know how many evil plots they hatched against the Jews that never came to fruition. Thus only they will be able to praise *Hashem* for all His chessed to the Jewish people.

We will not have to wait until the end of days, however, to learn what one group of adversaries had in store for us. As exit polls projected Shimon Peres as the winner in the vote for Israel's prime minister on election night, left-wing politicians fell over one another in their

eagerness to share their plans for the religious community. "Now we'll take care of the *chareidim*," proclaimed Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, who had already ordered a freeze on all *chareidi* housing projects (before the elections).¹ Environment Minister Yossi Sarid of Meretz took the opportunity to mock the religious community, telling a reporter, "There is a G-d."

Fortunately, the election night drama had a second act. Those who went to bed at midnight in despair over the Left's victory awoke early the next morning to find that the Right and religious parties had won.² Those who had been celebrating the night before were left to

gnash their teeth and point accusing fingers at one another. This pattern of our enemies being lifted up prior to their downfall is a recurring one in Jewish history, as when *Hashem* raised Haman to the pinnacle of worldly power and dominion over the entire Jewish people only to hang him from a gallows of his own making. Similarly, the left-wing politicians were allowed to taste victory and express their scorn for everything religious as a prelude to being cast into the depths of despair.³

For the next four years, the Left can plot as they will about drafting yeshiva *bachurim*, cutting off the financial spigot to religious schools and institutions, and passing a constitution enshrining freedom from religion as its highest value, but with the religious parties holding 23

¹ It is one of the remarkable aspects of the Israeli political system that government ministers could broadcast with such relish their intention of punishing those who had voted against them, without even paying lip service to the concept of serving all the citizens of the state. In the week prior to the election, a number of Chassidic *rebbe's* were subjected to crude and explicit threats of loss of funding for their institutions in the event of a Peres victory if they did not order their followers to abstain in the race for prime minister.

² Many of us in that category saw in the swift turnaround in the returns an aspect of Divine rebuke. Only a few weeks earlier those same exit polls had been wildly off in predicting the final results of the Likud primaries, and yet here we were once again conferring on them oracular status.

³ American Jews cannot possibly appreciate the significance of the dramatic turnaround from the early projections to the final results. When they turned on the 11:00 p.m. news before going to sleep, Binyamin Netanyahu's victory was already assured. For Jews living in Israel, however, the manner in which the gloom of Wednesday night gave way to the following morning's reprieve will not soon be forgotten. Nor were the erroneous early projections of only emotional significance: Had they not felt sure of victory, left-wing politicians would never have expressed themselves so openly. Thus we witnessed an instance of apparent Heavenly favor being shown to evildoers, as a means of heightening their ultimate downfall. (See Pachad Yitzchak, Purim 9.)

Yonason Rosenblum, who lives in Jerusalem, is a regular contributor to JO, most recently with "Sunday, Tragic Sunday" (April '96). He is the author and translator of many works, including most recently *They Called Him Mike*, published by ArtScroll.

out of 120 seats in the Knesset (including the four MK's from United Torah Judaism—the combined Agudath Israel -Degel HaTorah party) with 7 additional *shomer Shabbos* MKs, there is scant chance of any of these initiatives becoming government policy.

To be sure, the Right is not without its haters of Judaism, but Binyamin Netanyahu knows, as many commentators noted, that he owes his narrow victory primarily to two centenarian rabbis,⁴ and as a politician eager to stay in office for a long time, will not soon forget it.

A FATEFUL ELECTION

There can be little doubt that this was the most fateful election in Israel's history. Nothing so underscored the importance of what was at stake as widespread new reports that Rabbi Elazar Shach fasted until the results were confirmed.

Though most attention was focused on the implications of the election results for the "peace" process, that was at best a detail, albeit an important one, in the larger issue confronting the Jews of Israel. As far as the peace process *per se* goes, Binyamin Netanyahu will be operating within constraints that make it impossible to reverse what has been done so far, even if he were so inclined. Nothing in his campaign or post-election pronouncements suggest he is.

The real issue of these elections was whether the idea of the Jewish people, either as traditionally understood as *Am HaTorah* (the nation formed by receipt of the Torah at Sinai) or in its attenuated and distorted secular Zionist form, is one to which the majority of Jews in Israel still feel any allegiance.

For the past decade at least, much of the Israeli intelligentsia, the prestige media, the entire Meretz party, and significant segments of the Labor party

⁴A reference to the Ponevezh Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Elazar Man Shach, who ruled just prior to the elections that the yeshiva world should vote for Netanyahu, and to Rabbi Yitzchak Kadouri, the revered Sephardi kabbalist, whose blessing to Netanyahu — "Binyamin ben Tzila, tomorrow you will be prime minister" — was widely reported in the media on election day.

have fallen under the sway of what has come to be known as "post-Zionism."⁵ For post-Zionists, the burden of Jewish peoplehood and history has simply become one they no longer wish to bear. The atavistic identification of ourselves as Jews, claim the post-Zionists, prevents *normaliut* (normalization), defined as the pursuit of private pleasures and economic gain. Instead of pursuing the goal

The Right is not without its haters of Judaism, but Binyamin Netanyahu knows, as many commentators noted, that he owes his narrow victory primarily to two centenarian rabbis, and as a politician eager to stay in office for a long time, will not soon forget it.

of "Let us be a nation like all others," the objective of post-Zionism is simply to cease to exist as a nation.

It is post-Zionism that to a large extent fueled the Oslo process. Shimon Peres, chief architect of that process, announced in his recent book, *The New Middle East*, the dawn of a new age, in which personal identity is no longer based on national identity, "one in which particularistic nationalism is fading

⁵The discussion of post-Zionism (and supporting quotations) that follows is largely drawn from two incisive and eye-opening articles by Yoram Chazon: "The Zionist Idea and Its Enemies," *Commentary*, May 1996; "The End of Zionism and the Last Israeli," *The Weekly Standard*, Oct. 9 1995.

and the idea of a 'citizen of the world' is taking hold." And Gidon Samet of *Ha'aretz*, one of Israel's leading columnists, celebrated the peace process primarily for destroying the cement of national identity based on the Arab threat to Israel's existence. The loss of Jewish national identity will, he rejoiced, open the doors to world culture of which "Madonna and Big Macs are only the most peripheral examples."

Composer Arik Shapira, winner of the Israel Prize, described his composition "On Your Ruins, Ofra," as a paean to the anticipated destruction of the West Bank settlement of Ofra and the deportation of its inhabitants. What so incited Shapira's abhorrence for the settlers was their persistence in breathing life into "Zionist values whose historical role ha[s] come to an end."

To some extent, of course, post-Zionism is merely an expression of war weariness. Yitzchak Rabin's awareness of a decreasing national resolve led him to go along with an Oslo process about which he harbored grave misgivings. As Edmund Norden observed recently:

Generations come and go. A people becomes less enthusiastic about fighting and less good at it. The IDF is an army of draftees and reservists, sons and fathers, and, if once it was considered shameful to not be drafted, today a "Profile 21" — a psychiatric exemption — doesn't mean that you won't find . . . employment or be admitted to university. You can let your hair grow and do hashish and get on with your life unhassled by sergeants, especially if you're a bare-headed Ashkenazi kid like Rabin was once. In coming to his decision he must have factored in this change, as well as the fact that more and more twenty-, thirty- and forty-something reservists were dodging . . . callups, especially for Gaza. . . . Nor were these only left-wing bleeding hearts who regretfully couldn't make it. What had to concern Rabin-the-eternal-soldier was that even Likud types were coming down with back problems.⁶

Such weariness of the spirit easily gives way to ideologies that reject all loyalties beyond oneself.

⁶*New Republic*, March 18, 1996.

POST-ZIONISM IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD

Nowhere has post-Zionism been more intensely felt than in the Israeli educational system. The first Education Minister under the departing Labor government was Shulamit Aloni, of Meretz, the country's most outspoken hater of all things religious. Among the slew of outrageous statements that eventually cost her the post was her criticism of Holocaust studies and trips to Auschwitz for stirring up "nationalist" sentiment and her

Much of the Israeli intelligentsia, the prestige media, the entire Meretz party, and significant segments of the Labor party have fallen under the sway of what has come to be known as "post-Zionism." For post-Zionists, the burden of Jewish peoplehood and history has simply become one they no longer wish to bear.

insistence that all mention of G-d be excised from memorial services for fallen soldiers.⁷

Her successor and fellow Meretz leader, Amnon Rubenstein, proved to be only a kinder and gentler Aloni. He ordered the educational curriculum revised to eliminate the "archaic" interest in "Jewish values and culture," "love of homeland," and "loyalty to the Jewish people," to be replaced by a stress on "the language, culture, and unique heritage of the various population groups in the country."

The Ministry of Religious Affairs' guidelines for the disbursement of funds are fully consistent with these goals. Those guidelines give preference to groups promoting dialogue between

⁷Aloni's appointment as Education Minister was enough by itself to cause the Torah leadership to reject any efforts to lure United Torah Judaism into the government. The wisdom of that decision has been abundantly clear in hindsight.

Jewish and Moslem youth, organizations promoting pilgrimages to Mecca, and "secular" groups using multi-media to promote Judaism.

Meanwhile, Micha Goldman, Deputy Minister of Education, proposed that the national anthem, "*Hatikva*," be amended to remove any references to the Jewish people. The attack on "*Hatikva*" from the Left is surely one of history's nice little ironies. The author of "*Hatikva*" was a rabid hater of Judaism, who once placed *tefillin* on a dog and sent him out into the streets of Jerusalem.

Appointed head of the Education Ministry's committee on curriculum reform was Moshe Zimmerman, who has in the past compared Orthodox youth to the Hitler youth, *Chumash* to *Mein Kampf* ל"ג, and the IDF to the SS. Meanwhile the Education Ministry went about implementing the recommendations of the Shenhar Commission, appointed in 1991 by the National Religious Party's Zevulun Hammer, when he was Education Minister. Among those recommendations were that religious pluralism be taught in the general school system — as if a surfeit of traditional Jewish knowledge was a problem for secular students — and that the universalistic-humanistic aspects of Judaism be emphasized over the unique, particularistic ones.⁸

⁸If these recommendations ring a bell, they should. They could have been lifted straight from the platform of the German Reform Conferences of the 1840s.

The results of this education system have been sadly predictable. Only 17% of secular youth, according to a study by Dr. Yair Auron of the Kibbutz Movement Teachers' College, consider being Jewish to be very important in their lives. If born abroad, 42% would prefer to be born non-Jewish and only 21% would want very much to be born Jewish. In one secular high school, only one out of forty students could define *Kiddush*, had ever seen a *sefer Torah*, or could find *Shema* in a *siddur*.⁹

A REFERENDUM ON JEWISH IDENTITY

There is substantial evidence that the May 29 elections were in large part a referendum on the issues of Jewish identity raised so acutely by the infiltration of post-Zionism from academia into the thinking of Israel's largest political party. Labor's coalition partner, Meretz, explicitly framed the issue as a vote for or against religion. In one Meretz ad that made President Bush's 1988 Willie Horton spots models of subtlety by comparison, Meretz showed the huge crowds at the *levaya* of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, זצ"ל, with the caption, "This growth must be stopped." Had they been aired anywhere besides Israel, this ad would have been denounced as the rankest anti-Semitism. (Imagine that a major American party pictured members of an identifiable ethnic group, and promised to stop them.)

In another Meretz campaign ad, a teenager calls up his girlfriend and invites her to meet him at the movies on Friday night. She, however, can't go because there are no public buses on *Shabbos*. Vote for Meretz, the viewer is told, and there will be buses on *Shabbos*.

It would appear from election results that the voters understood the implications of the Labor-Meretz post-Zionism, and they were not buying. Religious parties will hold nearly one-fifth of the seats in the next Knesset, higher than the percentage of *shomrei mitzvos* in the general population. Both the NRP

⁹For these statistics and the description of the Shenhar Commission findings, I am indebted to Rabbi Bernard Rosensweig's "The Crisis in the Jewish Character of the Jewish State," *Jewish Action*, Spring 1996.

(National Religious Party) and Shas (the Sephardi Torah Guardians party) received much of their support from non-religious voters. The *pareve* NRP slogan, "Zionism with a *neschama*," was expressly designed to lure non-religious voters. (In fact, a group demonstrated for NRP carrying signs: "*Chiloniim b'ad Mafdal* — Secularists for the NRP.") One NRP spokesman explained the party's significant gains from the 1992 elections in large part as a reaction against Meretz. He attributed at least two of the party's 10 seats to non-religious voters offended by the Meretz campaign. (Meretz itself dropped from 12 to 9 seats.)

Other polls indicate that as many as 70% of the Shas voters describe themselves as "traditional" rather than "religious." Part of the Shas success is attributed to the distribution of hundreds of thousands of *kemayos* (amulets) bearing the likeness of the 106-year-old Kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Kadouri and an intense door-to-door campaign by party activists.

What these "traditional" voters have constantly heard over the last four years is that Judaism is an empty and outdated fossil. And they understood that if that is true, then Jewish history is the record of untold suffering on behalf of an untenable myth. But if history of the Jewish people is but a three thousand year farce, then wherein lies the greatness of the Jewish people, at once the perpetrators and dupes of that farce? And further: why do we need a Jewish state in order to preserve that national identity?

Put that way, a significant majority of Israel's Jewish citizens were not prepared to turn their back on all of Jewish history or to say that a Jewish national homeland is an outdated idea in an era of transnational identity. Many Israelis who drive on *Shabbos* nevertheless do not feel that the most important issue facing the public is that the State publicly proclaim *Shabbos* no longer binding, as Meretz wishes.

No doubt many Israelis voted for Binyamin Netanyahu primarily on the basis of security concerns. But those

concerns by themselves cannot explain the upsurge in support for the religious parties rather than the Likud. (The combined seats of the non-religious Right — Likud, Tzomet, and Moledet — actually declined substantially from the previous Knesset.) In their election post-mortems, winners and losers agreed on the fact that the Left had erred in its estimation of the Israeli public's indifference to religion. According to Stanley Ringle, a spokesman for Labor:

"The message [the voters] are sending is that the issues of religion in society and education have to be recognized as a central concern. We don't understand them, and they are a far more important element in defining life than we thought."

THE NEW YORK TIMES, MAY 31, '96

Nor were the issues of security and Jewish identity unrelated. Had the voters been more convinced of the Left's concern for Jews in particular, they might have given them more of the benefit of the doubt on security issues. But after the recognition in the Oslo agree-

ments of the "mutual legitimate . . . rights" of Palestinians and Jews to the land of Israel, after three years of Foreign Ministry efforts to raise money for the Palestinian Authority, after the call of Peres's protege Yossi Beilin for Diaspora Jews to redirect their giving from Israel to the PLO, those wellsprings of trust were not there.

Shimon Peres's portrayal of a new age of waning national identity was seen by the electorate as benighted utopianism. In their televised debate, Netanyahu effectively parodied Peres's vision of a "new Middle East" in which Israel would be a member of the Arab League, asking Peres for the precise location of this new Middle East. A people concerned about their safety are unlikely to turn over their defense to a utopian dreamer, especially when his utopia is based on the end of all distinctions between his own people and their historical enemies. The electorate recognized what Peres did not: Israel continues to inhabit a very bad neighborhood.

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While the incoming government will definitely be more favorably inclined to both Judaism and the religious population than the outgoing one, the elections provide no cause for euphoria. For one thing, the new government, which is already viewed with grave misgivings around the world, will be careful not to increase the international skepticism with any major about-faces in policy.

The significance of the Arab vote is another cause of long-range concern. Despite Netanyahu's 11% advantage among Jewish voters, his margin of victory was razor thin. Given the far higher Arab birthrate, the day when the crucial issues governing the fate of the Jewish people will be decided by Israel's Arab minority may not be far off.¹⁰

In a remarkably candid interview right after the election, Chaim Ramon, head of the Labor election campaign, admitted that the party had known all along that the majority of the public does not support the Oslo process. His strategy was predicated on distracting attention from that issue to secure Peres's election and, with it, the continuation of the process.

That the Arab voters, whose identification with the Jewish state is increasingly tenuous (for that reason Israeli Arabs have never been drafted into the IDF) might be the means of executing a policy against the wishes of a substantial majority of the Jewish population was not at all problematic in Ramon's view. On election night, he was not embarrassed to boast of the Arab support as the decisive factor in the apparent Labor victory.

Shlomo Avineri, a leading political theorist and former director general of Foreign Ministry, labelled as racist anyone who pointed out that the fate of the Jewish state could well be decided by Arab voters. He charged those who had raised the point with having delegitimized the Rabin government and of

¹⁰ The Arab vote went almost unanimously to Shimon Peres. About a quarter of the Druse voted for Netanyahu.

A significant majority of Israel's Jewish citizens were not prepared to turn their back on all of Jewish history or to say that a Jewish national homeland is an outdated idea in an era of transnational identity.

thereby causing Rabin's assassination.¹¹

In the waning days of the campaign, Labor charged hysterically that the slogan "Netanyahu. Good for the Jews" was bordering on incitement to assassinate Peres. That such a claim could be taken seriously is a good measure of the distance travelled from the original Zionist ideal of a homeland for Jews in which they can control their own fate.¹²

The new election law in Israel under which each voter casts two ballots — one for Prime Minister and the other for a party — presented a new halachic question. In the past the majority of *gedolei Yisroel* have always supported voting in Israeli elections, but that was always in the context of voting for religious parties. This year for the first time religious voters were presented with the opportunity to vote for candidates for prime minister, neither of whom are *shomer Torah u'mitzvos*. To vote for either one, then, posed the problem of appointing as our representative to

¹¹ The late Prime Minister Rabin did not share this view. Throughout his tenure, he tried to secure the entrance of another Jewish party into his coalition so that it would not be dependent on the silent partnership of Arab parties.

¹² The point here is not, of course, that we have ever controlled our own fate, as the Zionists claim, but how far we have moved from any concept of Jewish nationhood.

head a government ruling over *Eretz Yisroel* and a large percentage of the world's Jews someone with whom we cannot identify.

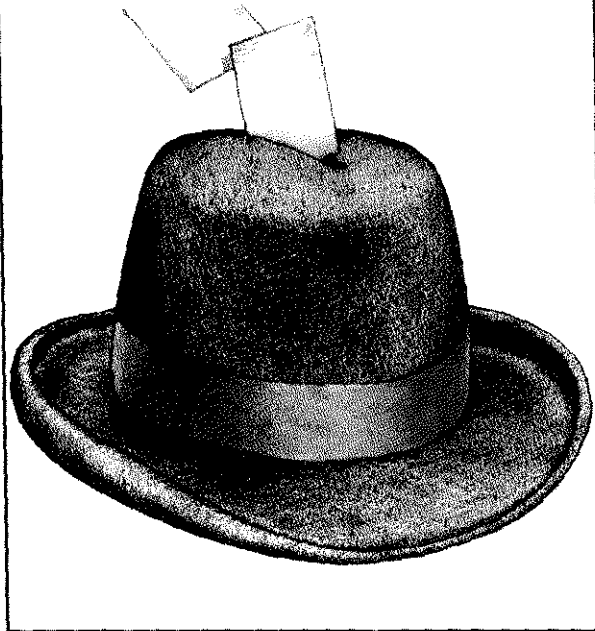
In the context of this year's elections, Rabbi Shach explicitly, and the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* of Agudath Israel by implication, ruled that the *chareidi* community should vote in the election for prime minister. But the danger nevertheless remains that we might come to identify with the candidate for whom we voted.

About this we must be clear: the thrice-married (once to a non-Jew) Netanyahu is not our savior any more than was Theodore Herzl, whom significant segments of Eastern European Jewry originally viewed in messianic terms. At the most, what we have done by voting is to save an intended victim — the children of Israel — from the clutches of those who sought to extirpate any sense of Jewish identity. Because the only means of getting rid of the pursuers was to replace them with someone else, we voted. Nothing more.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

We must not be lulled into a false sense of complacency by the election results nor tell ourselves that the minimal Jewish identity of the "amcha" Jew is forever secure, and that post-Zionist malaise will never overtake the majority of the Jewish people. Nothing could be further from the truth. The media and opinion-setters are already largely in the post-Zionist camp. If there is not a major transformation in the Jewish education of secular youth, the tide will continue in their direction. We assume at our peril that the children and grandchildren of those who rushed to grab Shas's *kemayos* will do the same.

The Education Ministry will almost certainly return to the NRP in coalition negotiations, and with it the opportunity to at last infuse children in that system with some knowledge of the heritage they are so carelessly casting off. Above all, we need religious teachers to teach these courses. Without teachers to



whom the ancient texts speak, they will not speak to the students either. Unfortunately, if past history is any guide, the portents for such an undertaking are not good. For much of Israel's recent history, the NRP has been in charge of education, and the results are not the stuff to make one optimistic.

We can only hope that, having looked into the abyss together that fateful Wednesday night in May, religious Jews of all stripes in Israel will not close their eyes to the threat facing us, nor forget our obligation to all Jewish children. Four years from now let there be no Jewish child, from Dan to Beersheba, who has never seen a *sefer Torah*, who has no knowledge of the basic affirmation of Jewish faith, "*Shema Yisroel*," who does not know that the *Yomim Tovim* are not mere agricultural holidays.

The religious parties will have unprecedented power in the next Knesset, but with that power goes responsibility and danger. The Israeli public has now thrown out one group of extremists bent on destroying the minimal *tzura* (image) of *Klal Yisroel*. But if they perceive the religious parties as trying to impose religious observance upon them by legislative fiat, they will throw them out as well. And we can be sure that our enemies will miss no opportunity to portray us in this fashion.

Already in the first days of coalition negotiations, the anti-religious press is filled with stories of the "exorbitant" demands of the religious parties. (Head-

line writers love to refer to the religious parties as "the *chareidim*" even when the accompanying articles describe the demands of NRP and Shas.) The common public perception of religious politicians, and of *chareidi* politicians in particular, is that they have no concern with anything beyond the financial interests of their own institutions.¹³

Prior to the elections, Ariel Sharon commented that the non-religious public has no knowledge

of the *anshei ruach* (great men of the spirit) who lead the *chareidi* world. In weeks of talks with them, he told Israel Radio, not one had ever said a word about money. The only issue they had ever discussed was the grave danger confronting *Klal Yisroel*. Now it is for our politicians to act in accord with Sharon's descriptions of our leaders.

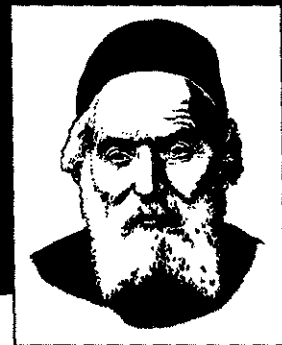
Our Knesset representatives have an obligation to insist that the needs of the *chareidi* population be given equal consideration with all other sectors of the population, which has not always been the case in the past. But our demands must be reasonable. It is ridiculous to seek, for instance, housing preferences for young religious couples over those who have served in the army, no matter how great the housing needs of the religious community. To do so, only provides ammunition to those eager to besmirch religion.

Nor must our politicians forget that the Knesset can furnish a "bully pulpit" to explain Judaism to the public. Much of the *raison d'être* for a *chareidi* party is to ensure that the wisdom of the Torah will be heard in the counsels of state. But to take full advantage of the opportunities provided, our political leaders will have to reorient themselves. In the words of Rabbi Moshe Grilack, one of

¹³ This picture was completely refuted by United Torah Judaism's refusal to join a Labor-led government, despite the considerable financial incentives to do so, but the public perception nevertheless persists.

Israel's foremost *chareidi* journalists, they must worry about the effect of their words on the general public, not just how they will be received in *Hamodia* and *Yated Ne'eman*.

The Jews of Israel have shown that the name Jew is still dear to them. There remains a thirst for more than empty hedonism, and only the Torah can slake that thirst. But before our fellow Jews will listen, we must prove our concern for them. Let us hope for our sakes and theirs that we rise to the challenge. ■



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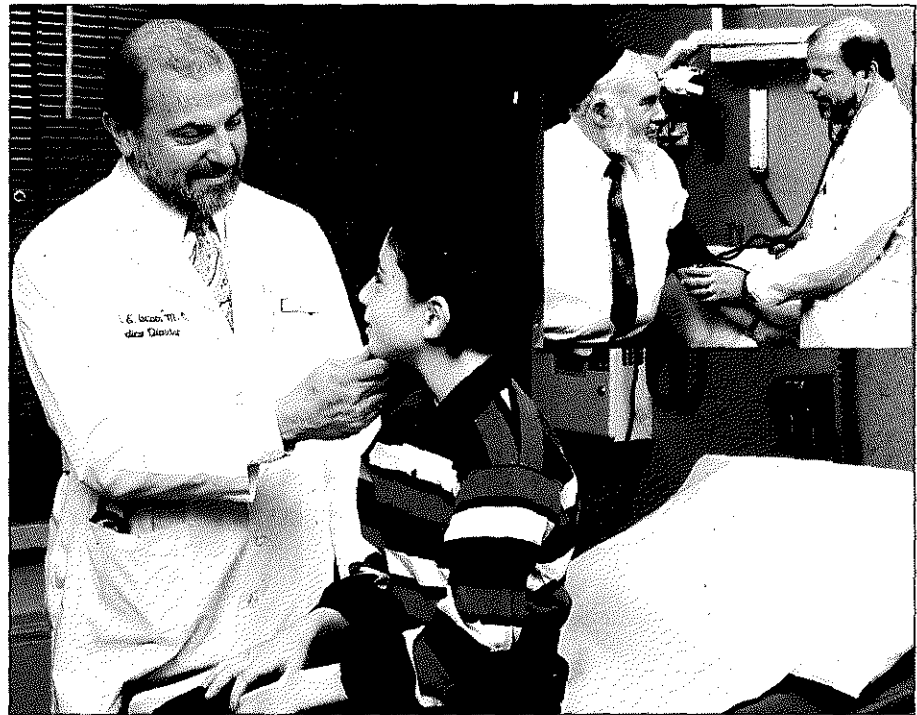
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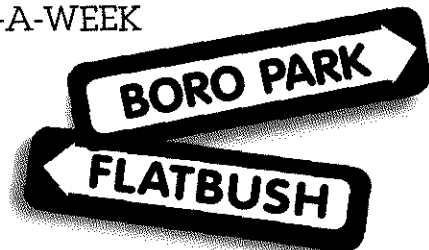
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LETHAL LIBERTIES

THE SELLING OF SUICIDE — AND WORSE

Liberty is meaningless — even destructive — unless it is responsibly utilized. This is unappreciated by much of larger society, which more easily embraces “Let My people go...” than “...so that they may serve Me.”

We observant Jews may feel we know better, of course, and hopefully we do. It is a mistake, though, to think that the implications of wider society’s mistaking of libertinism for liberty remain essentially theoretical for us. Ideas — even outlandish ones, like the radical redefinition of “marriage” being seriously considered by at least one state and actively debated in many others — have consequences. At very least, these are “environmental” ones, affecting the level of moral pollution in the societal air.

Consider the case of assisted suicide.

POSTER BOYS FOR THE “RIGHT TO DIE”

The first figure accompanying the phrase “assisted suicide” in many people’s minds is that of Michigan doctor Jack Kevorkian (a.k.a. “Dr. Death”), who has been helping total strangers kill themselves for a number of years. Colorfully described by one writer as “a kind of composite of the Lone Ranger and the Grim Reaper,” Kevorkian has thus far beaten the rap for a string of deaths he has attended, amusing himself throughout with his hobby of producing gory paintings of violent death. He has long crusaded to change laws to allow what he does (the suicide assistance, that is; the painting, unfortunately, is already legal).

Not exactly a character to inspire a sea-change of public attitude, granted; but an influence nonetheless on modern mores. There are, in any event, ample other poster boys for the move-

Rabbi Shafran, director of Public Affairs of Agudath Israel of America, is a frequent contributor to these pages.

ment to legalize “death with dignity” — a phrase worthy of a prize of some sort — like assorted medical personalities and pundits who have less flamboyantly embraced the cause.

And like George Delury, who helped his wife drink a mixture of water, honey and a fatal dose of amitriptyline hydrochloride, an anti-depressant. He had earlier addressed her silently, in his diary, with the sentiment: “You are sucking my life out of me like a vampire and nobody cares.” Though eventually convicted of attempted manslaughter and sentenced to six months in jail, Mr. Delury is seen by some as a hero of sorts, whose act was not only excusable but merciful. The widower was certainly conspicuously unrepentant at his sentencing. “I regret that my wife’s spirit has been impugned and her courage dishonored,” he stated, “because society and the government have provided no way to deal with these situations openly with due respect for individual freedom of conscience and individual dignity.”

The banner of “freedom” held high. The ethical atmosphere further fouled.

SPEAKING IN THE NAME OF THE L-RD

Even Judaism’s name has been besmirched by some champions of personal “freedom.” In 1989, a Reform rabbi, addressing a related medical ethics issue before Congress, stated that “Reform Jews have held that individuals have a direct, personal relationship with G-d in addition to their relationship via the Jewish people’s covenant.... We Reform Jews champion the right of conscientious dissent from the dictates of tradition....”

The right of dissent. The freedom-pollution thickens still, all but obscuring the light.

COURTING DISASTER

And now the issue of “assisted suicide,” along with the accompanying societal paradigm-shift-in-progress, has appeared in the federal courts as well. Two recent groundbreaking court decisions have come down on the topic should not only give us pause but take our breath

away — for they may literally do precisely that.

In March, the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco issued a ruling that established for the first time a terminally ill patient's "constitutionally recognized right to die," declaring that any law forbidding physician assistance in such patients' suicides violates a constitutionally protected "liberty interest" — much like the one presently protecting a woman's right to abortion. That ruling suggests protec-

tion not only for doctors, but for certain others acting under their direction "whose services are essential" to help the terminally ill take their lives.

The "liberty interest" approach to the issue is, to say the least, intriguing. Columnist Charles Krauthammer, for one, wonders about its implications for things like drug laws. "If the state may not impinge on your liberty to make yourself dead," he asks, "how can it impinge on your liberty to make yourself high?"

MURDER AS MEDICINE

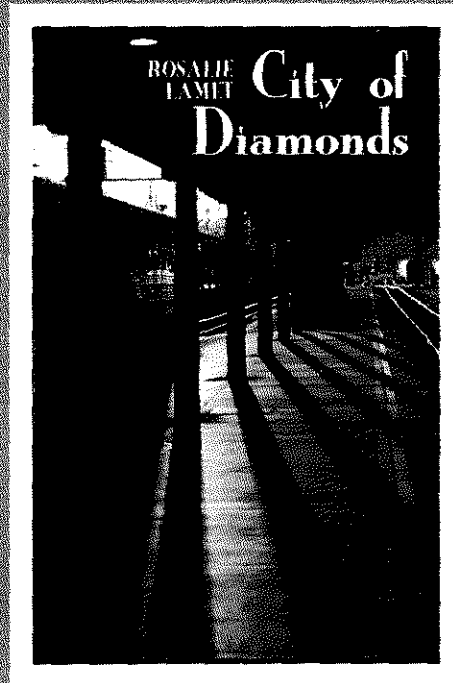
Be the *lombus* of the Ninth Circuit decision as it may, mere weeks later another was rendered, this one by the Second Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals. It ruled that a New York State prohibition against physician-assisted suicide was unconstitutional because it violates the Fourteenth Amendment's "equal protection" clause. Since New York's terminally ill patients are permitted to order the withholding or withdrawal of life-support systems — the decision's reasoning goes — the state may not simultaneously prohibit the provision of lethal doses of prescription drugs for people to use to kill themselves.

One can choose to leave aside inadequately addressed — and some might say hopelessly unaddressable — issues like how to define crucial things like "terminal illness" and "sound mind." Or why indeed "the state's interest in preserving life lessens" (as the court maintained) "as the potential for life diminishes." Or how such constitutional protection can logically be limited to the terminally ill. The most recent decision, though, is still startling.

Consider, for instance, the fact that a bill presently under consideration by New York State, if enacted, would empower third-party surrogates to authorize the withholding or withdrawal of life-support from incapacitated patients under certain medical circumstances. Should that bill pass, as my Agudath Israel colleague Chaim Dovid Zwiebel pointed out in a letter on behalf of Agudath Israel to New York legislators, the Second Circuit's logic would seem to require that those same surrogates be allowed to authorize the affirmative killing of a patient with whose welfare they have been statutorily entrusted. The image of a legally appointed surrogate choosing to end a sick person's life — even with no knowledge of what the patient himself would want to be done — should be the stuff of cold-sweat nightmares, not constitutional niceties.

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Consider that a bill presently under consideration by New York State, if enacted, would empower third-party surrogates to authorize the withholding or withdrawal of life-support from incapacitated patients under certain medical circumstances.

FROM THE NETHERLANDS TO THE NETHERWORLD

Just where a society's embrace of suicide as an acceptable option leads is all too evident in the Netherlands, where assisted suicide and euthanasia are common — and, according to at least one researcher (Herbert Hendin, professor of psychiatry at New York Medical College), usually result from the desire of others to be free of the burden of caring for the patient.

Indeed, a 1983 study there showed that more requests for euthanasia came from families than from patients. A medical journal told of a woman who no longer wished to care for her sick husband, and gave him the choice of either euthanasia or admission to a nursing home. Afraid of being left to the mercy of strangers in unfamiliar surroundings, he chose death. A doctor, fully aware of the circumstances, readily obliged. "Liberties" in Holland, it seems, have already become lethal.

DEATH FOR FUN AND PROFIT

"Freedom" of the simple-minded sort is particularly dangerous in societies like ours, where a host of social pathologies — from the nearly non-stop portrayals of death and violence in modern "entertainment" to the all-too-real carnage on

city streets — have made the idea of human life's sanctity unfashionable.

In a world where youngsters will conceivably murder for a car, a pair of shoes, or even just "for fun," or where women can decide whether to carry a baby to term, entirely on the basis of personal whim or convenience, an elderly or infirm person's final weeks on earth just don't command the *consequence* they once did — and, some of us know, should.

And we would be naive, moreover, to ignore another, even more chilling, factor in the headlong rush to "help people die with dignity." We live in times

when, *baruch Hashem*, the elderly, who tend to yield the most "terminally ill," are rapidly increasing in number. At the same time — and likewise, *baruch Hashem* — modern medicine has made great strides, providing cures for many once-fatal illnesses and maintaining life longer than ever before. Add skyrocketing insurance costs and the resultant fiscal crisis in health care, and suddenly life becomes less a holy, invaluable divine gift and more... a commodity. Every businessman knows how important it is to regularly turn over one's stock, to clear out the old and make way for the new.

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The ethical air quality has become clearly unhealthful.

LIFE BEFORE LIBERTY

Agudath Israel has taken careful note of the recent court decisions, and has filed an *amicus* brief in the Second Circuit case this June.

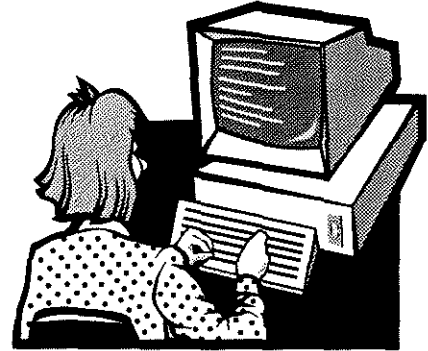
All observant Jews, though, have a responsibility, too, to make every effort to prevent the devaluation of life that seems to have blown in on the *Zeitgeist* from affecting our own, and our children's, hearts and minds.

It thus falls to us and other like-minded proponents of life's inherent sanctity to try to create moral-pollution-free zones in our own communities. To, further, make the philosophical case before the larger public that freedom without responsibility yields moral chaos. And, finally, to convince our fellow Americans that when the authors of our country's Declaration of Independence assured the fledgling nation's citizens of their right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," they may have chosen the order of their words very carefully indeed. ■

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Rabbi Teitz as a young man in Latvia.

An Appreciation of

RABBI MORDECHAI PINCHAS TEITZ, זצ"ל



First Anniversary Melave Malke of Daf Hashavua: (right to left) Ponevezer Rav, Rabbi Aaron Kotler, Rabbi Teitz and Irving Bunim זכרונם לברכה

On the fourth of Teves 5756 (Dec. 27, 1995), world Jewry suffered the loss of one of its great leaders and teachers, HaGaon HaRav Mordechai Pinchas Teitz, זצ"ל, the *Rav* of the Elizabeth, New Jersey, community. Rabbi Teitz was a unique individual, blending vast Torah scholarship with communal activism and an intense concern for the welfare of the individual. He combined the key elements of the classical European *Rav*—master of *halacha*, leader of the *Kehilla*, teacher of its children, guardian of its *Kashrus*—and applied them to the American scene with consummate effectiveness.

I. EUROPEAN YEARS

Rabbi Teitz, born on 8 Tammuz 5668 (July 10, 1908) in Subat, Latvia, to Rabbi Binyamin Avraham and Shaina Sira, was destined to become the family's twentieth-consecutive-generation rabbi. Reb Binyamin Avraham served as the rabbi of both the Chassidic and non-Chassidic communities of Subat. His ability to successfully work with and guide people of varied backgrounds and divergent interests was passed on to his son, Reb



Mordechai Pinchas.

When Rabbi Teitz was seven years old, the family moved to Livinhoff, 40km from Dvinsk, home of two *Gedolei Hador*, Rabbi Meir Simcha *Hakohein*, author of the *Ohr Same'ach* and the *Meshech Chachma*, and Rabbi Yoseif Rosen, the Rogatchover *Gaon*. His father had a close relationship with the Rogatchover who, in turn, had tremendous respect for him. When people came to the Rogatchover for his *beracha* he would often refer them to the *Rav* of Livenoff, saying, "Go to Binyamin *HaTzaddik*."

At the age of fourteen, Rabbi Teitz made his first trip to Dvinsk and developed his own relationship with both Reb Meir Simcha and the Rogatchover, with whom he established a profound bond. He eventually became a *ben bayis*, a virtual resident at the home of the Rogatchover, and learned with him for four years. Some years later, when the Rogatchover was ill, Rabbi Teitz went to visit him. The *Rebbetzin* was turning away all visitors, but when the Rogatchover heard Rabbi Teitz's voice, he called out, inviting him to enter. (During that visit, the

Rogatchover received his mail, consisting of twenty-five postcards and twelve letters with halachic inquiries. He answered all thirty seven as rapidly as he could write, without consulting any *sefer*.)

Rabbi Teitz's relationship with Reb Meir Simcha also bore precious fruit. Reb Meir Simcha had written his classic *Meshech Chachma* on *Chumash* at the age of seventeen. His father feared that if he were to publish it, he would be thought of as a *darshan*, an expert in homiletics, rather than a *lamdan*, an analytical scholar. So he instructed his son not to publish his work until he produced a *sefer* with *lomdus*. Reb Meir Simcha left the *Meshech Chochma* aside even after he published the *Ohr Some'ach*, his widely acclaimed commentary on the *Rambam's Mishneh Torah*. He confided to the young Rabbi Teitz that to his regret, he lacked the strength to edit *Meshech Chachma*. Rabbi Teitz suggested a young man in Slabodka, Rabbi Avraham David Yoffe, ז"ל, who did edit the work, now recognized as one of the great commentaries on *Chumash*.

Early Activism

As a youngster, Rabbi Teitz attended the Yeshiva in Ponevezh. While there, he was very disturbed by the inroads being made into the Orthodox world by the Bundists, Communists, secularists and others. In

Rabbi Yaakov (Mendy) Dombroff, an Elizabeth resident and founding director of Agudath Israel of New Jersey, worked for many years with Rabbi Teitz on statewide communal issues. Since 1986, he has worked for the New Jersey Attorney General where he has continued his activities on behalf of the *Klal*.

an effort to stem this growing tide, at the age of fourteen he started a yeshiva in Livinchoff, as a project of Zeirei Agudath Israel. He named this institution Yavneh, after the city of Yavneh, seat of the Sanhedrin in the days of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai. Rabbi Teitz also named subsequent organizations and *yeshivos* "Yavneh"—such as the yeshiva he founded in Elizabeth (the third day school built in the United States outside of the city of New York), and the movement he helped create to service Jewish youth on college campuses.

According to his brother, Rabbi Elchonon Teitz, *Rav* in Kew Gardens Hills, Queens, the Teitz family was very active in the Agudath Israel movement in Europe. They took great pride in their uncle, Rabbi Eliyahu Akiva Rabinovitz, *Paltaver Rav* who was founder, editor and publisher of the Agudath Israel's monthly journal, *Hapelles*, as well as its weekly *Hamodia*. He was also a leading speaker at the founding conference of Agudath Israel in Katowicz, 1912. Rabbi Teitz himself campaigned with Mordechai Dubin and Shimon Yitzchok Wittenberg, Agudath Israel representatives to the Sjem, the Polish Parliament, to help ensure full Agudah representation. In addition, he also worked with Rabbi Chaim Chodakoff who was the principal of the Torah V'Derech Eretz Gymnasium, secretary to the Lubavitcher *Rebbe*, and representative of Agudath Israel to the Riga City Council. His involvement included his going on a lecture tour around Latvia before elections, campaigning on behalf of Agudath Israel.

The public persona that he developed in his youth brought him to the attention of the Telshe¹ *Roshei Yeshiva*. In 1933, at age 25, he responded to their request, and accompanied Rabbi Elya

¹ The relationship with Telshe lasted his entire life. His only son, Rabbi Elazar Mayer, attended the Yeshiva in Cleveland. The *Rav* was a principal speaker at the ground-breaking ceremony at the Wickliffe campus, and was the keynote speaker at the Yeshiva's centennial celebration in 1976. The Telzer Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Chaim Stein, flew in from Cleveland to be present at the *Rav's* funeral and was among those who eulogized him; subsequently, the Yeshiva held its own memorial for him. Most significantly, the decision to establish the Yeshiva, after its flight from Europe, in Cleveland, was made in consultation with the *Rav* in his office in Elizabeth.

Meir Bloch to the United States to raise funds for Telshe Yeshiva. This was to be a major turning point in Rabbi Teitz's life. He had promised his father that he would return to Europe—which he did, with his bride. During his travels in America, someone suggested as a match Basya Preil, daughter of Rabbi Elazar Mayer Preil, the recently deceased rabbi

who was American born, and tell her his *derasha*. She would translate his thoughts into English, which she would then transliterate in Hebrew letters. He then spoke, appearing to be fluent in English. He would read *The New York Times* daily with a dictionary at his elbow, until he developed full command of the language.

Rabbi Teitz combined the key elements of the classical European *Rav*—master of *halacha*, leader of the *Kehilla*, teacher of its children, guardian of its *Kashrus*—and applied them to the American scene with consummate effectiveness.

of Elizabeth, New Jersey. Rabbi Preil had left instructions that if the individual marrying his daughter would be worthy, he should succeed him as rabbi of Elizabeth. Rabbi Teitz was eminently qualified.

With his ascension to the rabbinate of Elizabeth, New Jersey, a new chapter began in the life of Rabbi Teitz, which was to affect *Klal Yisroel* around the globe.

II. RAV OF ELIZABETH

American Orthodoxy was losing its youth — in part because the rabbis of the time simply did not speak their language. Rabbi Teitz felt it vital to communicate in English. At first, he would sit down with his *Rebbetzin*,

² Rabbi Preil was considered a *Gadol BaTorah*. His responsa were collected by Rabbi Teitz and published as *Sefer Hameor*.

At the time of his passing, his only son, Rabbi Yehoshua Yoseph, was nine years old. Rabbi Preil had purchased all the *lulavim* and *esrogim* for the town. The day before Succos, on his deathbed, he was concerned that were he to die, his only son would inherit his property, including all the *lulavim* and *esrogim* for the city. But, as a minor, he would have no way of giving them to the people who needed them. Rabbi Preil therefore called in an adult to accept ownership of the *lulavim* and *esrogim* on behalf of all the other townspeople. His concerns were well justified. He passed away that night.

Rabbi Elazar Mayer Teitz tells that he asked his father why he had insisted on maintaining a full rabbinate in a small town like Elizabeth, New Jersey, rather than accepting a more prestigious, though limited, position in a larger, more prominent city. The Rav explained his attitude by recalling how in 1936 the League of Nations debated Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia publicly denounced Italy and called upon the League of Nations to impose sanctions. Italian delegates were outraged, asserting that the mayor of a city had no right to make such political statements. Interestingly, the final vote in the censure fell to Luxembourg, a country of 100,000 people. It had attained far more as a small, independent country than the mayor of the great metropolis of eight million people. Rabbi Teitz felt he would make a greater contribution by accepting full responsibility for the needs of an entire small community than as one Rav among many, or as one participant in a larger organization.

Rabbi Teitz explained further that the principle is recognized in halacha, as well. If one has before him a complete small loaf of bread and a broken larger one, the beracha is pronounced on the whole loaf.

Of course, the *Rav* worked within many organizations, including Agudath

Israel of America whose national conventions he graced many times over the years. Rabbi Teitz was instrumental in the founding and maintenance of Agudath Israel of New Jersey. His constant advice and support helped the organization through many difficult victories and successes, including the passage of an autopsy law, the inclusion of a religious exemption amendment to the Uniform Determination of Death Act (time of death) and aid to *yeshivos*.

He served as treasurer of Ezras Torah for over 30 years, and was on the pre-

sidium of Agudas Harabonim with Rabbi Eliezer Silver and Rabbi Dovid Lifschitz for 12 years. When he had made one of his first public appearances in America, he so excited the crowd that Agudas Harabonim immediately sought him for a leadership position. He was too young then to serve on the executive committee, so they created an executive board of which he was appointed chairman.

With Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, Rabbi Teitz was co-founder of Merkaz Harabonim, in the early 1980's.

Whenever and wherever he saw a need, he filled it—a leader and a doer in its fullest sense.

The Full Range of Concern

Under Rabbi Teitz, Elizabeth provided a full spectrum of spiritual, educational, social and communal services. These included, among others, *shuls*, schools (K-12 for boys and for girls), *mikveh*, *shechita*, *Kashrus*, *eiruv*, *Chevra Kadisha*, and a cemetery plot for the asking.

He saw the welfare of each resident

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In 1933, at age 25, he accompanied Rabbi Elya Meir Bloch to the United States to raise funds for Telshe Yeshiva. This was to be a major turning point in Rabbi Teitz's life.

as his personal concern. He accepted the blessings and burdens of his role with equanimity, even dealing with the woman who delighted in telling her troubles to everyone she met. While other people crossed the street when they saw her, the *Rav* invariably took the time to let her unburden herself to him. She would call him on a regular basis, and although every minute of his day was precious, he would spend as much as an hour at a time on the phone listening to her litany of problems.

As he established himself in Elizabeth, the horrors of Nazism blackened Europe. During World War II, his concern for the individual placed him in the forefront of the Vaad Hatzalah (The Rescue Committee) together with other rabbinic luminaries, including the leg-

endary Rabbi Eliezer Silver, tirelessly working to save European Jewry. The Jewish Educational Center (J.E.C.), comprising the *shuls* and schools of Elizabeth, was instrumental in helping stranded Jews enter the country. By offering teaching positions, the *Rav* was able to bring over many people who would otherwise have perished. After the War, he was one of the Orthodox rabbinates' representatives visiting the Displaced Persons Camps, helping shape European Jewry's rehabilitation.

Soviet Jewry

Recognizing the isolation of Soviet Jewry, in 1964 Rabbi Teitz made the first of twenty-two trips to the USSR; it was the first crack in the Iron Curtain. Because he refused to allow any publicity about his visits, he was able to win the trust and tacit cooperation of the Soviet authorities. Surprisingly, the *Rav* was at times severely criticized by establishment groups for giving "aid and comfort" to the Soviet government because he went as their official guest—in contrast to the confrontational tactics of other pro-Soviet Jewry activists.

Rabbi Teitz's purity of motive in his work in the Soviet Union is perhaps best seen through the experiences of Rabbi Eliyahu Essas, the "father" of the Russian *Baal Teshuva* movement, as related by him at an *azkara*-memorial gathering held for the *Rav*. Rabbi Essas first met Rabbi Teitz on Tisha B'Av 5733 (1973), after having heard the *Rav* read *Megillas Eicha*, the Book of Lamentations. Rabbi Essas felt as though he were hearing *Yirmiyahu HaNavi*, the Prophet Jeremiah, reading the *Megilla*. Their time together was always limited to an hour or two for various reasons, not the least of which was constant KGB surveillance. The *Rav* tried not to overwhelm Rabbi Essas with his own knowledge, but rather downplayed his true stature. In spite of the risks, Rabbi Teitz met with some twenty-five of Essas's students. They were greatly encouraged by Rabbi Teitz, a man they viewed as a "*Mishnah Berurah V'Halacha Berurah L'Do-*

rainu"—the embodiment of Torah for our time. As their link to the outside world, the *Rav* quoted to them the *pasuk*: "*Hinei yamim ba'im ne'um Hashem...—Behold, days are coming, said G-d, when there will be a hunger not for bread nor for water, but for the word of Hashem*" (*Amos 8,11*). The *teshuva* movement was global, he said, and they were at the heart of it.

At the Knessia Gedolah (International Congress) of the Agudath Israel World Organization in Jerusalem, 1980, Rabbi Teitz struck a poignant note by reading a letter from Rabbi Essas to the

gathering, bringing the issue to this prestigious forum.

Daf HaShavua

Rabbi Teitz was always concerned with all segments of *Klal Yisroel*. In the early 1950s, he saw the influence of Yiddishists fading. In its heyday, this group would hold "Yom Kippur Balls." The *Rav* realized that its members were advancing in years and thoughts of *teshuva* were probably starting to haunt them. Having all their lives preached the value of Yiddish and

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Note: The preceding quotes are excerpts from interviews with Rav Wolpin שליט"א, about Yeshiva Ohev Yisroel. A tape of the interview is available.

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the lack of value of Torah and religion, however, how could they now return? Rabbi Teitz felt that by bringing Torah into the privacy of their living rooms, they might respond without being forced into a public retreat from their lifelong-held positions.³ It was with that in mind that *Daf HaShavua* was created in 1953.

Daf HaShavua was a half-hour program in which Rabbi Teitz taught Tal-

³He indeed received letters from a number of Yiddishists saying that they actually did return to Torah life as a result of the influence of his broadcasts.

mud.⁴ He started with *Megilla*, which contains much *Aggadata* (homiletical sections), to capture the hearts as well as the minds of his listeners. At the end of his first year of broadcast, he held a

⁴The *Rav* often used his program to comment on matters of communal concern. On one occasion, he denounced certain irregularities taking place in the Jewish community. As a result, he received threatening phone calls, and ultimately two people arrived at his door. In a rare display of anger, the *Rav* rebuked them and warned them not to return. He then picked one up, literally, by the scruff of the neck and threw him off the porch. The phone calls ceased and they never returned.

Melave Malka for the public to see who his listeners were. 1,400 people attended, including, among other *Gedolim*, the *Ponevezer Rav* and the *Satmar Rav*. Government statistics showed the listening audience to be between 175 - 250,000 people per week. (This was the McCarthy Era when the government monitored all foreign language broadcasts, including the Yiddish-language *Daf HaShavua*.)

The program aired on Saturday night, an unconventional time selected to avoid conflict with any other *Rav's* class. A phenomenal success, the *Daf* was broadcast for thirty-six consecutive seasons.⁵

III. FACTORS IN GREATNESS

His Torah

Always on the lookout for ways to disseminate Torah, Rabbi Teitz started *Bas Kol*, teaching Torah on phonograph records; though short-lived, it was the spiritual antecedent of today's Torah tape system.

When he first came to America with the *Telzer Rosh HaYeshiva*, Rabbi Elya Meir Bloch, he undertook to learn no less than two hours daily. Although his communal activities made it very difficult, he maintained that regimen until the end of his life. His daughters recall that he would usually come home late at night, only to begin learning. From their bedrooms, they would hear him recite the *Gemora* with a sweet melody, accompanied by the gentle creak of his chair. When it would suddenly become quiet, they knew he had reached a difficult point; he would resume, and they knew the problem was resolved.

It was hard to figure out when he had time to learn. Forever snatching minutes here and there, he was, in fact, always learning. During his many plane trips, he would develop thoughts and ideas,

⁵The *Rav* believed that all technological advancements are to be used for Torah. This concept was also voiced by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein who, at a *Daf Hashavua Siyum*, pointed out that the airwaves were surely created to teach Torah, in line with Rabbi Teitz's endeavor.

... had a very different meaning in 1944. R' Yosef Paneth, scion of the Chassidic dynasty of Dej, led his family deep into the wooded mountains of Transylvania in a valiant attempt to outwit the Nazis. His unyielding determination inspired courage in his children. His indomitable trust in the creator will inspire faith in the heart of the reader.

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At Daf Hashavua Melave Malke, with Rabbi Binyamin Avraham Teitz (his father), Rabbi Eliezer Silver and Rabbi Alexander Rosenberg זצ"ל

jotting down notes... dubbing the file in which he placed them: "Torah Min Hashamayim, Torah from the heavens."

• His grasp of Shas and poskim was remarkable. Rabbi Michel Yoseif Bomrind, a rebbe in the J.E.C., tells of when Rabbi Teitz saw a student walking in the hall and asked him why he was out of class. The boy told him that his rebbe had told him to find out how many times the word "pruzbul" appears in the Talmud. The Rav waved his hand in the air, as though running down a page of Gemora, and then told him, from memory, every Talmudic citation for pruzbul.

• When I moved to Elizabeth, I was in doubt as to where to place the mezuzah on the doorway between my kitchen and dining room. I posed the question to the Rav in shul. As we walked from his shtender to his office, some 100 feet, he began quoting the relevant Gemora in Menachos, verbatim. He continued his recitation, with explanation, while he retrieved the Gemora and found the appropriate place.

The Rav as a Leader

Rabbi Teitz was a man of action, in keeping with the dictum: "Lo hamedrash ha'ikar ella hama'aseh—Action, not study is the main thing" (Avos 1:21). In his commentary on Mishlei (12,18), the Vilna Gaon writes that there are two kinds of leaders: One who reproves the people harshly but gives no suggestions for correction, and one who teaches a way to improve and correct what has gone awry. The Gaon states that the wise man says only that which is necessary to heal and for that which needs to be healed.

Seeing a need for a national awak-

ening of Orthodox Jewry in America, he published in Elul 5696 (1936) the first of a series of booklets entitled "Urah—Awaken" as a call to teshuva.

Rabbi Teitz felt strongly that every Jewish child was entitled to a Jewish education. At a Torah Umesorah convention in February, 1968 (5728), he presented the Jewish Child's

Bill of Rights, which reaffirmed that right, and placed the responsibility of implementing this goal on the Jewish community.

He lived up to his own standard. No Jewish child has ever been turned away from the J.E.C. for lack of funds. He looked to the community to support the institutions, maintaining that young parents have many bills to pay—pediatrician, dentist, shoes, clothing, and so on—that they could not be denied access to a Torah education for lack of funds.⁶

His sheer force of personality is partially illustrated by an event that took

⁶ Though he was renowned as a great fund raiser, he was uncomfortable in that role. His belief in a cause and his dedication to it created the situation in which people never failed to respond with adequate funds to actualize his vision.

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place during his early years in America, related by Rabbi Yehoshua Yoseph Preil, his brother-in-law.

• One of the wealthiest, most respected members of the community decided to buy a mausoleum for family interment, instead of in-ground burial as is required by halacha. Because of his standing in the community, people were reluctant to reproach him. The Rav, who lived his life based upon the pasuk: "Lo sagura mifnei ish"—to fear only G-d—summoned the individual and explained that his plan violated Jewish law.

The man asked if the young rabbi could prove his point. The Rav compiled the relevant sources, had his Rebbetzin translate them into English and reviewed the material with that individual. He was convinced, and halted construction on the building midway. The partially built edifice still stands in mute testimony to Rabbi Teitz's remarkable influence.

The Rav was a man of vision. When the J.E.C. needed a new structure in 1947, he studied the changing demographics of the metropolitan area, and

decided to "skip" two neighborhoods and put up the new building in the uptown Elmora section of Elizabeth.

He was keenly aware that promoting Orthodoxy in the New Jersey suburbs meant battle against the Conservative and Reform⁷ institutions for the hearts of his congregants.

He believed that the *shul* should be a place of beauty *l'chavod u'l'siferres* (the *shul* won an architectural award for its sight and sound lines), and decorum was a must. His Slabodka Yeshiva training, emphasizing the majesty of the individual, was reflected in his own regal bearing and in the upkeep of the institutions over which he presided.

Interpersonal Dealings

Rabbi Teitz believed that "*Chanoch lena'ar al pi darko... raise the child according to his path,*" was not restricted to children. Each person is unique and has to be dealt with on his level. He was as comfortable talking to the simplest person as he was in conversing with heads of state and leaders of nations.⁸ He brought people from all walks of life closer to Torah, including people who did not quite finish the trip. When he passed away, there was an outpouring of grief and sympathy from all, including irreligious Jews and non-Jews.

Indeed, he maintained close friendships and worked effectively with both *Chassidim* and *Misnagdim*. He was close with the *Rebbes* of Satmar and

⁷His success is now a matter of history. When he came to Elizabeth, he was often attacked for bringing "old world" ideas into the New World. He was accused of wanting to "ghettoize" the Jewish community and at times was actually jeered. Elizabeth was also home to the first female rabbi, Sally Preisand. Recently, toward the end of the Rav's life, the city's last non-Orthodox synagogue was razed. The Rav took great pride in the fact that when he first came to Elizabeth, there was not even a *minyan* of *Shomrei Shabbos*, while today there are four active *shuls* comprised of about 600 Orthodox families.

⁸The Rav was highly regarded by many government leaders. His involvement with the Vaad Hatzalah during World War II as well as post-War activities brought him into contact with many leading figures both in the United States and abroad. From 1958 to 1964, he testified on many occasions before congressional committees and various state legislative bodies in a successful attempt to block legislation that would have banned *shechita*.

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Rabbi Teitz with Rabbi Elyahu Essas.

Lubavitch, among others, as well as with the Lithuanian *Gedolim* in America. In his pursuit of excellence he posed questions affecting the American rabbinate to *Gedolim* in *Eretz Yisroel*, such as the Chazon Ish, Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, the Brisker *Rav*, Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank and the Steipler *Gaon*. When I accompanied him once to an Agudath Israel Convention, he was virtually mobbed by a large group of *Chassidim*. When I asked one why they were so attracted to Rabbi Teitz, the fellow looked at me with a puzzled expression and said, "The *Rebbe* said Rabbi Teitz is an *Adam Gadol!*"

This assessment was reinforced by other *Gedolim*. He sat on a *beis din* with Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and Rabbi Henkin in the 1950s, when a controversy broke out in California over the *kashering* of chickens. Two groups each insisted that the other used water so hot as to render the chickens non-kosher. As the *beis din's* junior member, Rabbi Teitz was dispatched to California to interview the parties on tape to bring back to the full *beis din*—perhaps the first time that testimony for *beis din* was taken on tape.

Man of Chessed

When Rabbi Berel Peker asked Rabbi Aharon Kotler if he should take a job teaching at the J.E.C., Reb Aharon responded that it would be worthwhile working with Rabbi Teitz because he's an *ish kulo chessed*—*chedsed* incarnate.

Rabbi Teitz's involvement with the *yachid* was not determined by the recipient's age. He held weekly study sessions (*vaadim/chaburos*) with the ninth and tenth grade boys in his high

school.... Aaron Stier—an Elizabeth native, and today an attorney in that town—was fourteen years old when the *Rav* asked him to read the Torah in a different *shul*. Realizing that the young man would feel awkward in an unfamiliar place, the *Rav* walked the 1½ miles with him, introduced him to some of the people there, and then returned to the main *shul* in time for *davening*.

Another resident of Elizabeth, Dr. Steven Singfer, had completed high

school at the J.E.C., and went to learn in a yeshiva in Jerusalem. During a trip to Israel, Rabbi Teitz visited the young man, who complained about teasing by his classmates. Rabbi Teitz gently reminded him that he was there to learn Torah. The Torah, the *Rav* said, is compared to honey; he was the bee trying to get to the honey, and they, his taunters, are like the thorns. You have to get past the thorns to reach the honey. The boy stayed on and today is a lecturer in a *Daf HaYomi shiur*.

He also acted on issues most people did not realize existed. For example, since any object with lifeblood on it must be buried, after World War II, he

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Rabbi Teitz as keynote speaker at the groundbreaking ceremony for Telshe Yeshiva in Wickliffe, Ohio

searched for *seforim* with blood on them, which might have been held when people were shot, so that he could arrange for their burial. He also saw to it that the graves of the Vilna Gaon, the Ba'al Shem Tov, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky and others were restored and well tended.

His Rebbetzin

Rebbetzin Teitz רבנית, a woman of great strength and character, worked at his side as a full partner. When all their children were grown and out of the house, some tried to per-

suade her to pursue a career of her own. She explained that she could not because she had to be there when the Rav came home for breakfast, and again to serve him lunch, and would therefore not be free until at least 2 PM; and soon after, of course, there was supper.

During the war years, they routinely made small weddings in their home and took in

orphans, family members, and friends for as much as a year at a time. The Rebbetzin also tended to the homebound daily. When a community member was ill and needed a second cardiac opinion, she arranged the appointment with one of the world's foremost cardiologists at Harvard. The doctor had stopped taking patients, but when the Rebbetzin called, the doctor's office set up an appointment within the week.

Unwilling to provide the Rav with possibly less than optimal *Kashrus*, particularly at Pesach time, she made her own cheese, churned her own butter, and *kasher*ed her own meat and poultry. She con-

tinued this practice throughout their marriage, until illness interfered.

The Man

To those who were close to him, Rabbi Teitz was larger than life, and this short sketch does not begin to do him justice. His essence might best be captured in his interpretation of the biblical term "*Hineni*—I am here"—as meaning: "I," not someone else; "am," now, not later; "here," not anywhere else. This was how he lived his life and realized his goals.

Though not hasty, the Rav was very decisive. Once he made a decision, he acted upon it. He either would be satisfied or he would resolve to act differently the next time. No time to wallow in regrets. (This by no means had any bearing on his relationship with his Creator, as was obvious when one witnessed him *davening*.)

Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky, *Rosh Hayeshiva* of the Yeshiva in Philadelphia, remarked at a *hazkara* memorial held for Rabbi Teitz: When *Hashem* showed *Adam HaRishon* a listing of each generation and its leaders, beyond doubt Rabbi Teitz was included in that group.

The passing of Rabbi Mordechai Pinchos Teitz was a great loss for Elizabeth; just as surely, it was a loss for Jewry throughout the United States and around the globe. ■

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There has been a loss, and there is sadness and grief, perhaps also anger and confusion. We must visit the mourner to offer three elements of healing: condolence, consolation, comfort. But we are afraid that we will also be asked questions—the searing, piercing “Why?”—and we will not know what to answer.

The *aveilim* must speak first but they seem chained to silence. Even after they have painfully unlocked vocal cords choked with emotion, visitors find that their own vocabularies have become inadequate, bereft of grace, devoid of eloquence, wanting in courage.

Yet, everyone who has had to undergo a *shiva* knows of its profound benefits for the bereaved. A buffer before reentering a callous world, the opportunity to hear about previously unknown aspects of the deceased, the words of consolation, these all make us appreciate the laws of *aveilus* and the period of enforced introspection. According to the *Ramban*, the most venerable amongst the nations used to avail themselves of the institution of *shiva*, no doubt because of its therapeutic properties.

Rabbi Feitman is the *Rav* of the Young Israel of Beechwood (Cleveland), Ohio. He is a frequent contributor to these pages, most recently with “Planting the Seeds of Joys,” March '95.

■

The days of *shiva* are actually inverted days of *Yom Tov*. Were we worthy, the Sevens would all be festive, but since we sinned, the Sevens turn somber and tragic.

■

But on the national level, the question must still be asked: why did our sages impose an annual time of mourning for the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*?

To be sure, the answer seems to be deceptively simple—so that we never forget the *Beis Hamikdash* in all its glory. Were we not required to mourn, we might feel very little about these events of two millennia ago. As the great *Mashgiach* of Mir, Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz זצ”ל, points out, even with Tisha B’Av and the Three Weeks, which precede it, “We are less perturbed with the *churban* than if our vegetable gardens had been ruined.”²

Still, the imperative to remember is

not sufficient to warrant our annual focus on *churban*. As articulated by Rabbi Dessler זצ”ל: “*Al ma...* Over exactly what are we afflicting ourselves, and to what end?”³ Joy is a basic building block of Divine service, in keeping with “*Ivdu es Hashem besimcha*,” but sadness and depression are certainly not. So whereas precipitating a state of joy needs no justification, actuating a state of melancholy must be proven to be absolutely necessary. As the *Baal Hatanya* writes (quoted by Rabbi Dessler above), the process of reliving the *churban* carries with it the danger of dejection, and yet it is worth the risk because of the spiritual rewards to be reaped. But what, exactly, are these dividends?

Perhaps an approach can be found in the Talmudic sources for the seven days of mourning. The *Gemora* (*Moed Kattan* 20a) derives the law that the primary period of mourning is seven days from the verse: “I will turn your holidays into mourning” (*Amos* 8,10). Since the essential unit of *Yom Tov* is seven days, the *Gemora* concludes that the basic unit of *aveilus* is seven days, as well. Such juxtaposition in the Torah often indicates more than a specific *halacha*. It points to an inner connection that we otherwise would not have assumed.⁴

That inner connection would seem to be that the days of *shiva* are actually inverted days of *Yom Tov*. Were we worthy, the Sevens would all be festive, but

since we sinned, the Sevens turn somber and tragic.⁵

So we begin to see that mourning is an opportunity—even a mandate—for spiritual growth.

Using the Festival Days as a Scriptural source for *shiva* sheds light on the purpose of mourning in general—to uplift the soul and mend spiritual wounds, to allow time for reflection and repentance. If this is true on the individual level, it is all the more applicable on the communal. In the words of Rabbi Leib Bakst שליט"א, *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Yeshiva Gedolah of Detroit, "Chazal decreed that

we mourn for the *churban* so that we should 'sit silently alone' (*Eicha* 3,28) and return to ourselves. This is the secret of *aveilus*, to bring us to the state of self-evaluation by removing all exterior barriers to *teshuva*."⁶

MOURNING, IN ORDER TO CREATE

The Jerusalem Talmud⁷ provides us with a different source for *shiva*, which leads to a more cryptic purpose for the obligation to mourn:

"*Uminayin...*—How do we know that *Hashem* kept *shiva* for His world?

Because the Torah records, 'And it was after seven days that the waters of the flood began.'" The Talmud then asks the obvious question, "But does one mourn before the person has died?" The answer: A human being who does not know the future cannot mourn until the actual death, but *Hashem*, who knows what will happen, *שמר על עולמו תחילה* mourned in advance."

Two queries come to mind: even though G-d certainly knows what will happen, what is the point of mourning before the fact? Surely, there must be a lesson for us if the Torah revealed this action of G-d. Furthermore, why the phrase *שמר על עולמו*, which literally means "guarded over His world," as a euphemism for mourning?

Perhaps the two questions answer each other. The *Yerushalmi* is instructing us: mourning at its highest, most ideal level is a creative act. *Hashem's* mourning for the world related more to the new world He was to build than to the one He was reluctantly destroying. It was an act of *שמירה*—of protection and preservation—and preceded the cataclysm so that cure would be in place at the onset of the malady.

As the *Yerushalmi* points out, mortals do not mourn before the demise of a loved one. But if the revelation about how *Hashem* (*kivayachol*) mourns is to have any meaning for us, we should use *aveilus* as an opportunity to rebuild our world, to preserve and protect that which is good, and to rid ourselves of that which is harmful and depraved.

Here, too, we proceed from the individual to the national level. The purpose of mourning the *Beis Hamikdash* is to attain the spiritual level necessary to rebuild it once again, this time on an even higher plane. This may be the reason some authorities⁸ take the position that during the Second *Beis Hamikdash*, Tisha B'Av was commemorated as it is today, with fasting and mourning. Since many spiritual levels were lost from the First Temple to the Second (prophecy, the *Urim V'tumim*, the *Aron Hakodesh* and *Keruvim*, daily open miracles), it was appropriate to mourn—not the *Beis Hamikdash* itself, but the loss of the lofty

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Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky זצ"ל uses this concept to explain why Yechezkel described the Third *Beis Hamikdash* and seemingly skipped over the details of the Second: The prophet wanted us to be aware that the Second *Beis Hamikdash* would be a temporary structure with limited spiritual attainments, and that *Klal Yisroel* should still yearn and pray for the return of the loftier status of the First *Beis Hamikdash*.⁹

THE POWER OF YEARNING

The essence of these days of Tamuz and Av, then, might be described as Days of Yearning. A nation, like an individual, is often more identified by its yearnings than by its attainments. For while an accomplishment can be transitory or even haphazard, true *געווענים וכיסופים*—profound spiritual longings—are definitive and enduring.

The late *Rebbe* of Zhikov, Rabbi Yehuda Horowitz זצ"ל (passed away in 1989), once received a letter from a *chassid* who had moved out of *Eretz Yisroel* because of difficulties with his livelihood. The man expressed profound yearnings to return to *Eretz Yisroel*. In his response, the *Rebbe* insightfully wrote: "It is better that you live outside *Eretz Yisroel* and long for the Land than to live in *Eretz Yisroel* and long for *Chutz L'aratz*."

The *Rebbe* concluded with the admonishment, "If the time should

Mourning at its highest, most ideal level is a creative act. Hashem's mourning for the world related more to the new world He was to build than to the one He was reluctantly destroying.

ever come, G-d forbid, that you cease to yearn for *Eretz Yisroel*, you must return immediately."¹⁰

One might think that this process of loss, yearning, and return is a *bide'aved*—a poor last resort compared to never having lost at all. Rabbi Tzadok Hakohein of Lublin, however, teaches otherwise:

We learn from creation that darkness must precede light and night must precede day. As the prophet (*Micha* 8,8) says, "Because I sit in darkness, Hashem is a light for me"—Not: "Though I sit in darkness—" but: "Because I have sat in darkness, [I appreciate and can benefit

from] G-d's light." Thus, a Bar Mitzva's first commandment as an adult is the night-*Kri'as Shema*, because darkness must be the prelude to all spiritual accomplishments. The process of "descending to eventually rise" (*Chullin* 7a) is inevitable, and built into the structure of the universe itself.¹¹

LEARNING FROM YEARNING

Sometimes, it would seem, authentic yearnings create perceptions and insights that are not accessible through normal intellectual channels. My *Rebbe*, Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner זצ"ל, writes in wonder to his own *Rebbe*, Rabbi Isaac Sher זצ"ל, the *Rosh Yeshiva*

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of Slabodka, on Nissan 5687 (1927):

During the past year, several basic insights, which were essential to me personally, remained beyond my comprehension despite the fact that [the *Alter* of Slabodka] labored valiantly to explain them. Suddenly, with his passing, these matters became totally clear. I searched hard for a logical explanation for this phenomenon and found none. Obviously, a mysterious force higher than any logic was at work here. Our sages teach, "The righteous are greater in death than in life."¹²

The "mysterious force" of which the *Rosh Yeshiva* speaks may be the power of yearning. When a beloved *Rebbe*, particularly one of the stature of the *Alter* of Slabodka, passes away, the resulting void seems to be an insurmountable impasse to spiritual growth. All knowledge, wisdom and understanding seemed to flow from the *Rebbe's* great-

ness. But, paradoxically, it is that very yearning for his guidance and presence that can help the disciple to recover from his loss, even to the point of superseding in some ways the influence from the *Rebbe's* actual presence. Thus, yearning properly channeled can generate incredible spiritual vitality instead of mere emptiness or nostalgia.

Twenty-eight years after the death of the *Alter*, Rabbi Hutner applied similar terminology in consoling the Yeshiva of Telshe upon the loss of its *Rosh HaYeshiva*, Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Bloch זצ"ל. His words of consolation fused the general anguish over Reb Eliyahu Meir's passing with his personal distress at not having been able to attend the funeral and found a common source of comfort for both:

What can one possibly say? the

■
The late *Rebbe* of Zhikov wrote: "It is better that you live outside *Eretz Yisroel* and long for the Land than to live in *Eretz Yisroel* and long for *Chutz L'aratz*."
■

Captain of the ship of Torah... has been taken away.... Out of pain and sorrow we raise our eyes towards the promise of our sages that the righteous are greater in death than in life. Their words testify to us that with the appropriate spiritual preparation, the mantle falling from the *Rebbe* who is passing on [see *Melachim II* 2,14] can create a doubly-powerful force in the souls of his disciples.... My lips whisper the prayer that in the merit of my additional pain at not having been able to participate in the funeral, may I be privileged to receive the comforting good news of your Yeshiva's tremendous growth and success....¹³

Yearning for the lost *Rebbe* sensitizes every spiritual nerve ending, sharpens every memory, plays back every conversation, enlarges every mental image. And, ultimately, that aching process produces growth. Even the "pain" of not attending a funeral—if truly heartfelt—can be a powerful source of "merit." The *Rosh Yeshiva* teaches us, by personal example and shared introspection, that loss can be transformed into gain through the alchemy of yearning.

Only our Creator Himself can know the long-range reverberations of every painful setback turned into triumph. But once in a while stories do come down to us.

• Early this century, the Mashgiach of the Yeshiva in Slutsk entered into a Torah debate raging in the Beis Hamidrash. The

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The Rebbe concluded with the admonishment, "If the time should ever come, G-d forbid, that you cease to yearn for Eretz Yisroel, you must return immediately."

Mashgiach was known as an inspiring embodiment of Mussar and middos, but he was not a particularly brilliant Talmudist, as were the Roshei Yeshiva. His suggested solution to a Talmudic problem in Bava Kama was perceived to be wanting, and condescending smiles suddenly surrounded him.

A lesser person might have shrugged off the incident and gone back to his area of expertise. He might have chastised the students for their lack of consideration and respect. Instead, he sat down at the Gemora and wept bitterly, crying himself into a deep sleep. In his dream, he was given a promise that henceforth things would be different. He need only apply himself and open his Bava Kama, and the intricate byways of the Talmud would be open to him.

When Rabbi Pesach Pruskin awoke, he found that he was a different person. Passages that had seemed inscrutable before had become clear as crystal, and he achieved a new sense of purpose in his studies. He applied himself with fresh vitality and in a short time became famed for his lectures and Torah brilliance. Soon, in the city of Shklov and later Kobrin, Reb Pesach was producing students who would become leaders of Klal Yisroel. One of them was a young man from Strobin, Moshe Strobiner; he would later become better known as Rabbi Moshe Feinstein ז"ל.¹⁴

A similar story is told of the first Rebbe of Ozerov, Reb Leibush the Great.

• Reb Leibush had been orphaned at a very early age and was taken in by a kindly but simple Jew from Ostrovtz. The man was able to teach him how to read and a bit of Chumash, but nothing else, yet Reb Leibush thirsted for more. When he opened an advanced sefer and realized that he understood nothing, he began to weep and fell asleep. In his dream, he heard the promising words of Yechezkel being read to him, "And I will give you a new heart and a renewed spirit..." (36,26). As soon as he awoke, he found, astonishingly, that he could read and understand everything. That was

the beginning, not only of one Torah leader, but the inception of a dynasty of inspired leadership.¹⁵

A SEASON OF YEARNING

To be sure, the leitmotif of spiritual longing may be felt in many mitzvos throughout the year. The shofar reminds us of times of past greatness and arouses our aching for the shofar of Moshiach.¹⁶ The great joy of the Succos Simchas Beis Hasho'eiva flows from the yearning of the waters below



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to be as close to G-d as the waters above.¹⁷ *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah* resonate with the mutual longings of *Hashem* and His people.¹⁸ On *Pesach* we remember our youthful exuberance in following *Hashem* into the desert, and we try once again to regain that spirited intensity.¹⁹ *Shavous*, of course, transports us to the moment when the words of the Torah were fresh and new and helps us rejuvenate our excitement in Torah study.

The building of the *Mishkan* was predicated upon the profound desire of

the people to build a place for *Hashem*; and they miraculously "learned how to do so" out of their profound longing for a Tabernacle.²⁰ Binyamin earned the merit of having the holiest part of the *Beis Hamikdash* in his progeny's territory because he yearned so deeply to be the "host for the *Shechina*" (*Megilla* 25b). Indeed, the *Sefas Emes* explains that our very descent into this world from a higher and better one is to achieve the one trait that is easier to develop here than there, the power to yearn.²¹

But there is one season of the year permeated with the very spirit of *געטרייבן* pining for a lost greatness: the Three Weeks from the Seventeenth of Tammuz until the Tenth of Av. During this period, the special prayers and fasting, the *Selichos* and *Kinos*, the tears and Lamentations, all reflect our longing for the times of splendor when we were privileged to have a *Beis Hamikdash* and its glorious trappings—*kohanim* offering *korbanos*, the incense and the songs of the *Levi'im*, the *Sanhedrin* sitting in its chamber issuing Torah decisions for all of Israel.

Yes, this period allows *Klal Yisroel* to express its longings for *Hashem* in the most extraordinary of ways. Even more remarkably, there is a Heavenly response to this expression which validates the intensity of those longings.

The Seven *Haftoros* following *Tisha B'av* constitute a unit and are known as the *Zayin d'Nechemta*—the Seven Prophetic Readings of Consolation. They must be recited in a specific order which supersedes other *Haftoros* that might have been recited at that time.²²

Rabbeinu David Avudraham (14th century) cites a *Midrash* which interprets the sequence of these *Haftoros*:

The prophet is sent to console the people of Israel and he transmits *Hashem's* words: "*Nachamu nachamu ami*—Be consoled, be consoled my people." However, to the prophet's surprise (as reflected in the beginning of the second of the *Haftoros*), the nation responds: "G-d has forsaken and forgotten me." In the third segment of the set (in *Parshas Re'ei*), the prophet reports back to *Hashem*: "She is not consoled." This exchange is resolved by *Hashem* in the fourth of the *Haftoros*, that of *Shoftim*, with the ringing declaration: "*Anochi Anochi...*—Indeed I will personally console you." The final three *Haftoros* reflect increasingly profound expressions of *Hashem's* direct consolation to the people of Israel.²³

Among the obvious questions:

What does it mean to reject the prophet and demand direct communication from *Hashem*? Surely throughout history, the prophet has in fact been our conduit for the word of G-d! In fact, how



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dare we have rejected the comforting words of the prophet in G-d's name? And then, why were we rewarded for this stance with the granting of our request for Hashem's exclusive *nechama*?

The single answer to these queries relates to the nature of prophetic credibility. The *Rambam*²⁴ writes that a prophet may be tested only by verifying his predictions of good things to come, not his prognostications of disaster. Since repentance is always an option for human beings, a prediction of catastrophe could always be preempted by *teshuva*. However, the word of a prophet that something good will happen can never be nullified.

In further elucidating this concept elsewhere, the *Rambam*²⁵ poses the following problem with his rule:

If a promise of good things to a prophet is always irrevocable, why was *Yaakov Avinu* afraid that his ensuing sins (see *Berachos* 4a) might erode and abrogate G-d's promise? Surely he was a prophet, and this was a prophecy! The *Rambam* answers that there is a distinction between a pledge given to the prophet for himself and one he is expected to transmit to *Klal Yisroel*.

Promises made to the prophet for himself can be rescinded if he is later found unworthy. Only prophetic assurances disseminated to the populace are unalterable, because they are basic to the process of establishing the veracity of prophecy itself²⁶.

THE PROPHECY REVISITED

With this in mind, let us look once again at the Midrash cited by the Avudraham concerning the Seven *Haftoros*.

Hashem sends a message of consolation to Israel through the prophet, and the messenger is rejected. We wish to hear from Hashem Himself, and the request is lovingly accepted and acted upon.

A promise from the prophet would be such a relief. It carries the imprimatur of irrevocability. Everything will be allright, no matter what. Even further, sin cannot repeal the comforting words. No fall from the spiritual

heights can override the guarantee of consolation. What could possibly be better?

Klal Yisroel answers: More than words of consolation, more than comforting prophecies—yes, even more than immutable assurances indemnified by the laws of prophecy—what we want most of all is Hashem himself. *Churban* has alienated us from our Father, and all we ask is to be close to Him once again. No emissaries, no intermediaries. All we ask for is His embrace.

And the petition is found favorable, for it is proffered with credibility of sacrifice. We give up safety and security for the purity of direct relationship with Hashem.

The prophet is indeed our eternal source of communication from Hashem. But after *churban* and estrangement, we need to reestablish a relationship. It is the degree of our yearning for Hashem that is being tested, and our annual task is to reenact those longings. The vehicle for that rejuvenation is the Ten Weeks—three of mourning and seven of slow, painful, but steady reacquaintance with "our Maker, our husband," Hashem himself.

It is only after this long process that we can actually return "ad Hashem Elokecha—until Hashem." As the *Baal Hatanya* would sing at moments of ecstasy, "It is not Your paradise I crave, it is not Your *Olam Haba'ah* I desire, but You Yourself I seek."²⁷

ENDNOTES

¹Commentary to *Bereishis* 29,27.

²*Daas Chachma Umussar*, Vol 2, p.67.

³*Michtav M'Eliyahu*, Vol 2, p.48.

⁴See, for instance, *Toras Kohanim*, Ofef edition of *B'reisa D'Rebbe Yishmael*, p.52, nt.13.

⁵See commentary of *Rishon Ltzion*, to *Eicha* 1,9, printed in back of *Mikra'os Gedolos*.

⁶*Yad Shlomo*, published by the Detroit Kollel, p.165.

⁷*Moed Kattan* 3,5, Zitamir edition, 12b.

⁸For a review of the halachic sources for this issue, see Rabbi David Cohen, *Birchas Yaavetz*, p.305, and Rabbi Israel Schepansky, *ארץ ישראל בספרות התשובות*, Vol 3, p.390, nt.7.

⁹Quoted at length in *Binu Sh'nos Dor v'Dor*, p.22; and see, also, *The Jewish Observer*, April '81.

¹⁰*Zecher Tzaddik Livracha*, p.95.

¹¹*Tzidkas Hatzaddik*, 4, 11, and 76.

¹²*Igros*, letter 159, p.251; see also no.161, p.253.

¹³Letter 221, p.302.

¹⁴*Marbitzei Torah Umussar*, Vol 2, p.163.

¹⁵Rabbi S. Wallach, *The Aish Das of Ozerov*, p.21.

¹⁶See *Rosh Hashana* 16a, and the *Mussaf Shemoneh Esrei* of Rosh Hashana.

¹⁷See *Tikunei Zohar*, *Tikun* 5, 19b; also, *Aish Das*, vol.8, p.411.

¹⁸See *Rashi* to *Vayikra* 23,36 and *Succa* 55b.

¹⁹see *Rashi* to *Yirmiyahu* 2,2; *Shem Mishmuel*, *Vayikra* p.28; *Alei Shur* Vol. 2, p.391.

²⁰See Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz, quoted in *Yalkut Lekach Tov*, *Parshas Vayakhel*, p.244.

²¹*Sefas Emes*, *Parshas Emor*, 5636,172.

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²²See *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 428:8, commentaries *ad loc*.

²³*Sefer Avudraham Hashelem* (Jerusalem, 1963), p.303.

²⁴*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 10:4.

²⁵Introduction to commentary on *Mishnayos*, Kapach ed., p.6.

²⁶For more on this subject and a review of all the opinions in *Rishonim* concerning the testing of a prophet, see Rabbi David Cohen, *Ohel David*, Vol.2, p.73.

²⁷Rabbi Menachem Mendel (*Tzemach Tzedek*), *Derech Mitzvosecha*, *Shores Mitzvos Hateffila*, ch.40, p.138.

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I. THE MAN AND HIS IMPACT

Dr. Isaac Breuer זצ"ל, whose fiftieth *Yahrzeit* we mark this year, ranks among Agudath Israel's most prominent ideologues. Born in Papa, Hungary, in 1883 to the city's *Rav*, Rabbi Salomon Breuer זצ"ל, his family moved to Frankfurt when Rabbi Breuer succeeded his father-in-law, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch זצ"ל, as *Rav* of the independent Orthodox *kehilla* in 1888. Isaac Breuer acquired his proficiency in *Shas* and *Poskim* from his father, in whose *Yeshiva* he spent the formative years of his youth. Although he received *semicha*, Dr. Breuer opted not to serve in the rabbinate and took up the study of law at various universities. Nevertheless, he vowed to his father to devote his life to *Am Yisroel*. *Torah im Derech Eretz*, the principle that permeated his father's house, was the basic feature of Dr. Breuer's *Weltanschauung*. Dr. Breuer

Rabbi Bechhofer is the Rosh Kollel of Yeshivas Beis HaMidrash LaTorah and the Noble Night Kollel in Skokie, IL as well as *Mora D'asra* of Cong. Bais Tefila in Chicago, IL. His most recent contribution to these pages was "Mezuzos, Machlokes and Eilu Va'Eilu", Jan. '95.

never failed to point to his father and grandfather as the guiding mentors of his life.

One of Dr. Breuer's primary contributions to Hirschian thought was the definition of *Eretz Yisroel's* significance in the framework of *Torah im Derech Eretz*. Dr. Breuer moved to *Eretz Yisroel* in 1936, and died there in 1946. Shortly before his death, Dr. Breuer represented the Agudah's World Executive to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry that explored the possibility of founding a Jewish state.

Dr. Breuer was a prolific writer¹. His works enhanced the commitment of a new generation of German Orthodox Jews to Torah Judaism. In a sense, he was the ultimate "codifier" of *Torah im Derech Eretz*. One of his works, *Moriah*, deserves special attention. It is truly remarkable and unique. In it, Dr. Breuer

¹Excerpts from his works were translated and published by Prof. Jacob Levinger in *Concepts in Judaism* (Feldheim, 1974). An in-depth — but highly technical — analysis of Dr. Breuer's philosophy was written by Prof. Alan Mittleman, and is entitled *Between Kant and Kabbalah* (SUNY Press, 1990). The biographical material presented here is necessarily brief, and, therefore, completely inadequate in describing the life and personality of Dr. Breuer.

expounds on our national destiny and our task in this world.

Dr. Breuer was intimately involved in the leadership of Agudath Israel throughout his life. He viewed the Agudah as a critical tool that *Hashem* had granted to *Am Yisroel* to fulfill its national destiny. A sizeable portion of *Moriah*, therefore, discusses the history and vision of the Agudah.

(It is important to note — as we shall — that Dr. Breuer's ideas were often the subject of intense philosophical debates *within* Agudah circles. The reader may perceive a bias toward Dr. Breuer's views. Nevertheless, it is not my intent to persuade, but to present Dr. Breuer's strikingly contemporary thoughts for consideration by our generation.)

II. HIS PHILOSOPHY OF THE JEWS AS THE "AM HATORAH"

Societies and Nations

Hashem created an imperfect world for man to perfect. *Adam HaRishon's* test was whether he would faithfully follow that which *Hashem* decreed to be "good" and

"just," or whether he would decide what was good and just on his own. In eating from the *eitz hada'as* because it was good to him, Adam chose the latter path. In following his own independent values, he laid the foundation for a human history of war and injustice. Since the dispersion at *Migdal Bovel* (the Tower of Babel), nations and their agendas have become the major players in ongoing history. In telling us that each nation has its own spiritual *sar* (ministering angel), *Chazal* (the rabbis of the Talmud) clarify that nations are not merely collections of individuals, but are integrated spiritual units — good, or evil.

An independent state allows national identification. Ideally, it also serves as a means to bring law, order and values to its citizens. Unfortunately, national collective egoism frequently manifests itself in a nationalism that sanctions its adherents to run roughshod over justice. Nationalism can subvert all of man's wonderful ideals, and is the cause of history's constant wars.

Other Religions

For some time after the *Dor Haflaga* (the generation of the Tower of Babel), religions were functions of nationalities. The Greek philosophers began making inroads against this system. The juggernaut of Roman conquest vanquished it. Clearly, no "national" deity had saved its nationality from the Roman legions. In despair, the nations of the world turned to Judaism's message of one G-d, Creator of the Universe, merciful and kind. But not completely.

The symbol of the new religion was a corpse on a cross. Man cannot perfect the world. Man needs to be "saved." Christianity is not a religion of *avoda* (service to G-d), but of *yeshu'a* (salvation). When that salvation tarried, Christianity became the "Church" —

another form of nationalism that demanded fealty — and waged wars to that end. To avoid the clash between state and religion, religion had to be attenuated — such as in Protestantism, suppressed — as in Communism; or separated — as in our country.

The Distinction of Am Yisroel

With His command to Avraham of *Lech Lecha* ("Go... to the land that I will show you"), Hashem set

the course of a chosen nation, distinguished from the others. Not a religion, not a philosophy, but a nation. To alter the course of history, one must deal with history on its own terms. *Avraham Avinu* was the *av hamon goyim*. He and his descendants were to be Hashem's partners in setting the course of history.

We were exiled to Egypt to learn that even the most advanced nations become unjust and inhumane when their per-

To alter the course of history, one must deal with history on its own terms. *Avraham Avinu* was the *av hamon goyim*. He and his descendants were to be Hashem's partners in setting the course of history.

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ceived national interests are at stake. Our exodus from Egypt paralleled *Avraham Avinu's* exit from *Ur Kasdim*. We were not freed to pursue our "own" national agenda within general history. We had learned the error of such pursuits. *Hashem* chose us to represent Him and His agenda to all nations. Our G-d is not a national deity, but "*melech goyim Elokim*,"² the King of nations.

Our nation does have a constitution — the Torah. The Torah, however, is not an arbitrary collection of principles and laws. The Torah to Israel is as the laws of nature are to Creation. As the synthesis of nature and its laws is inescapable, the synthesis of Jews and their Torah is unbreakable. Laws of nature are not subject to free will. Jews can rebel against the Torah, but they cannot escape it. Our Torah is our destiny and it is our "nature."

²A digression into Agudist history: Largely, the course that Agudath Israel was to follow was the subject a "family feud"—within the Frankfurt Hirschian community—between Dr. Breuer and *Moreinu* Yaakov Rosenheim ז"ר. Mr. Rosenheim emphasized the Agudah's role as a union of *Shomrei Torah u'Mitzvos*, guided by *Gedolei Torah*. Dr. Breuer was not satisfied with this role. The essence of their dispute is captured by the phrases they each favored. Mr. Rosenheim was fond of the phrase "*Klal Yisroel*." Dr. Breuer found this phrase inadequate, as it implies a societal grouping and does not emphasize our character as a nation. Dr. Breuer's phrase of choice, therefore, was "*Am Yisroel*."

The Role of Eretz Yisroel

The nations of the world are identified by and with their lands. *Am Yisroel* was forged in the desert, as remotely removed as possible from identification with a land. Without Torah, there is no *Am Yisroel*. Without *Eretz Yisroel*, there still is an *Am Yisroel*.³

The chosen land lies at the geographic crossroad of the world — to influence the world. *Eretz Yisroel* is the land of the Torah, the land of *Hashem*. Since *Am Yisroel* is the independent nation, *Eretz Yisroel* should be the independent land; "independent" meaning accepting no other authority but that of *Hashem*. Nation and land are destined to unite and together fulfill the eternal task of bringing Torah into Creation. They are like husband and wife: their unity is a tool for enhancing Divine Presence. When they are separated, however, their tasks are not diminished. *Eretz Yisroel's* desolation when not

³Another digression: While Dr. Breuer was a fervent opponent of Zionism — even of Religious Zionism — he nevertheless emphasized the centrality of *Mitzvas Yishuv Ha'Aretz* in Judaism. His Torah Nationalism demanded this focus. This perspective was another point of internal dispute among Agudist ideologues. Those who focused on the development of *Klal Yisroel*, the community of *Charedim lidvar Hashem*, did not accord *Yishuv Ha'Aretz* greater value than any other *mitzva*. To Dr. Breuer, however, *Yishuv Ha'Aretz*, at least as an ideal, was a high priority in the ongoing task of building Torah autonomy.

inhabited by its nation is also a manifestation of the unique character of the land — its independence.

The Instructive Pattern of Our History

Our history tells of struggles to educate us to our task. Before his death, *Moshe Rabbeinu* admonishes us that we will rebel against our role. *Sefer Shoftim* and *Sefer Melachim* are replete with the stories of our failures. Our warriors and kings — heroes that other nations might celebrate in songs and sagas — are critiqued solely on the criterion of their dedication to *Hashem's* master plan. The state's value is gauged by its achievements in *Hashem's* justice and law.

Nevi'im, whose universal prophecies proclaim the vision upon which *Am Yisroel* is founded, maintained the eternal chain of *Mesora*. Even when the failure of the state resulted in *Galus Bavel*, that chain continued unbroken.

After a miraculous victory over Greek culture, a Torah state arose again. The Torah's laws of nature, however, do not allow for *kohanim* to serve as *melachim*; priests are not to be kings. The Torah state gave way to Herod's state. Herod was a vassal of Rome, the greatest enemy of the Torah. Rome developed the ideas of nationalism, national autonomy and power to their ultimate degrees. Its ideology laid the foundation for all subsequent history, with a vision that stands in direct contradiction to the vision of *Hashem*, His Torah and His nation. Jews, who stubbornly refuse to yield to national and nationalistic values and priorities, are the great enemy of Rome and its successors, the states it spawned, and the Church.

With what weapon do we fight against Rome? Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai came to Vespasian not to request sovereignty, but to ask for *Yavneh v'Chachomeha*. There would no longer be kings or *kohanim gedolim*. *Nevu'a* was already but a memory. The *Sanhedrin* would soon become extinct as well. But not before legislating laws that would maintain our unique nationhood. The Torah demands that *Am Yisroel* never

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submit to circumstances and become a "religion." The Torah requires complete, overriding attention and dedication, that we remain "chareidim lidvar Hashem." It is only in light of this demand that our love of our land can be understood. All nations love their lands, perhaps no less than we love ours. A nation severed from its home-

land, however, soon loses its love for that land. People that lose their distinct national identity, lose their identification with its land. Chazal and the Torah itself demand of us to retain our essence as a Torah nation no matter where circumstances physically place us. That Torah nationalism weds us to Eretz Yisroel. We remain true to our beloved spouse, and it has remained true to us, yielding its bounties to none other than its partner, the Torah nation.

One practical vestige of nationhood remained with Am Yisroel throughout history: the Kehilla. A Kehilla is not a "community." It is a miniature replica of the Torah state, a living embodiment of the Mesora that preserves the collective memory of Torah independence.

The Immediacy of Torah Shebe'al Peh

Torah Shebi'Ksav has influenced all the nations of the world. The secret of our uniqueness is Torah Shebe'al Peh, the vehicle by which we bring "Malchus," Hashem's vision of Divine autonomy, to fruition in this world. No other nation teaches its law to its grammar school students. Science, history, mathematics, languages — but not law. Law is exclusively for those who choose it as a profession. In our schools, Divine justice and Divine law is the core of the curriculum, and the success of that schooling is our most precious aspiration.

Eretz Yisroel is the land of the Torah, the land of Hashem. Am Yisroel is the independent nation. Eretz Yisroel should be the independent land; "independent" meaning accepting no other authority but that of Hashem. Nation and land are destined to unite and together fulfill the eternal task of bringing Torah into Creation.

Other nations phrase their laws in the most abstract way possible. Such abstraction divorces law from life, making it the domain of the few experts. Their national identity is distinct from their law. Our law is our national identity. Its form is that of cases — the language of real life. Its study is universal.

Ideally, Torah Shebe'al Peh must be verbal — alive. The creation of the Mishna was necessitated by the terrible dispersion. The wonder of the Mishna is the extent to which it remained Be'al Peh, in its terseness and brevity. Even the Gemora is not a law book. It is neither systematic nor scientific. It frustrates non-Jews, and is the first thing forsak-

en by our own rebels. In the Beis Midrash, however, the Gemora becomes alive, electrifying and exhilarating. The yeshiva bachur studying Zevachim is in the Beis haMikdash. The ben Torah learning Sanhedrin experiences the Torah state. Torah Shebe'al Peh is Am Yisroel's dynamic force. Its study elevates us to the high-

er realms that are its sources, from which we draw the tools to fulfill our destiny. We are constantly challenged to impose the eternity of Torah Shebe'al Peh on new situations. Its analysis consistently yields new discoveries and fresh insights. Thus, Torah Shebe'al Peh eludes final codification. No sefer causes more renewed "live" analysis than our greatest code, the Rambam's Mishneh Torah.

Objective and Subjective Judaism

Mitzvos are laws. They must be kept, whether we understand them or not. Torah, however, does not suppress individuality. There

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is a distinct subjective element to Judaism. Throughout our history, great thinkers from among us developed new perspectives and frameworks of "ta'amei hamitzvos." In a broader sense,

ta'amei hamitzvos include the pursuit of the "spirit" of the mitzvos; methods by which we shape our hearts with ahava and yirah; ways with which to deal with the great problems of the spirit, eternal questions of free will and destiny, and more. Here, too, Hashem insured constant "chiddush." The ongoing development of new schools of Avodas Hashem guarantees that the subjective element of Torah Shebe'al Peh always meets the needs of the generation.

Changes with the Advent of Modernity

While Am Yisroel thrived and developed, Europe languished in the Dark Ages. Its

culture had no temptations to offer, and, in any event, for the most part it imprisoned the Jew behind the Ghetto's walls. Small was the spiritual threat to our nationhood.

The nineteenth century brought new philosophies. It stressed science and culture. Visions of human rights, freedom and liberty — even for Jews — swept across Europe. Social emancipation brought down the walls of the ghetto. Hashem posed a new challenge to Am Yisroel: Was it the hatred of the nations that had preserved it, or had it been its own free will, which could now survive new freedom?

The first Jew to confront the new course of history was Moses Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn did not debate the new European values. While Mendelssohn was a ma'amin, he did not believe in the G-d that redeemed His nation from Egypt, gave them His Torah at Sinai, and chose them to impose His vision on history, to confront the rebellious autonomy of nationalism with Divine autonomy. Mendelssohn's G-d was the L-rd of heavens and earth, Father of mankind, a good G-d who wants His children to be good as well. The fire of Am Yisroel's history and mission, however, did not burn within Mendelssohn's soul. Not its past, nor its future. Judaism was a religion, to be lived, in the present. Mendelssohn loved his religion and his nation, yet he also loved European culture. How did he resolve the contradictions? By retaining his personal allegiance to Judaism — as his religion — yet simultaneously investing his entire being in European culture — as his life.

His successors uncritically embraced the new philosophies. To fully enjoy the new rights of citizenship, they had to reject the idea of a Jewish nation. Jews had to become "Germans of the Mosaic faith." Mendelssohn's love of Judaism prevented him from personally forsaking halacha. His followers, however, correctly perceived that laws are functions of nations. If Judaism is but a religion — a personal faith — it cannot impose law. The ultimate arbiter of personal faith is the person himself. If

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we are to convince others to share our faith, the "Reformers" reasoned, we must make our religion appealing to them. Laws, difficult and no longer relevant, went quickly.

The Views of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch viewed emancipation neither as a Divine gift nor as the work of Satan, but as a challenge to apply Torah to a new reality. In theory, the more areas of endeavor open to the Jews, the greater the possibilities to develop a comprehensive Torah driven national life. Fighting to maintain the past would suggest that Torah was weak, that it could not address, harness and influence history. The Torah could overcome and govern any reality, impose its purpose on any legitimate idealism.

Rabbi Hirsch engaged the prevailing focus on nature and humanity. His premise: Both nature's and man's perfection are attained through Torah. The *Am HaTorah* is the nation most concerned with and most accomplished in human perfection.

In a Torah state, all areas of endeavor, all of *derech erez*, must be scale applications of *Am Yisroel's* total mission. Emancipation provided the *Am HaTorah* with the opportunity to develop in that direction. Emancipation could be seen as the final leg of

Galus on the road to *Ge'ula*. *Torah im Derech Eretz* meant, in short: "Be *Am Yisroel* in the full meaning of the term."

The First Battlelines are Drawn — The Separate Kehilla

If even in exile, *Am Yisroel* was to be an *Am HaTorah*; if in lieu of a state there was a *kehilla*; if the autonomy of Judaism was the autonomy of *Hashem*; then how could Torah-true Jews make peace with belonging to a *kehilla* with "Reformers" who systematically sheared Judaism of its identity? Even if the general *kehilla* would support "Orthodox" institutions and "ritual requirements" — how could a Jew in whom the fire of national destiny burned join a framework that tolerated rebellion and transgression? Rabbi Hirsch battled mightily for the right to separate from the general community. In doing so, he laid the cornerstone of the future Agudah's ideology.

Others disagreed. They saw in the general *kehilla's* concessions a sentiment of *teshuva*. They thought to influence their estranged brethren. They did not understand that while one must extend a hand to individual sinners, the *kehilla*, the *Am*, can have but one constitution, one basis — the Torah. In not drawing that distinction, they laid the philosophical cornerstone of the Mizrahi.

Chazal and the Torah itself demand of us to retain our essence as a Torah nation no matter where circumstances physically place us. That Torah nationalism weds us to *Eretz Yisroel*. We remain true to our beloved spouse, and it has remained true to us, yielding its bounties to none other than its partner, the Torah nation.

The Intrusion of Modern Nationalism

Ironically, the assimilationist tendencies, the "Protestantization" of Judaism, led to new, more terrible forms of Anti-Semitism. Animosity no longer centered on the Jewish religion, but on the Jewish race. An assimilated Jew of the West heard — and was shocked by — the racial slurs. He sought to rectify the "Jewish Problem" by enhancing the Jews' status — by

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empowering them, by seeking a land and a country. He boldly spoke the language of independence and Jewish national identity, as no man had done in the past two thousand years. That man was Theodore Herzl.

Simultaneously, the *Maskilim* of the East looked for a way to "renew" Jewish culture. *Achad Ha'am* held that Jewish culture was stifled by the oppression of the exile. Given its freedom in its own land, who knows what new spiritual achievements the nation might attain? They might create some new book for human-

ity, just as they once created the Torah....

Herzl's Zionism came as a shock to the West. He did not identify himself as an "Austrian of the Mosaic faith," but as a "Jew, part of the Jewish nation." The very idea turned many Jews on the verge of baptism back to their roots. Here lies the positive aspect of Zionism, its success at changing Judaism back from a faith to a nation. It restored the Jewish nation to the center of history, to its rightful place as a nation playing a decisive role in the history of nations.

Here too lies the danger of Zionism.

Reform is not an alternative to real Judaism — it has no place for an *Am*. Zionism is an alternative. It focuses on an *Am*, but not on the *Am* of the *Am HaTorah*. Zionism's nationalism is that of all the other nations. To the extent that it has "Jewish values," they are but the values of Mendelssohn's successors - those of personal (or no) faith, not those revealed at Sinai.

The Challenges of The Twentieth Century

Europe's new culture lulled its elite into a false tranquility. Philosophies of extreme individualism and libertarianism led the elite to forsake nationalism. But others took up the cause. A new, radical nationalism, drunk on national autonomy, arose, and nationalized laws to its own ends. Powerful cravings for national autonomy consumed all the eighteenth century's visions of justice, good and beauty.

After the war, briefly, the nations felt the need for a transcendent system of law that would bring true peace. To that end, they created the League of Nations. The League established the British Mandate in *Eretz Yisroel*. Miraculously, the nations of the world recognized the national character of *Am Yisroel*. Social and national emancipation had forced *Am Yisroel* into the arena of general history. It now compelled us to engage in its debate, to apply our destiny to new conditions, to rise to new tasks. The mandate was a challenge to utilize the paramount tool of Divine autonomy, *Eretz Yisroel*. In 1926, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld זצ"ל asked Dr. Breuer: "What is with the Torah diaspora? Does it not see the *etzba Elokim* at work here? I now understand the *Musaf* of *Yom Tov*: 'Because of our sins we were exiled from our land and distanced from our soil.' Redundancy? No! We were exiled from our land by *Hashem*, and then we distanced ourselves...."

The Role of Agudath Israel

The drive to found Agudath Israel was born, in Germany, of two catalysts: the pogroms in the East

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and Zionism. The Agudah was to grapple with these issues. Not as a worldwide relief organization. Not as a mutual aid society in the battle against secular Zionism. Not as a "religious" movement. Rather, as the collective *Am HaTorah*, questing to establish and enhance Divine autonomy. To this end, Rabbi Salomon Breuer and Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik זצ"ל agreed that the Agudah would recognize autonomous Orthodox organizations in each country as scale models of the *Am HaTorah* in Galus and as its constituent elements. The Agudah was to raise the banner of *Malchus* in *Klal Yisroel*.

The next step, Dr. Breuer contended, was for the Agudah to act as *the Am HaTorah*. The Agudah was to take upon itself the historical destiny of *Am Yisroel* as a nation — with a vision and a task in history. The Agudah was to influence and shape the course of that history according to the agenda of Divine autonomy dictated at Sinai: "*Mamleches Kohanim v'Goy Kadosh!*" "...Agudism demands the preparation and training of the *Am Hashem* and the *Eretz Hashem*, so that they should again unite to form the state of *Hashem* under the governance of *Hashem's* law."

In line with this philosophy, Dr. Breuer and others proposed that no one could hold office in Agudath Israel if he belonged to a *Kehilla* or other group not committed to the principle of an independent Torah-ruled Orthodoxy. This proposal, however, was not adopted, because in most of Eastern Europe, separatist Orthodox *Kehillos* did not exist and indeed the idea was totally alien. Adopting this rule, Rosenheim and others felt, would in effect write off the bulk of Eastern European Orthodoxy. (The author expresses gratitude to

*From a 1921 essay: "The Agudist Vision," quoted in *Moriah* pp. 212-213. Dr. Breuer in *Moriah* details the history of the Agudah and its accomplishments. While that history is essential to any understanding of current events, it is beyond the scope of this essay. It is particularly fascinating to follow Dr. Breuer's description of the battle that the autonomous *Yishuv* in *Yerushalayim*, newly affiliated with Agudath Israel, waged against the Zionist institutions and their hegemony on religious issues. He sees that struggle as a replica of Rabbi Samson Raphael's Hirsch's struggle in Frankfurt.

Rabbi Joseph Elias for the above insight.)

World Status Between the Wars

The peace imposed by the Allies after the first World War was to be sustained by the League of Nations. International relations, however, are not governed by ideals. The union in a League was but a treaty. Treaties cannot redeem mankind; only justice and law can save humanity. A League of Nations, a forum for vying national interests, is not a forum to elevate human aspirations. Were the League to have embarked on a campaign of universal education toward law and justice, perhaps it might have succeeded. Local curriculums, however, remained the curriculums of the localities and their nationalism. The tragedy that had beset mankind since the *Dor Haflaga* continued unabated. (Current events in *Eretz Yisroel* reflect those difficulties. Shorn of Sinai's historical destiny, the struggles of Jews and Arabs in Israel are but battles of opposing national identities.)

What the Nazis כ"י Knew

One of history's tragic ironies is that our bitterest enemy realized the truth about us to a greater extent that any nation that preceded

them. They declared war against the *Am of Am Yisroel* — world over. National emancipation had succeeded in establishing *Am Yisroel's* national identity. The Nazis recognized *Am Yisroel's* unique role in history and fought it to the death — not army against army, but might against justice. Nazism knows no ethics, no justice, no morality. It is National Socialism — social justice based solely on nationalistic considerations and race. It is the ultimate brazenness and violence of autonomy and nationalism against the basic ideal of "*Tzelem Elokim*." It is no less than the war of the *Sitra Achra* against *Hashem*.

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The Nazis' might was their god; their law was derived from their might. The most highly developed culture in history succumbed to the drives of brazen nationalism. It nationalized justice and law, and in the process reverted to the most elementary and radical barbarism. Only a fool could believe that wars caused by these forces cannot recur. Even democracy will ultimately fail to restrain the power of such extreme nationalism. Only Hashem's law and justice can harness such forces.

III. OUR TASK

Dr. Breuer challenges us to approach history with a perspective on the unfolding of Hashem's master plan for Creation. His term for this perspective is "meta-history." History is the story of independent man and his independent nations and states. It is also the account of the debate between the will of the Creator and man's egoistical will. The great devel-

opment and volatile nature of modern secular culture have intensified that debate. Competing visions — none of which can truly resolve history's problems — have lead to ever more frequent outbreaks of war. Society becomes ever sicker, as extreme libertarian individualism (the descendant of *Adam HaRishon's* sin) clashes with extreme nationalism (the heir to the sin of *Dor Haflaga*). The destiny of *Am Yisroel* is to bring the perspective of meta-history to bear on history, and to shape its course.

It is precisely in *Eretz Yisroel* that the battle is most obviously pitched: A spiritual battle against the vision of *Am Yisroel* as a nation among nations. There must arise among us new Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkais to build new *Yavneh v'Chachomehas*, to promote the meta-history of Divine nationalism. Our ultimate goal must be to answer the call of history and destiny: To unite the *Am HaTorah* with the land of Torah to forge a state of Torah.

We may not consider ourselves inad-

equate for the task. *Avinu Malkeinu* will help us establish His autonomy: "To unite all of *Am Yisroel* under the rule of the Torah, and to establish the Torah's governance of all the spiritual, financial and political spheres of *Am Yisroel's* life in *Eretz Yisroel*." Torah-true Jews in the diaspora must participate in the process as well. We must raise the voices of a Messianic *Am*, an *Am* whose entire essence is Divine justice and law. We must show the entire world that only our Torah can serve as the source of life and peace. Upon us devolve the following essential tasks:

1. Talmud Torah — *kenegged kulam*.
2. *Kiddush Shem Shamayim*: To display to ourselves and to our misled brethren the beauty of Torah life, both within our homes and in our interpersonal relationships.
3. Awareness of our period and our responsibility. To assess our lives from the perspective of: What have we done to bring the *Geula* closer?
4. To love all of *Am Yisroel*. To utilize every means to bring those who have gone astray closer to our Father and King.
5. To train talented leaders, to arouse the nation in *Eretz Yisroel* and in the diaspora, to organize the *Am HaTorah*, and to imbue it with a powerful will.
6. To fulfill directives of the *Gedolei Torah* that stand at the helm of the *Am HaTorah*, and with that discipline to generate a dynamism and freshness that will transcend any pettiness.

Conclusion

Dr. Breuer concludes *Moriah* with Rabbi Hirsch's exhortation to his fellow Jews, a charge as relevant to the tests of the present as it was to the emancipation of European Jewry:

...Let us arise and be *Yehudim*, *Yehudim* in the fullest meaning of the word, permeated by the spirit of Torah as the source of life. Then the spirit of *Yahadus* will also greet the Emancipation joyously, as a broader manner in which to fulfill the Torah's demands, and in which to bring the Torah's program for our lives to complete realization. ■

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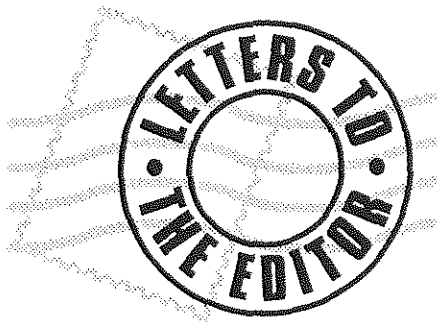
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REVIEWER'S NOTE

The review of Rabbi Akiva Tatz's book *Worldmask* (JO, May '96) indicated that the book was not footnoted or sourced. That is not entirely accurate, for the book is sourced in a special reference section in the back of the volume. Footnotes were eschewed to permit a smooth flow of the text.

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ABANDONING SINGLEHOOD: RISKY, BUT WORTH IT

To the Editor:

I was very interested in Yaakov Astor's, "The Singles Crisis," in the April '96 issue. I myself experienced several very difficult years of searching before encountering my wonderful *zivug*, *Baruch Hashem*, two years ago.

One point I would like to mention is that the "Singles Crisis" seems to be nothing new, and in fact things may be better today than in previous generations. We have probably all heard stories about *yeshiva bachurim* in Europe who could not marry until well into their thirties, since few girls were interested in marrying a boy who didn't have a good job. And then there are stories of girls in the *shtetlach* whose hair turned white waiting for their parents to arrange a suitable dowry. Unfortunately, in every time and place there have probably been a significant minority of people who just didn't manage to get married for whatever reason until middle age, and sometimes not even then.

Regarding those people who are afraid of marriage, I would like to say that I myself was terrified; however, I found one concept that convinced me to take the plunge: True, marriage is a dangerous gamble. There are no guarantees at all of how it will turn out. However, turning down a reasonable offer is infinitely more dangerous. Who knows if something better will later come along? And when? And what types of terrible spiritual dangers is a person exposing himself to until then? Therefore, going ahead and getting married when something decent comes along is simply the safer of the two options.

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HOW TO HEAD OFF THE SINGLES CRISIS BEFORE IT CONFRONTS YOU

To the Editor:

It was with great interest that I read "The Singles Crisis," as there is a member of the single community right in my immediate family. I witness with my own eyes the suffering of the singles that the author speaks of, and also the intense suffering of the parents, who watch their dreams of marrying off all their children dim with each passing year, as the single child wanders about, frustrated, isolated from friends, sometimes moving into his or her own apartment.

I bear personal witness to the suffering of the siblings, who stand by feeling helpless even as they try to offer words of encouragement or come up with one more name that just might be "The One."

I applaud the author for the ideas set forth in the article, and look forward to seeing such an organization become reality. Permit me, though, to address a few words to parents of children approaching *shidduch* age, or who have already started the search for a *shidduch*: *Wake up! Wake up and hear the clock ticking!!!* This is not the time to sit back and relax. Now is the time to go on high alert and make an all-out effort to find a *shidduch* for your child.... Now, when they are young and still listen to sound words of advice from their parents.... Now when they are still well-enclosed within the framework of the family. Once these young people have had a chance to go out into the world, they feel that they know better. Their expectations change. They have time to observe their friends' spouses and decide what they like or don't like. The picture that they have in their minds of the "Right One" suddenly takes on color and definition, and they are no longer interested in anyone who doesn't look exactly like that picture. The dreaded expression "He/She is not for me" becomes the final word after each date.

If your daughter has just turned eighteen, by all means hold out for everything on your wish list. But once the

years begin to slip by, shed all those layers of insubstantial fluff in rapid succession. Forget about money, *yichus* and social standing. Leave behind your preconceived notions of what country of origin you would most like your prospective *mechutanim* to have hailed from. By all means, swallow your pride and call back friends/neighbors/*shadchanim* who have mentioned *shidduchim* to you. Concentrate instead on the root of the *shidduch*—the boy or girl your child will be marrying. *Does she have good middos? Is he a ben Torah? Not: Is she a world-class beauty? Is he at least 5'10" with the latest Borsalino hat?* Of course, I am not *challila* suggesting pushing your child into something he/she does not want. But do show your child what is important, and impress upon her that it is time to get married.

If you carry on about what kind of house the girl lives in, of course your son will not be interested in anyone who doesn't match up, especially if more time goes by and you begin to get desperate. He simply won't want anyone to say that

he "settled" for less than the best.

And if you think twenty is too young for a boy to get married, just remember us—the suffering families of the suffering singles; marrying off your child on the young side will suddenly seem like a highly desirable alternative.

Certainly, the above is not to be taken to mean that parents are to blame, and certainly this cautionary note is not the answer for everybody. There are too many different circumstances, and no two situations are alike. And of course, there are those for whom eighteen or twenty is far too young. This is simply food for thought for those entering the *shidduch parsha*.

And one final word. Pray. Let us all pour out our hearts in prayer that the *Mezaveg Zevugim* (the Divine Matchmaker) will send the "Right One" to each and every one of those searching for a partner in marriage.

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An Opinion Unfit to Print

Though the national media have repeatedly focused on the newly-increased religious-party representation in the Israeli Knesset, and on its likely impact on American efforts to export "Jewish religious pluralism" to the Jewish State, The New York Times declined to publish the opinion piece below, penned by Agudath Israel president and co-chairman of the Agudath Israel World Organization Rabbi Moshe Sherer.

The "paper of record" claimed that the piece merely articulated a long-established position, one well-known to the American public.

Were it only so.

WHAT IS GENUINE JEWISH UNITY?

by: Rabbi Moshe Sherer

The wringing of hands is so intense it is almost audible.

The strong showing by religious parties in the recent Israeli elections has elicited cries of dismay and anguish by Reform, Conservative and secular Jewish spokesmen who rail against the "Orthodox monopoly" in the Holy Land. Most galling to these proponents of "Jewish religious pluralism" is that the increased Orthodox presence in the Knesset will likely assure that matters of personal status — marriage, divorce, Jewish identity — will continue to be determined in Israel in accordance with the standards of classical Jewish religious law. The likely reaffirmation of the State's official embrace of Orthodoxy, they despair, will foster further divisions among a Jewish people desperately in need of unity.

The truth, however, is quite to the contrary: *Genuine* Jewish unity is promoted, not undermined, by Israel's adherence to Orthodox standards governing personal status; and it is cause for celebration, not consternation, that Israel's electorate has strengthened the hand of those who favor retention of the religious status quo.

Consider the most basic issue of Jewish identity. All Jews accept, and have accepted for thousands of years, that anyone born to a Jewish *mother* or who converts to Judaism in accordance with Jewish law is a Jew.

In recent years, however, non-Orthodox

Rabbi Sherer is president of Agudath Israel of America, and chairman of the Agudath Israel World Organization.

groups have decided to expand the definition. Most notably, the Reform movement has unilaterally declared that anyone born to a Jewish *father* is a Jew, regardless of the mother's religious identity. Also, both the Reform and Conservative movements have loosened standards for conversion. As a result of these "innovations," countless thousands of people the world over are in a religious Twilight Zone: counted as Jews in certain segments of the Jewish community, but as Gentiles in others.

The bottom line, therefore, is that people who satisfy the Orthodox criteria for "Jewishness" are universally acknowledged as Jews. Beyond that historical standard of classical Jewish law lies controversy and disunity.

The same is true with respect to the issues of marriage and divorce. Jewish law imposes restrictions on whom a Jew may marry, and how a divorce is to be effectuated. But the Reform movement has done away with many of those restrictions.

The upshot: a clear dichotomy between marriages and divorces performed pursuant to Orthodox standards, which are acceptable to *all* Jews; and those performed pursuant to Reform standards, which are acceptable only to *some*.

Faced with such pronounced differences within the Jewish community on the most fundamental issues of personal status, what path is available to the Jewish State that is most likely to promote unity? The path of "religious pluralism," whereby Israel would embrace standards that deviate from classical Jewish teaching and are flatly rejected by many Jews the world over? Or the historical path of Jewish law, whereby the State would adhere to the one

set of standards over whose acceptability there is no controversy whatsoever?

The answer was self-evident even at the very founding of the Jewish State to no less a secularist than David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister. In making his historic commitment to the Agudath Israel World Organization that the new State would look to classical Jewish law in determining matters of personal status, Ben-Gurion wrote of the urgent need "to avoid the splitting of the Jewish people." The need is surely no less urgent today.

We Orthodox Jews are profoundly pained by the schismatizing of the Jewish population. We are, moreover, deeply saddened to hear *ourselves* blamed for Jewish disunity when we have done nothing but try to remain faithful to the collective Jewish heritage. Pointing an angry finger at the Orthodox as the instigators and perpetrators of division, we feel, is like blaming a faithful spouse for the breakup of a marriage. The fault lies with those who have strayed.

But we have hope. What is broken can be put together once again. Jews of all stripes are beginning to recognize that the greatest challenge facing Jews today is how to assure Jewish continuity — the survival of Jews in future generations as a distinctive people with a distinctive heritage and a distinctive religious mission.

With that recognition, perhaps, will come reconciliation. For just as classical Judaism furnishes the one personal status standard around which all Jews can coalesce, so too does it furnish the one foundation on which Jewish continuity can be assured.

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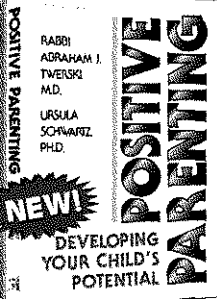
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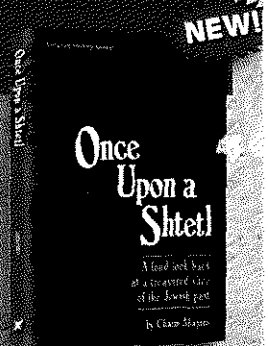
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