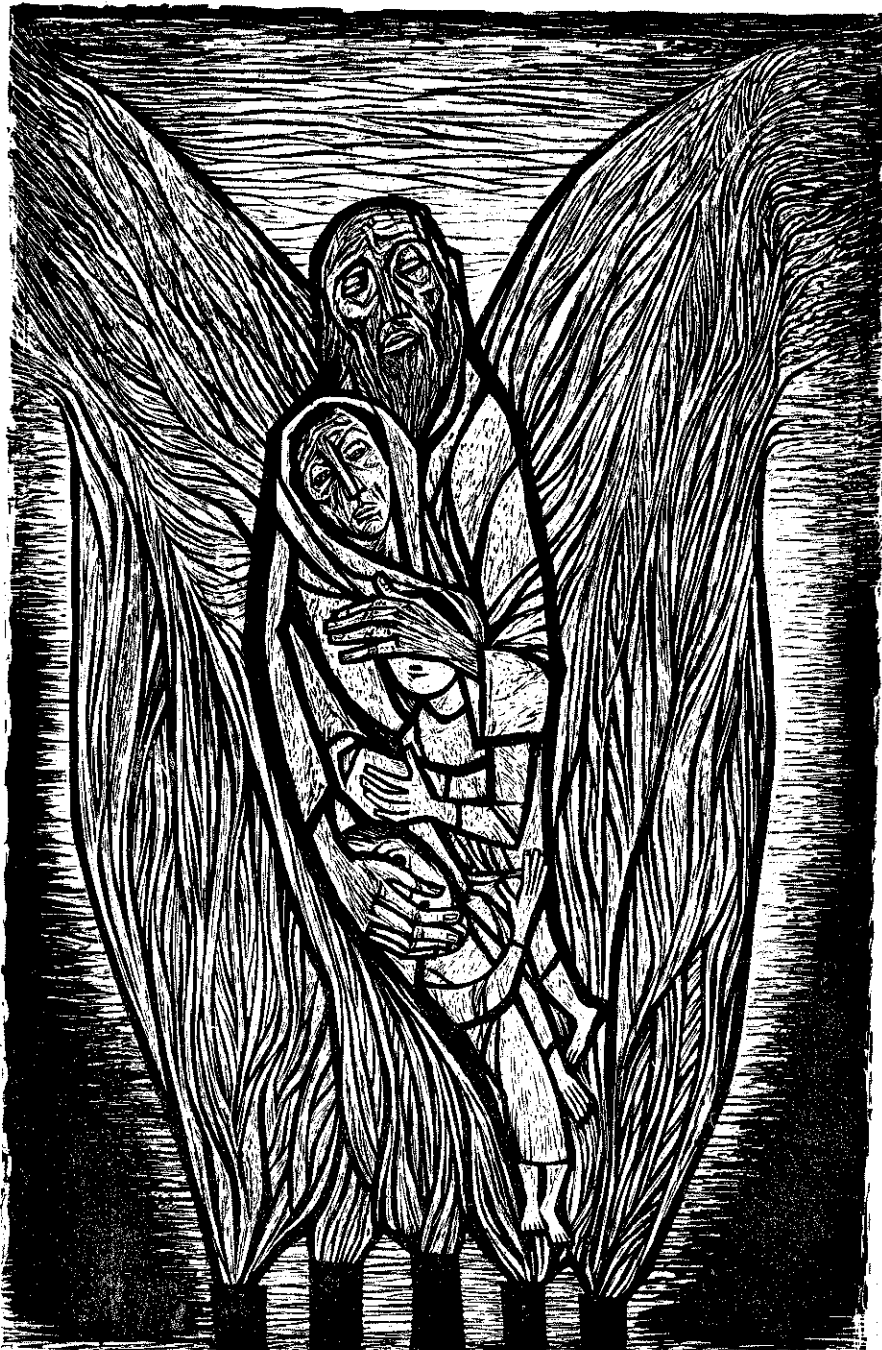


THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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Siegmund Forst

Who's Afraid —
Me?

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Two Jewish Peoples

•

Every Jew Counts

•

The Miracle of
Williamsburg

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Book Reviews

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Second Looks at
The Jewish Scene

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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the cover

A design for a wood-cut by SIEGMUND FORST.

Who's Afraid — Me?

In this essay, Mr. Forst describes the crisis of modern culture reflected in the arts, the sciences, and the philosophic thought of our time. He finds in these areas the reflection of a deep-seated anxiety and lack of meaning from which modern man seems unable to free himself. The modern Jew, Mr. Forst observes, is particularly afflicted by this alienation.

As against this hopelessness, the author points out that the solution to the problem of existential despair lies in an understanding of "the Jewish problem."

IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME that there was hardly an epoch in which man has not thought himself to be at a "turning point" in history. This awareness of being in a process of transformation and the intensity of this feeling depend upon the accentuation of particular events and the degree of sensitivity of the generation. However, it is difficult today to perceive the immense and rapid changes which confront man with entirely new and stunning aspects of existence in its totality, and to preserve at the same time the cautious restraint of historical objectivity.

What are the most pertinent facts of our time and what is the common denominator which will help us to find a formula which will systematize the multiplicity of events and help us to relate them to ourselves?

What are the most revealing facts?

Is it the unimaginable *smallness* into which we can split time and matter, which has opened itself before the eyes of man; or is it the infinite bigness of an ever-expanding universe into whose peripheries of endless light-years we shoot our toy rockets?

Is it between these two abysses, the infinitely small and infinitely big that man stands, as Pascal said in his time?

Is it the imminent danger of automation which opens a frightful vista of dispensability of man coupled with a "population explosion"?

Is it the danger of nuclear war?

We are also confronted by a "cultural explosion" which produces a hunger for values which no longer

exist, resulting in profound anxiety. The intellectual awareness of the immensity of the problems has resulted in a rebellious temper which rejects vehemently anything which presumes to be an answer, while unable to produce one itself. Kierkegaard once observed, that to the degree that truth increases in extent, certitude decreases.

Many have taken refuge in the existential concept that man has to *endure* life which itself is meaningless. All that one can achieve is *homeostasis*—the maintenance of an equilibrium. One inevitably has to lose the battle against life—the important thing is, to lose it gracefully. It is this Greek element of tragic inevitability which is at the root of modern man's existential despair.

In one of Sartre's books which is appropriately titled "Nausea," he writes: "If I exist, it is because I am horrified at existing. I am the one who pulls myself from the nothingness which I desire, the hatred and the disgust of existing." Since there is nothing particularly right and nothing particularly wrong, there is even nothing to fight for. Revolution, as it should be, is not *for* something, it is only *against* something, against what happens to be the "Establishment." The student's cry for "freedom" in the universities is not freedom *for* something, it is freedom *from* something.

It has become rather unsophisticated today to speak about "right" and "wrong." Actions for betterment of life and the conditions of man, in which some of the leading intellectuals take part, are—for them—more symbols of dissatisfaction and protest, than a genuine aim and purpose of life. In literature, obscenity has become a sign of intellectual honesty and some writers go out of their way in order not to be suspected of any humane idea.

SIGMUND FORST has written in the JESCHURUN which appeared in Berlin and in the JUDISCHE PRESSE of Vienna. His papers have appeared in Dr. Leo Jung's "The Jewish Library." Mr. Forst is a graphic artist and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

ART IS, OF COURSE, always the mirror of a time and there is an intrinsic link between—let us say Samuel Beckett's *End Game* and the paintings recently exhibited in a reputable gallery which consist of nothing but pitch-black-painted canvases. In this category too is the music from Ives to Stockhausen which rejects composition and aims at *decomposition*.

It would be a mistake to laugh away these phenomena as aberrations, made possible by the machinations of a clique of slick entrepreneurs and the verbalizations of scribblers who have skillfully programmed artistic tastes, for it takes a basic condition of a public to allow itself to be brainwashed and programmed. One cannot lightly dismiss manifestations which are attempts to shape despair, and express the dissolution and destruction of reality.

There is a tendency in art today which cannot be overlooked in this context. It is the desire to "take chances," "let's see what comes out of it," "let the color run." It reflects so perfectly well the present situation of man who, like a child, starts to operate a complicated high-powered machine, not knowing what will come out of it. And since man finds himself unable to burden the responsibility for what he is doing, he is eager to shift it to some authority which "knows." And this is how Art today clearly and unmistakably symbolizes the crisis of Democracy as a sustaining force in society.

It is indeed possible to say with overwhelming supporting evidence that what we see today are symptoms of a cultural dissolution which started at the end of the 19th Century in a generation which Hans Kohn once described as the happiest one of all. This dissolution predicted by Spengler 50 years ago, is inherent in Western Civilization itself—it was so from the very beginning.

The so-called Judeo-Christian concept carries in itself an elementary dichotomy. Franz Rosenzweig interpreted the role of Christianity as an indirect medium for Israel to act upon the world. And then there is the amalgamation with Greek thought and art which is in its essence tragic and fatalistic, despite, or better, because of its intense affirmation of the *Here* and the *Now*. This Judeo-Christian Western Civilization is since its beginning engaged in a gigantic attempt to free itself from its Jewish components which have injected in it a duality which it was never able to compromise.

Western man as he appears today in his alienation and existential frustration is a natural outcome of this condition. His dilemma remains because it is not accidentally but rather basically rooted in his structure. It is one of the fallacies of Marxist materialism that it is so narrowly concerned with its economic doctrine that it hopes to substitute *means* for *meaning*. Even after

economic order has been established, the absence of meaning remains as the cause of basic unhappiness. The obsessional optimist will glibly maintain that once economic misery is abolished, man will be free to devote himself to the "beautiful things of life." When the last Australian aborigine will have been introduced to atonal music and is able even to paint like Rauschenberg, he may be sound of body, but neurotic and unhappy of mind. He will only have acquired the Western dilemma which cannot bear reality and wants to destroy it in a gigantic death-wish.

Today it is not the scientist and the expert who is deeply aware of the great void. Endless specialization in ever more complicated fields has created types of the scientific mandarin. Their minds have been absorbed into the minuteness of the particular, which has grown to be an immense world for itself. Locked in the compartments of their own creation, they have lost the capacity to grasp the problems and see a totality in them. It takes precisely the average man to have the ability to be perplexed.

There emerges from all this an astonishing fact: not only has existence lost any tangible meaning in modern man's life, it is imminently threatened at any moment—and it has not produced *fear*. To have fear, where there is *no* reason for it, is a commonly-accepted symptom of insanity; not to have fear where there *is* reason, is no less a symptom of insanity. Perhaps it is that fatal insolence which the Greeks called *Hubris* and which precipitates disaster.

IS it possible in this context to single out that tiny segment of humanity—the Jews? The authentic Jew—and only with him are we here concerned, has always regarded himself as a meta-historical entity. (Isaac Breuer's term). His historical existence lends validity to this concept. (Toynbee in his "Reconsiderations" finds it hard to cope with this fact and tries frantically to overcome it by finding a historical parallel, and he finds it—in the Parsees!) The Church has seen—in a perverted way—Jewish existence as supernatural, and eminent Catholic thinkers such as Maritain explain that Jews are hated "because Jews are a meta-physical people and the others feel it." It takes the starry-eyed Jewish secularist to try to immunize himself against the Jewish mystery by fanatically denying it. Acknowledging it would mean an Either/Or which would be a threat to him.

It is amazing to note the consensus of a shallow rationalism which has embraced the minds of our estranged brethren when it comes to "explain" the crime of the greatest magnitude committed by man against our people; because explain they must, at all costs. Antisemitism to them becomes a product of socio-political factors; or if our brother happens to be

psychologically-oriented, it is a collective neurosis or the outcome of a deep-seated inferiority complex. In the case of Hitler and Nazi Germany, it was a calculated device, to shrewdly manipulate the masses against the Jew for a political end. It is all very clear. In the course of man's progress of humanization through the Ethical Culture Society and with the help of the American Jewish Congress, such events will never again take place. Only the escapist Jewish mind can be capable of such almost metaphysical stupidity which is akin to the theory that the "Jewish problem" will be solved and the Jewish people "normalized" by the existence of a Jewish State.

As to Nazi antisemitism, if one reads the available literature describing the development of the National Socialist movement created by an evil genius whose daemonic powers fascinated millions, inducing them to perpetrate an unheard of crime in the very center of civilization, how is it possible not to come to conclusions which lie outside the dimensions of historical perspective? One has only to read Hitler's testament which he wrote shortly before his suicide in the bunker of the Reichs Chancellery in Berlin when the Russian artillery was already pounding with heavy guns upon the roof—even at this moment his thoughts were focused on the Jews—the Jews, the Arch-enemy. The fanatical hatred of Jews which dominated that man from the very beginning when he wrote *Mein Kampf* until his last moments, cannot have been a calculated strategic means for political ends.

Significantly enough, it is the Jewish writer who surpasses all others in brazen superficiality, while Herrman Rauschnig (*The Redemption of Democracy*, 1941, p. 221) grasped more deeply and with more insight than many Jews the spiritual content contained in the Paganism and Nihilism inherent in the "*Bewegung*" as "movement for the sake of movement." "Antisemitism," he said, "is not a fringe problem, a symptom of our crisis, its importance is expressed by the fact that it is the very center of the National Socialist doctrine. . . . Hatred of the Jews is something like a subconscious reaction against the author of the Tablets of the Law in which good was distinguished from evil and the division based upon a divine will. . . . We must examine antisemitism for more than its political and social factors alone. . . . Behind the biological and racial excuse is a fundamental root of antisemitism: the hatred for the people of Israel, the chosen people on whom the revelation of G-d was bestowed. . . . Therefore antisemitism is always most conspicuous in times of spiritual crisis, of human uncertainty: not because 'distractions' are needed in such times, but because people grow weary of the burden of a higher life. . . . We are still summoned to Sinai today as always, and here is precisely the basis of antisemitism. . . . It is flight from an intellectual and moral demand upon oneself, refuge sought

in a material claim upon another, whom one can make responsible for one's own weakness and unhappiness. . . . The paradox is that the Jew himself helped to drown out the *summons to Sinai*."

It is therefore natural that we find in the Jewish deserter from authenticity that particular compulsion to deny it and thereby attempt to extricate himself from the eternal sting. An interesting case in this respect is Sigmund Freud in whom that compulsion appears more vehemently and less-thinly disguised. Ernest Jones in his remarkable biography of Freud points out the magic reaction with which Michaelangelo's statue of Moses fascinated Freud, who was drawn to it again and again when he visited Rome. We can understand why Freud came to write his *Moses and Monotheism* during his last years, in which he tried to deny the Jewish authenticity of Moses. The figure of Moses occupied his mind all his life. He just could not have him be real.

How can one deny the mystery of an eruption of unimaginable proportions appearing in the midst of a cultural tradition and civilisatory progress. This hatred against the Jew has set powerful forces in motion, ushered in the age of nuclear destruction, and introduced a new era of extension into the cosmos, and new worldshaking tensions which threaten the annihilation of this entire civilization. What an enormous lack of, if nothing else, historical sensitivity is required, not to see this entire development, initiated by a man whose hatred of Jews was his total credo. Forces have been set in motion by an embodiment of anti-Sinai which point to a new perspective and a complete metamorphosis of the structure and forces within this civilization—or to a world-wide catastrophe.

In the wake of all this we are producing constantly our peculiar species of escapists, the various "reformers" and "reconstructionists" and assimilationists vehemently waving the American or the Israeli flag, and often both.

There is no more fervent believer in Democracy as his ultimate salvation and the redemption of mankind than the American Jew who has lost his religion. We have permitted ourselves to be interpreted by an intelligentia which has lost its roots and has usurped our representation in the eyes of the world, adopting resolutions, organizing congresses, taking over the protection of Civil Liberties, manipulating political forces and making an unbearable nuisance of themselves—all in the name of the Jews. Political publicity-seekers and loud-mouthed busybodies are distorting the image of a people whose destiny it is to solve the personal misery of man, and which therefore, by its very nature, is not coordinable with an order which by *its* nature is fictitious and against which it has to protest.

WHAT are we to do? The more we come to realize the gravity of the crisis in which this globe finds itself, the more intensely we should become aware of our own and innermost being as a supernatural entity, which follows a lonely path above and beyond time with a mind directed towards the messianic fulfillment of the destiny of the world *which is our responsibility*. Because, seen with the eyes of the soul, man is not a product of nature, nature is rather a product of man. To represent and ultimately to establish the order of G-d is the *raison d'être* and the function of our people, and this is why it is basically set against the order of man and even against nature. And now it is when the two opposites meet—since man also is set against his own order which is striving rapidly towards the culmination point of its crisis. And we, after we have experienced a breakdown of an order, we have surefootedly stepped right back into it and geared ourselves anew to the wheels of a transient system at whose conveniences we grasp. Instead of having experienced the great catharsis—and this ostensibly must have been the purpose of the tragedy, otherwise it would have been senseless—we take part in the dance on top of the volcano. How was it possible to have

forgotten so quickly, in order to take part in the “affluent society” the very same one, we are predestined to rebel against? How is our present state of mind of industriousness and busy “practicality” reconcilable with *Saintliness* because that is in the last analysis what *ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש* amounts to.

We lead a schizophrenic existence and we are tragically unaware of it. To indicate the shallowness of our souls it is perhaps sufficient to point to the idea of *משיח*, not as an illusory dream, but as a reality and a basic factor in our way of thinking, and to ask the question, how much strength and vitality does it exercise in our own consciousness? Though we profess it daily, it is practically dormant. Were it not so, our lives would be different.

The amazing thing is the fact, that everything going on and from whatever angle it is analyzed, all point to an “outside” solution and we who have proclaimed it, are more estranged and more distant from it than ever. The breakdown of the old order must precede the new one. The revolution will be radical. The whole world feels it and it does not know what it is, and we who are supposed to know, do not feel it.

Yaakov Jacobs

Two Jewish Peoples

Israel's struggle to instill “Jewish Consciousness” in its youth

No generation can write its own history; it takes the detachment of a new generation to examine the past and to discover the forces that governed the period, the problems it faced, and finally, its achievements and failures. Those involved in the reality of an epoch are too close to it to gain the perspective that historical understanding demands.

When the Jewish people lived in their Land, in closer proximity to their G-d and the Holiness of Torah, they were blessed with the wisdom of the *Ne'vi'im*. The *Ne'vi'im* were not prophets as most translators would have it, whose closeness to G-d made it possible for them to see into the future only. Of equal and perhaps greater importance, was their ability to see into the present; to be intimately involved with the destiny of their people, and yet to understand in depth what ailed them and to prescribe the cure for those ailments.

In the bitterness of a long *Golus* we have often had to await the judgment of a new generation to make clear to us what the past generation had suffered. Common to all periods in Jewish history has been the

efforts of hostile nations to separate our people from their past . . . and from their Faith. In modern Western society, Christianity has been the most aggressive force seeking to isolate Jews from their past and thereby absorb them into the Christian faith. The Pope's recent attack on Jews who still “rail at Christianity” by their stubborn refusal to accept the “messiah they so eagerly awaited” is proof sufficient that these efforts have hardly been abandoned; that on the contrary a stepped-up offensive is now being mounted.

Christianity's favorite device in its campaign to divide and to destroy, has been to differentiate between the ‘Hebrews’ of the past and the ‘perfidious Jew’ of today (see *The Ten Commandments and the Hebrews*, THE JEWISH OBSERVER, February 1964). The ‘Hebrews’ or the ‘Children of Israel’ in Christian theology are warmly regarded since they are considered to be the forerunners of the teachings of the ‘New Testament.’ The ‘Jews’ are the cursed people who stubbornly reject Christianity thereby holding back ‘the second coming.’ While Catholics will no longer speak of the ‘perfidious

Jew' in their prayers, to many Christians the name 'Jew' will continue to conjure up an image of a person who has nothing in common with the sublime personalities of the 'Old Testament.'

We have generally assumed that Jews, by and large—even those who reject Torah—have refused to accept this division between our past and our present. The creation of the State of Israel, in whatever perspective it is viewed, was thought to be a blow at attempts to isolate the Jew from his past, for was it not the *Tenach* which was placed on record before the United Nations to substantiate our historic claim to the Land. Yet it is becoming clear, and this writer is indebted to a recent statement by a prominent Israeli for crystalizing the realization in his own mind, that Israel itself has contributed to the acceptance by Jews of the fallacious Christian argument that there is a difference between 'Old Testament' Jews and observant Jews of today.

"One Hundred Percent Jews"

David Ben-Gurion, veteran Zionist leader, first Prime Minister of the State of Israel, has for many years preached that Jews have no future in the *Golus*; that all Jews should emigrate to Israel lest they become the victims of, assimilation at best, or violent antisemitism at worst. He recently spoke to a group of foreign students at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In *Golus*, he told the students, Jews "are Jews only a few hours a year—on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. At best, if they are religious, they are Jews every Saturday.

"But in Israel we are 100 per cent Jews. And there is complete identity between our Jewishness and our humanity. There is no split between the two." (*The Jerusalem Post Weekly*—3-5-65)

During the question period, the *Post* reports, Ben Gurion was "under attack by a number of Orthodox students. "A bearded skull-capped American" asked the question, "Who is a better Jew—one who lives in the Diaspora and prays three times a day or one who lives in Israel, watches soccer games on the Sabbath and reads *Haolam Hazeh*?"

When questioned further on the lack of respect shown by many Israelis for the Jewish faith, and the fear that Israelis in several generations may hardly know they are Jews, Ben-Gurion responded with a question: "Isn't the land itself a Jewish value? It says in the Bible—to your seed will I give it." He then denied that he had implied that all there is to Jewishness in Israel is Jewish agriculture, Jewish industry and Jewish construction. "I believe," he said "in Isaiah's prophecy that we will be 'a light to the nations.' But I'm not sure that Isaiah put on *tefillin*."

In a similar manner that Christian theologians refuse to recognize any connection between the 'Patriarchs of the Old Testament' and the lowly Jew of today, Ben-Gurion shudders at the thought that the great 'prophet

Isaiah' forerunner of modern-day enlightenment and prophet of world peace, actually put on *tefillin*, wore *tzitzis* on the corners of his garments, and, horror of horrors, concerned himself with the thirty-nine categories of work forbidden on the *Shabbos*. Loudly proclaiming his Jewishness, embarrassed by his failure to behave like a Jew, and enraptured with 'Isaiah's prophecy,' Ben-Gurion refuses to believe that 'Isaiah put on *tefillin*.'

Ben-Gurion's excursions into Biblical criticism are not new; he has frequently made asinine statements intended to impress . . . and to shock. Of late, even his friends have mercifully chosen to ignore his pontifications. But in this instance, we believe his words must be taken seriously, for they betray a tragic reality which we must confront. The secular Zionist, the secular Jew, the Jew who rejects Torah, has done more than cut *himself* off from the mainstream of Jewish tradition. By insisting on his Jewishness, and even the superiority of his Jewishness, while at the same time rejecting Torah, he has split the Jewish nation in two and has created a division in our ranks that our most vicious enemies never managed to achieve.

Growing Breach

Soon after the establishment of the State of Israel the emergence of the Canaanites shook the Jewish world, religious and secular. The Canaanites, who wanted no part of Jewishness stated their ideology as follows.

A Jew and a Hebrew can never be the same. A Hebrew cannot be a Jew, just as a Jew cannot be a Hebrew, for a member of a sovereign nation cannot accept the status of being simply a member of just one branch of a world-wide people. In the Diaspora there are Jews; in Israel there are Hebrews.

Fortunately, the Canaanites did not attract large numbers of followers, and they quickly ceased to be a factor in Israel's ideological arena. But their philosophy, their insistence on differentiating between Hebrews and Jews, between Israelis and Jews, continues to represent the outlook of increasing numbers of young Israelis growing into adulthood without exposure to their Torah heritage, and subjected to the anti-religious influences of the popular magazines, the majority of the daily press and a basically irreligious culture.

This growing breach between Israelis and Jews in the *Golus*, motivated the addition to the curriculum of the state-sponsored schools of a program of *Toda'a Yehudit*, "Jewish Consciousness." This program, when it was instituted several years ago, was hailed as a great step forward in closing the gap between 'Israelis' and 'Jews.'

After eight years of "Jewish Consciousness," Dr. Baruch Ben Yehuda, principal of the Herzliya Gymnasia

in Tel Aviv, and an associate of the Ministry of Education's Center for the Fostering of Jewish Consciousness, made this statement to a press conference in Jerusalem:

The lack of identification, of understanding and feeling, of Israeli youth with Jews of the Diaspora and with Jewish values—which make us One People, can bring about the existence of two separate Jewish peoples which will not identify one with the other.

Ben Yehuda urged that the Jewish-Consciousness program be rapidly intensified among Israeli youth, in order to tie them to other Jews, "including religious Jews," in order to assure the unity of the Jewish people.

Mr. Yeshayahu Frishman, an Assistant Director General in the Ministry of Education who heads the Center for the Fostering of Jewish Consciousness, cautioned the members of the press not to misconstrue the motives of his Center in these words:

The Jewish Consciousness program in the schools should not be confused with religion. Its object is not to draw the children to religion, just as the State schools will do nothing to draw them away from religion.

In response to questions, Fishman stated that he is not satisfied with the achievements of the program and that many teachers have no clear idea of the goals of the program which has been operating for the past eight years.

One journalist asked Fishman how people to whom *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* is not a personal experience, could draw up a program to be taught by teachers who are equally devoid of these experiences to students who are also not expected to have these experiences. Fishman replied that teachers in the secular schools are not asked to teach things they do not believe in, but the *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* have not only religious but also national values.

Regardless of any improvement that will be made in the *Toda-a Yehudit* program, a curriculum that will teach what Jews *used* to practice, or even, what *only* 'religious Jews' practice today, is doomed to failure for it will make no significant impression on the average child.

Paradoxically, as Moshe Akiva Druk pointed out in the March issue of *THE OBSERVER (Religion and State in Israel)*, as Torah grows in *Eretz Yisroel*, the gap between religious and non-religious youth will grow wider, and efforts to induce Jewish Consciousness will become ever more futile, and the fears of Dr. Ben Yehuda of the development "of two separate Jewish peoples which will not identify one with the other" will become ever more real.

What are the educators to do? Are they to abandon the program entirely and resign themselves to "two Jewish people"?

The futility of artificially inducing Jewish Consciousness should be clear after eight years. Revising the cur-

Some comments by teachers at a conference of general State school teachers held recently in Jerusalem to discuss "Jewish Consciousness":

"If a boy doesn't put on tfilin, shouldn't he know what tfilin are? Or if he doesn't go to the synagogue. . . . What I'm talking about is elementary knowledge."

"Even though we run away from the religion in the 'Shulhan Aruch,' the children won't. You can't fool the sabras. Unless we give the teachers the necessary spiritual preparation the Jewish consciousness programme will remain superficial — and the kids won't accept it."

"You can't take a culture based entirely on religion and try to neutralize it by picking out the raisins of humanism. . . . When I teach the Bible, the pupils often ask me: 'Do you believe that, teacher?'"

"A Jew like me who has run away from religion has difficulty presenting this programme."

riculum, and revising it again, can only lead to the same frustrations. The Israeli child taught about *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* in a vague nationalistic context will remain far removed from those who lived with *Shabbos* in the past and those who live it in the present. The gap can only grow wider and wider and after eight more years the problem will have grown more crucial.

For those of the Canaanite persuasion who want no part of Jewry's past and no identification with Jews in the *Golah*, or in Israel for that matter, there is no problem. They need not fight for their position; it will be achieved by default.

But . . . for those who sincerely desire that there should not be "two Jewish peoples," and this is certainly the wish of the majority of Israel's citizenry, there is no easy way. Sooner or later they must recognize the inevitable results of generations of Israeli youth being brought up in an educational structure void of Yiddishkeit, where Jewish Consciousness cannot flourish and cannot survive. They must face the reality that only by teaching Torah—not 'Jewish Consciousness'—to every Jewish child in Israel can the division of our People be avoided.

Every child living on the Holy Soil of *Eretz Yisroel* must be taught to love the Torah which makes the Land holy and which gives him the right to live there as a Jew. Every Jewish child in Israel must be given at least an even change to grow to be a believing Jew, if he is to be a Jew at all. Unless Israel's educators are willing to face up to this fact, the most intensive program of 'Jewish Consciousness' will have no effect. We can be a *Goy Echod*, One Nation, only by virtue of the One G-d and the One Torah which give meaning to our Peoplehood.

This is the Challenge

Are we following the Torah way to win the alienated Jew?

WE LIVE in trying times. In times when Torah Jewry is confronted with a tremendous challenge and yet afforded perhaps an even greater opportunity.

The forces of gnawing agnosticism, of degrading sensuality, and of crass materialism have made serious inroads on the "People of the Book." The spiritual face of the Jew has been pitifully disfigured.

The Jewish people in former times proclaimed aloud the Name of G-d in a world filled with idolatry. How sad that there are Jews in our time who are so alienated from the essence of Judaism that they are in the forefront of the movement to obliterate any mention of the Divinity from men's public affairs. (As one columnist put it, "It's comforting to see forces at work protecting this nation against the danger of 5 year-olds saying thanks for food and flowers and birds.")

The personal and family life of the Jew has always served as a model of virtue and decency to the nations of the world. Yet, Jews are currently represented in the literary and entertainment industries, serving the gutter tastes of a society which from day to day evinces new signs of moral decay.

In former times, the Jew—even the simple, uneducated Jew—would intersperse his every day conversation with expressions of *emunah*—of faith. *ברוך ד' "Blessed is G-d," בעזרת ד' "With the help of G-d," אם ירצה ד' "G-d willing."* These were all part of his natural mode of speaking. He may not always have truly felt or even fully understood what he was saying—but that was the accepted manner of speech. That was how a Jew talked. He at least gave lip service to a faith in the Almighty Creator. Yet in our day the university educated liberal-agnostic Jew has become a sick prototype, who, on the pages of the contemporary novel is in constant search of himself.

It was of these Jews of our times whom the *novi Yirmiahu* spoke: *And you shall say to them; this is the people that did not listen to the voice of the Lord, its G-d, and did not accept reproof; faith is lost and has been cut off from their mouths (Yirmiahu 7: 28).* To a shattering number of our people faith no longer gains even the merest lip service.

Inordinate pursuit of pleasure, insatiable desire for wealth, an unending scramble for position—all have taken their heavy toll. The Jew has become the symbol

of the money-grabbing, status-seeking, materialistic-minded bourgeois citizen. Stripped of the moral safeguards of Torah, he has shown that he can, in fact, vie with the nations of the world in all areas, and that he is as capable as the next fellow of sinning.

The Nature of Klal Yisroel

This in short is the Challenge. Yet paradoxically the challenge itself affords an opportunity. The very breakdown of which we speak presages a rebuilding. The nature of *Klal Yisroel* is such that it never quite reaches the point of no return. The Creator, in His divine wisdom and infinite mercy, has so provided that when it approaches that point, there must occur a spiritual resurgence.

And despite all this, when they are in the hand of their enemies, I will not forsake them or will I despise them to destroy them, to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their G-d (Vayikra 26:44). There is a rejection mechanism built into the innermost recesses of the collective soul of the Jewish people which does not allow it to make peace with evil and immorality.

The Jew is sickened by his own excesses and seeks a cure. And there is but one cure—TORAH! Our Sages tell us in the name of G-d: "I created the evil impulse, and I created Torah as its cure." *The search for that cure was the secret of the Exodus from Egypt.* The Jews had sunken to the forty-ninth of the fifty "gates of defilement." So degraded were they, that had they stayed for another moment, our *Chachomim* tell us, they would have been beyond redemption and would have remained slaves forever in Egypt. *Moshe Rabeinu* himself doubted if they were worthy of deliverance.

The Torah tells us: *And Moshe said to G-d; Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should take the children of Israel from Egypt! (Shemos 3:11).* Rashi explains, "Who am I—of what consequence am I that I should speak with kings? 'And that I should take the children of Israel from Egypt!' And even if I am important, what have the Jews done to deserve a miracle and that I should take them from Egypt."

And G-d answered him: *For I shall be with you and this shall be a sign for you that I have sent you—when you bring forth the people from Egypt you will serve G-d on this mountain.*

Rashi goes on: "G-d answered the first question

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first, 'You asked me *Who am I*—the answer is that it is not your prominence that will impress Pharaoh but the fact that *I* will be with you. And that which you asked, *by what merit do the Jews deserve to be saved?* I have good reason for this deliverance—for when they leave Egypt they shall accept the Torah on this mountain (Sinai)."

Moshe saw a fallen generation, sunk to the depths of Egyptian idolatry and incest, holding on to their Jewish identity by the thinnest thread. And he wondered, what *z'chus* could they possibly have to be delivered? The Holy One answered him that the *z'chus* of Israel is not *actual* and therefore cannot be apparent at the moment. However, the fact that they will accept the Torah in the future indicates that they already yearn for Torah, however subconsciously. Jews are by nature recipients of Torah. They are sick of the foulness of Egypt. They long to return to the pristine glory that is their heritage from the *Avos*. . . . *Thus shall you say to the children of Israel: The Lord, G-d of your fathers, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchok and the G-d of Yaakov has sent me unto you (Sh'mos 3:15).*

A Cry for Torah

The cry of the Jews which came before G-d was not only a physical plaint over their enslavement, but an inner cry of anguish over the depths of spiritual bondage to which they had fallen. This in essence was a sub-conscious cry for Torah. When they made their way to Sinai they cried out with awareness, *We shall do; we shall listen!*

This is ever the *z'chus* of Israel. Even though they may fall to the level of the "dust of the earth"—their potential is like "the stars of Heaven." When Moshe protested—*But they will not believe me*—the Medrash tells us that G-d told Moshe: "For (the sin) which is in your hand you must be punished, for you have falsely accused my children. They are believers, the sons of believers." And indeed when Moshe came to the Jews the Torah tells us: *The people believed.*

Growing Unrest

The last year or so has witnessed a growing unrest of Jews over what appear to be serious threats to their very survival as Jews. We hear a "cry of the children of Israel" in the face of what seems an inexorable fate—ethnic and cultural extinction.

Those who have heretofore concerned themselves solely with the material welfare of Jews are suddenly confronted with a "Jewish Problem" which they never dreamed would bother them. There is talk of "intensive Jewish education," of "religious commitment," of "combatting assimilation," in quarters which but a few years ago were expending herculean efforts to

obliterate any and all distinctions between Jew and Gentile. To use a phrase of the *Chovos Halevovos*, they have returned from a minor skirmish to face a great war. The battle of the country clubs and the university quotas has been just about won. But now there is the war of Jewish Survival to be fought.

Of course, we of the Torah camp can pooh-pooh all of this as yet another round of publicity seeking by the secularist Establishment. We can refuse to see anything more positive in this unrest than an opportunity for us to sit back and enjoy the discomfort of those who are finally admitting that they have been driving all along down the road of destruction. But is this the Torah attitude?

When Eliahu *hanovi* was forced to flee for his life, the Holy One asked him (*M'lachim* I, ch. 19), *What are you doing here Eliahu?* and he answered, *I have been zealous for the L-rd, G-d of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, they have destroyed Your altars and slain Your prophets by the sword, and I alone am left; and they sought my life, to take it away.* G-d answered him: . . . *And Elisha the son of Shapat from Avel Machola shall you annoint as prophet in your stead.* "I no longer desire you as a prophet since you speak ill of my children." (Rashi)

The *Chachomim* explain: "He should have said before Him, 'Master of the Universe, they are your children, the sons of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, who did Your will in Your world.' He did not do this, however, but said, *I have been zealous.* . . . G-d said to him, "Will you forever be zealous? . . ." (*Tana D'bai Eliahu*)

This episode occurred after the great denouement on Mount Carmel, (*M'lachim* I, ch. 18) when the Jewish people, who had shifted between G-d and the Baal, had seen the fire descend from heaven in answer to Eliahu's prayer, and had cried out, "The Lord, He is G-d." G-d remonstrated with Eliahu—there is a time for *קנאות*—for zeal and there is a time for *לימוד זכות*—for attempting to find the merits of the Jewish people.

A time when those who have served strange gods begin to see the error of their ways is not the time to proclaim *קנא קנאתי*, I have been zealous. It is the time to stress that inwardly they are still the children of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov and that they too feel the anguish of *שכינתא בגלותא*—of the Divine Presence in Exile.

This is most poignantly put in the verse in *Shir Hashirim*: *אני ישנה ולבבי ער וגו'* "I sleep, but my heart waketh, the sound of my beloved knocketh, 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of night.'" (*Shir Hashirim* 5,2)

"I sleep—from the mitzvos. But the merit of my

fathers stands by me and "my heart wakes." (*Medrash Vayikra*)

Deep in the heart of the Jew, although he slumbers from the observance of mitzvos, there burns yet the spark of nobility which he has inherited from the *Avos*. His heart can yet sense the voice of the Beloved of Israel, His locks drenched with the drops of the long night of *Golus*, as He entreats, "Open to Me My sister, My love."

We may be standing on the threshold of a spiritual renaissance. Let us not be blinded by a parochialism which does not permit us to see that which is genuine in the cry of our brethren.

A great deal of the current discussion on survival and assimilation can be written off as the usual sound and fury of American Jewish organizations. But we

dare not rule out the possibility that a great deal of it comes from the Jewish heart.

Given this spiritual potential which lies dormant in the hearts of our alienated brothers, the challenge is thrust upon those already committed to Torah to seek the means to release and redeem this vast reserve of Jewishness. The means are not obvious, but they can be found in the well-spring of Torah and in the deepest recesses of the Jewish heart.

The Torah ingenuity which has built yeshivos and day-schools must now be channeled into a massive effort to reclaim lost Jewish souls to the end that the whole of our people once again becomes the *Am Ha-Torah*.

Berel Wein

The American Rabbinate — Revisited

A year ago, in a moment of brashness, I wrote an analysis of the trials of the American rabbinate. (*THE JEWISH OBSERVER*, March, 1964) From the safety of an outsider looking in, I thought I not only saw the problem clearly, but a glimmer of solution as well. This year, as an insider looking out, I have once again taken the effrontery to re-examine this most sensitive area in Orthodox Jewish life—the rabbinate.

It has often been stated that there is a lack of respect for the rabbi (the pulpit breed) in Orthodox Jewish life. It is further argued that this in part makes it difficult to attract the necessary-caliber individual into the pulpit rabbinate. However, this statement, like most categorical statements regarding Jewish life in this country, is only partly true. If we take the *Yeshiva Bochurim* of the country as a criterion, we would have to agree that there is precious little respect shown to the American rabbinate, much less to the American rabbi himself. (Whether or not such an attitude is warranted by facts, will be discussed later.) However, once one leaves the "Yeshiva world" and even the "New York world" and finds himself in the smaller (and sadly, less intensively Jewish) communities, one discovers that there is a great reservoir of respect and affection for the Orthodox rabbi. This is not only true of the members of his synagogue, but of the "other" Jews of the community as well. The amount and loyalty of feeling towards the Orthodox rabbi will vary naturally in accord with his personality, tenure in the

community and other factors; but the undercurrent of good feeling is there.

The problem, therefore, in these communities is not the question of respect for the rabbi, but rather: what does the rabbi do to translate this respect into positive accomplishments for Torah Judaism. There are many small and medium-sized communities in the country (especially in the South East where I live), where there is a day school and/or a Yeshiva fund only because the rabbi "wants it." The rabbi who is successful in harnessing the latent respect of his community for Torah projects, has a potent weapon on his side. This is not to advocate the "cult of the individual" in Jewish life, but one should use all weapons available for the defense of Torah—even the rabbi himself.

Here we are faced with the deeper, underlying problem of the rabbinate. Many rabbis, either unaware of their strength or afraid to use it potently, fritter this weapon away. Instead of working for a day school, or for improving the Torah standards of an existing day school, the rabbi will be satisfied with an appointment to the Chamber of Commerce advisory board, or another manifestation of communal respect. Not because that is what he wants, but rather because he is afraid that that is all he can achieve. No one can write a general rule which will be applicable to all situations, but the Orthodox rabbi in these smaller communities should be aware that by self-assertion for Torah standards he can accomplish much more than hoped for, because his flock basically does respect him and therefore *his* Orthodoxy and *his* Torah.

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The Lonely Rabbi

A second problem of the rabbi (once again New York is perhaps an exception) is loneliness; the overpowering feeling of being alone and of carrying a burden too heavy for one's shoulders. All rabbis (presumably) begin as *Yeshiva Bochurim*. An outstanding facet of Yeshiva life is the comradeship of friends and the warmth and knowledge of reliance that the *Roshai Yeshiva* provide. When one leaves the Yeshivoh for the outside world of the rabbinate, these elements are not only absent, but they are sorely missed.

The cleavage between the European-born and educated rabbi and his American counterpart still exists and is becoming less pressing only because of the attrition of time on the ranks of the older rabbis. Even in the ranks of the so-called "younger" rabbis, devoted friends are hard to come by. The *Roshai Yeshiva* are hundreds of miles away and regrettably contact with them is difficult to maintain. Most rabbis shy away from too close a friendship with their own members and therefore the loneliness sets in. One has to make profound decisions in Torah life every day—and yet he must do it alone. The question in Halacha can perhaps be answered by a telephone call to New York, but the question of Halachic policy in relation to a local exact situation is much more difficult to impart, much less to answer. Interfaith, brotherhood, adoption, relating to Conservative rabbis, standards of Kashrus, all of these merge with many other daily problems to form a kaleidoscope of bewilderment that defies sharp focus. And this is how the attitude that "I am doing the best I can," or finally, "this is the best that can be done" is fostered.

When this finally occurs, then the rabbi has left the station of loneliness and arrived at the terminal of self-righteousness. He then convinces himself that he is the last word regarding Judaism (at least as far as his community is concerned) and sooner or later becomes sensitive to all criticism and insensitive to advice. Thus loneliness breeds defensive pride, which in turn only breeds even greater loneliness.

The "Right Man"

These problems are symptomatic of the great challenge that faces Orthodox Jewry in this country today—the problem of manpower. The problem of attracting the highest caliber of Yeshiva student to enter active Jewish leadership is becoming more acute. It is true that many communities have so badly deteriorated as to make it impossible for a *Ben Torah* to live and function in the community. However there is a growing

number of communities where the ground is fertile, and as our opportunities grow, we are confronted more often with the problem of finding the "right man" for the position. The difference between success and failure in most communities is simply the difference between having a good man or an excellent man there. The footprints of excellent men in Jewish communities can be read generations after, in the synagogues they headed, the schools they founded and the families they influenced. There is no substitute for a talented, dedicated, scholarly rabbi.

Only the Yeshivos can hope to produce such a person. Only they can mold him and develop him into the tenacious general who will not shirk from the battle that envelopes us all. The factory is there but it is not producing in the required numbers. For, due to a myriad of complex reasons—not the least of which is the blindness of the Yeshiva student to the spiritual rewards of the rabbinate—a shudderingly large percentage of Yeshiva graduates become *Baale-batim* when they would do better for Jewry and be personally more gratified in the rabbinate.

Opportunities Lost

So Orthodox Judaism must face the foe undermanned and outgunned. There are towns and cities that are waiting for the "right man" to show them the road—but because we are so convinced that it would require a compromise of basic principle—we are unable to supply them. A synagogue in my state that had mixed seating for over five years, re-introduced a *Mechitza*, because its new rabbi demanded it of them as a condition prerequisite to his coming there. There is a synagogue in my area that can easily be lost to Orthodoxy simply because they cannot find an Orthodox rabbi of the caliber to compete with the other "rabbis" in their area. The tragedy in this area is that the people of this caliber who *are* available, who have been nurtured in our Yeshivos, and who could easily fill the need, are unwilling even to consider the rabbinate. Thus, unfortunately, the gap between the Yeshivoh world and the rabbis grows, and the divergence of views and policies between the two deepens. As long as the Yeshivoh and the rabbi view each other askance, our future is in real jeopardy.

Orthodox Jewry alone possesses the men and ideas that can guarantee future Jewish survival in this country. A true appreciation of the historical role of the rabbi by *all* Orthodox Jews will lead to a strengthening of that pillar of Jewish life as well as to a necessary reappraisal of the future course of Orthodox thought on this matter.

Every Jew Counts — Reflections on Sefirah

A CERTAIN consistency is supposed to hold between different events which fall on the same day or in the same period on the Jewish calendar. Thus, the propensity of *Tisha B'av* or the 17th day of Tamuz for tragedy is well known, while all the redemptive events which occurred on the 15th day of Nisan are enumerated as part of our Haggada. In the light of this principle, it is difficult to understand how what was essentially a period of joyousness marked so by the Torah with a special observance, should, centuries later, be laid over with tragedy and become transformed in Jewish tradition into a period of mourning.

I have of course, reference to the *Sefirah* period between *Pesach* and *Shevuos* whose forty-nine days or seven weeks must be diligently counted and a running total be maintained by every Jew. Of the joyous quality of these days, bridging two happy festivals, there can be little doubt. The *Sefer Hachinuch* makes it clear that counting the days is indicative of our impatient desire and great longing to arrive at that climactic Revelation at Sinai which was the end goal of the Exodus from Egypt. Certainly, only joyous anticipation can inform the Jew as he marks the passage of time which brings him closer to the encounter with the Almighty.

The committed Jew still counts today. But it is no longer a period of joy. Over most of these days tradition has imposed a mood of "partial mourning"—weddings, music and hair cutting are prohibited. The reason goes back to the great sage, *Rabi Akiva*, whose disciples, numbering in the thousands, died during a plague between *Pesach* and *Shevuos* because "they did not accord respect one to another" (*Yevamos* 62b). The event itself is shrouded in obscurity and has led writers to somehow connect the "plague" with the Bar Kochba rebellion, with which *Rabi Akiva* was associated.

Be that as it may, however, the question arises as to whether tradition would have made the tragedy of *Rabi Akiva's* disciples determinative for this period for all time, if they had not perceived that somehow this time segment, in spite of its apparent joy, already had implicitly within itself the seeds of sadness; a tendency towards tragedy!

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Perhaps, the sadness lies in the fact that so many of our people never do successfully negotiate the passage from the physical birth of our people to the Revelation of G-d's will; from an acceptance of Jewish peoplehood to a commitment to the religious imperatives of the Torah. It is indeed tragic that so many of our people who participate in a family Seder on *Pesach* are not seen in Shul on *Shevuos*. They do not count the days to *Shevuos*; they are apparently not eager for the Encounter; they have lost the thread of continuity that could lead them from the fact of Jewish identification to Sinai's fiery slopes.

Wherein lies the roots of this tragedy? What is it that these brothers of ours have missed? What is it that they fail to perceive?

The terminal points of the period under discussion—*Pesach* and *Shevuos*, each have their special offering. The *Korban Pesach* was brought with matzoh and the "new offering" on *Shevuos* was comprised of *chometz*. The matzoh symbolizes simple, unadorned, unembellished existence itself. An offering of matzoh indicates an awareness that existence itself is a good to be attributed to G-d for which He is to be thanked. *Chometz* as fermented dough symbolizes human personality as complicated by civilization; society made complex by technology; human relations infected with the competitive spirit.

Only when a Jew starts out with this conviction—that his basic existence as an individual and collectively as a people is grounded in G-d, can he develop to the point where he can bring an offering containing *chometz*; can he bring his fully developed life as an individual and as part of the group under the sanctification of Torah. "Lo, this only have I found, that G-d has made man straightforward, but they have sought out (השבונית רבים) many inventions" (*Eccles.* 7:29). Only if it is recognized that G-d made man straightforward can the thought be further extended to encompass him with his "many inventions."

This truth was learned at the Exodus. The Jew who left Egypt realized that for his existence he must thank the Almighty. Consider the four classic types who are obliged to render the *ברכה הגומל* — the blessings of thanksgiving which derive from the *Korban Todah*: He who is liberated from incarceration; who recovers from sickness; who successfully terminates a sea voyage

or a trip through the wilderness. All of these situations constitute threats to one's existence. To have thus contemplated the fragility of our life and to have seen it preserved is to gain insight into our dependence upon the Lord.

But as the *Maharal Mi Prague* points out, all four situations were experienced during the Exodus from Egypt! The Almighty liberated us from the house of bondage; He saved us from the ten afflictions; He brought us through the sea, and He sustained us in the wilderness. The *Korban Pesach* is thus the *Korban Todah* par excellence. But unlike the *Korban Todah* itself, it is only brought with matzoh. For it is essential that we first understand that what we start out with comes from G-d. "Know that the Lord is G-d, He has made us."

In our own day as well, our own generation has witnessed *Gevuros Hashem* in the great historic events of our time. But the responses to these events have differed. There were some unfortunately who, blinded by the secular anodynes of our age, could not see behind the empirical factors and apprehend the Hand of G-d. They refused to declare, "He has made us and not (ולא) we ourselves." They were therefore unable to draw the conclusion "... and we are His (ולו), His people and the sheep of his pasture."*

There were however others who, at the time of the War of Liberation, *did* feel a sense of the miraculous character of our deliverance. There were many newcomers to the Land who *were* overcome with a Messianic fervor and *were* inspired by the palpable holiness of the land. Unfortunately, their feelings were not channelized or given expression. In some instances, they simply evaporated from lack of encouragement and the pressures of everyday living. In other instances they were stifled by the efforts of those to whom godlessness had become a mission and the secular state an end in itself. The counsel of Solomon was not heeded; *אם תעירו ואם תעוררו את האהבה עד שתחפץ* — "If ye stir up; if ye awaken love," it is of no value "until you give it an object;" until you afford it some concrete expression.

Indeed, this is really the relationship between *Pesach* and the days of *Sefirah*. Our Sages made it quite clear that the miracle of our people's physical liberation from Egypt was matched by their sudden and precipitous spiritual elevation from the depths of moral turpitude up to the dizzying heights of sovereign peoplehood under G-d. Israel took a giant step forward on *Pesach*. The *Chasam Sofer* tells us that this season remains a favorable one for Jews to take a leap forward in their Judaism. "Observe the month of *Aviv* (... ועשית פסח) and ye shall *skip* towards the Lord your G-d."

* The author here alludes to the variant in the passage from *מזמור לתורה* (תהלים ק) *כי יב* reads, "He has made us, ולא, and not ourselves. The *קרי* reads, "He has made us, ולו, and we are His."

We are today well aware of the tremendous physical pressures, stresses and strains to which an astronaut is subject when he is suddenly thrust upward. It wreaks havoc with his organism and he must therefore be insulated and protected in various ways. Similarly, the sudden elevation of our people; the very rapid transition from spiritual insensitivity to a life of religious obligation placed a severe strain upon the emotional structure of the Jew. The command therefore came, "from the morrow after the *Shabbas (Pesach)* you shall count . . . seven complete weeks." If the religious gains are to be preserved and one is not to develop a case of the spiritual "bends," then precipitousness must give way to gradualism and the sudden elevation must now yield to a methodical buildup. We must start a systematic count-up to train and develop in orderly growth our character, our knowledge and our attitudes. This alone is the road that leads to Sinai.

There are many areas today in our Orthodox life here and in Israel that are in great need of consolidation. Impressive gains have been scored by our day school movement here and great things have been achieved by *Chinuch Atzmai*, the independent religious school system in Israel. But serious work and constant reevaluation remains to be done on the secondary school level, or these gains may be placed in jeopardy. The period for counting *Sefirah* has arrived!

A final point remains to be made. In considering the nature of the tragedy which befell us during this period, one cannot help noting an element of self-blame. The Talmud states that the disciples of *Rabi Akiva* succumbed because "they did not respect one another." So too, in contemplating the general failure of so many of our people to make the connection between *Pesach* and *Shevuos*, should we ourselves not bear some of the blame?

The Content of Revelation

If our people resist the *experience* of Revelation, they surely cannot ignore the *content* of Revelation, i.e., our Torah, to which they are exposed at one time or another, in one form or another. And have we not been assured that, "This is your wisdom and understanding in the light of the nations!" If Torah can gain the admiration of the outside world, surely it should be able to inspire our own people! Yet *Rashi* comments: "With this you will be considered *wise men* and *understanding men* in their eyes." *Rashi* explains the text to mean that what will impress the world and our brethren is not the abstract wisdom of the Torah contained in books, but only the applied wisdom of Torah embodied in the personalities and lives of active men and women.

We who do get to bring the *מנחה חרשה* on *Shevuos* of *chometz* must sanctify not only our bare existence

but our *חשובות רבים* as well. The experience of *Kabolas Hatorah* must leave visible effects and have tangible consequences which are to be reflected in all of our activities: upon the way we give charity; the way we do business; the way we engage in politics; the quality of our love for every individual Jew and the extent of our *Mesiras Nefesh* for *Eretz Yisroel*. We must not merely love religious Jews, we must love Jews religiously.

If the effects of Torah were crystal clear in *all* of our activities, would we not ourselves constitute the greatest force making for better appreciation and wider acceptance of Torah values!

When *Yechezkel Hanavi* receives his mission to preach to the House of Israel, he is told: "And whether they will hear or whether they forbear—for they are a rebellious house—*yet shall they know that there has been a prophet among them.*" (2:5)

The encounter so transformed the personality of the *navi* that even when Israel rejected his word in conscious rebellion, there was a grudging admission that a prophet of G-d walked among them. *Yechezkel* had so internalized Torah—literally eaten it—that it became part of his personality and was apparent in every action, in every decision, in every word.

Everything then depends upon our ability to get from *Pesach* to *Shevuos* with our entire people to a realization of the fourth expression of redemption: "I will take you unto Me for a people and I will be unto you for a G-d." In a sense this is the very test of the

authenticity of our charge: "And this shall be a *sign* unto you that *I have sent you*, when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve G-d upon this mountain."

Towards this goal and in this process every Jew counts.

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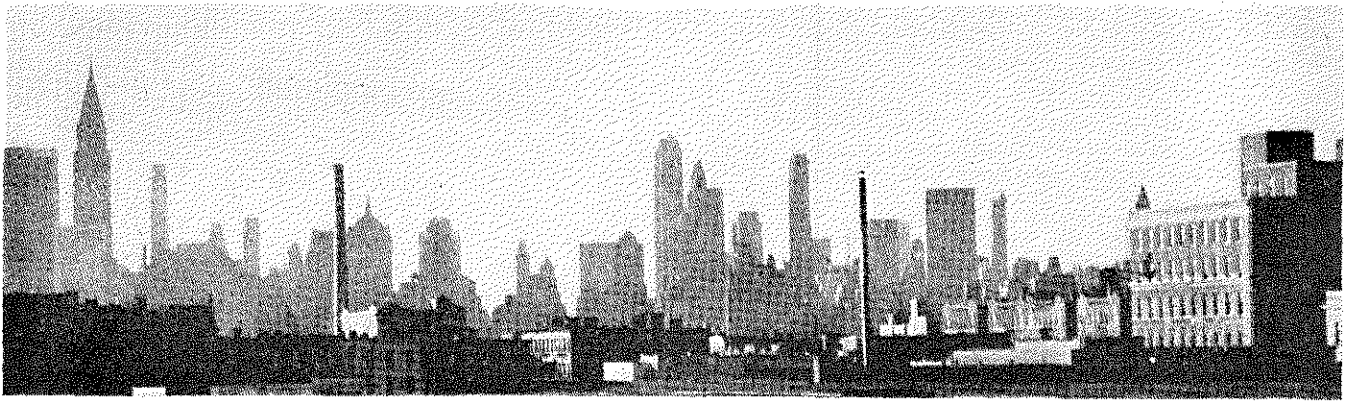
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Bernard Weinberger

The Miracle of Williamsburg

How a community managed to halt a population shift

Williamsburg has euphemistically been called the Jerusalem of America. To the less charitable of spirit this has meant the *Meah Shearim* rather than the *Katamon* of Jerusalem. From a spiritual point of view, however, Williamsburg has come to be recognized as a center of Orthodox Jews. It nurtured the *Yeshiva* and *Mesivta Torah Vodaath*, the *Agudath Israel* movement, the *Young Israel* movement, who in turn paved the way for the influx of the *Chasidic* groups during the post-war immigration. Williamsburg thus became the center for the *Chasidim* of *Satmar*, *Siget*, *Wishnitz*, *Zelim*, *Pupa*, *Belz*, *Square*,

Klausenberg, *Ger* and *Stolin* to mention only the larger groups.

In recent years, however, Williamsburg has lost considerable ground and its importance has dwindled, giving way to the new centers of *Boro Park*, *Crown Heights*, *East Flatbush*, *Flatbush*, and sections of *Queens*. To some it seemed only a matter of months or at best a few years before Williamsburg would no longer be considered a Jewish neighborhood.

Suddenly, however, things have changed and those who hastened to forecast its demise are now looking with startled wonder at the revitalized and vibrant Williamsburg. Few

people are able to explain it, but, it now seems that Williamsburg is about to make a comeback that may bring it to surpass its greatest days.

Population Shifts

Because of the ever-growing problem—from the point of view of the Jewish community—of population shifts it is important that we examine what happened in Williamsburg, and glean therefrom the pertinent lessons that may be applied effectively in areas facing similar problems.

Jewishly speaking, Williamsburg is a relatively small area (bounded by *Grand Street*, *Wythe Avenue* and *Flushing Avenue*), not more than two square miles. It has always been a densely-populated area. Some fifteen years ago the city tore into the heart of the Jewish community when it demolished all the homes on *Keap* and *Rodney Streets* to make way for the *Brooklyn Queens Expressway* which cuts right through the center of the community. (It is alleged by knowledge-

A number of years ago, RABBI BERNARD WEINBERGER became the spiritual leader of Young Israel of Brooklyn, located in the heart of Jewish Williamsburg. He quickly realized that this once-glorious neighborhood was headed for extinction due to the mass exodus of Orthodox Jews to other urban and suburban areas of New York City and shared his concern with other rabbis and Jewish leaders in the area. As a result of his initiative, leadership and constant prodding, Williamsburg is today on the threshold of a new era in its history. In this chronicle, Rabbi Weinberger records some of the steps taken in saving Williamsburg.



Students of Torah in a Williamsburg yeshivoh, one of many institutions that would have been forced to relocate if mass population shift had been allowed to continue.

able people of the community that the expressway was originally planned to run parallel with the waterfront, thus avoiding any interference with the mainstream of Williamsburg. However, this would have entailed dislocation of a huge industrial plant with rather good connections in the corridors of City Hall and the plans were therefore changed to dislocate the residents.)

Because of the massive dislocation involved, Williamsburg was then regarded as doomed. Since no new houses had been erected since the early 20's, anyone dislocated sought a haven outside the commu-

nity. Williamsburg had been served a death blow. With the heavy flow of traffic through a major thoroughfare within the community, the pollution, debris, and vacant lots parallel to the highway that were left without landscaping, slum conditions set in and the corroding forces of deterioration were set into motion.

Squerer Chasidim Leave

Shortly thereafter, the *Squerer Rebbe* and his *Chasidim*, motivated by religious reasons, began to plan the establishment of their own in-

corporated village in Rockland County. This gave further impetus to the growing exodus from Williamsburg.

In the process of demolition for the expressway, the city had destroyed one of the older *schuls* of the community, popularly known as the "South 5th Street Shul." The loss of this major Jewish landmark and failure to replace it could have signaled the death of Williamsburg. For a while the congregation met in temporary, rented quarters. But, with the money acquired from the city they purchased a lot and embarked on what then seemed a herculean task of building a new *schul*. That they succeeded in building a magnificent, modern and imposing *schul*-structure was a major factor in revitalizing the community and is a reflection of what is now emerging as the miracle of 'Williamsburg.'

The rabbis of the community were determined to keep Williamsburg alive and they set out to do something about it. With some local political assistance, they managed to gain the interest of the New York City Housing Authority. On a Spring afternoon in 1956 this writer rode the streets of Williamsburg with the chairman of the Housing Authority, to select a site for a project that the Authority would erect. Discussions took place on a daily basis as to the type of projects, the suitable sites, the importance of keeping relocation down to a minimum and all related subjects.

At this point, internal problems arose; many of the community leaders, particularly the heads of the schools, began to show opposition to the projects. They felt that the *status quo* was desirable since any housing development would destroy rather than preserve the homogeneity of the community. Heated discussions took place, but planning went on. A number of influential Jewish leaders in the city were extremely helpful.

In the meantime, there were persistent rumors that the *Satmar Kehila* was planning to relocate in a small suburban community. It was agreed that all efforts would be abortive if so large a segment of the community left *en masse*. A rabbinic delegation met with the *Satmar Rebbe* at 1:00 A.M. one Sunday morning to discuss with him mutual problems and the group left with the feeling that the *Rebbe* appreciated all the ramifications of relocating and that he would not undertake it unless forced by external factors.

Meanwhile, meetings continued. Delegates were sent to the local chamber of commerce who were pushing for the development. Finally, the first public hearing at City Hall came and the chambers of the Board of Estimate were jammed with Orthodox Jews. But, the community was split down the middle. The Board deferred final action. More meetings were held and a formula for compromise was sought. Perhaps the city would build only eight-story buildings, install escalators, provide Orthodox Jews with the apartments on lower floors. Finally the project received approval with the pledge from the City Fathers that the needs of the Orthodox Jewish community would be respected. The Housing Authority in the meantime, was now operating under a new chairman and new talks had to be held to assure that the pledges made would be honored.

Shabbos Elevator

Finally, the plans for the first unit were made known. The Jonathan-Williams project, as it was named, would provide 525 apartments in five structures, three of which would be twenty-one stories high and two of which would be fourteen-stories high. This was not

satisfactory since it would mean that the overwhelming majority of occupants would not be *Shomrai Shabbos*. But the rabbis were now faced with a *fait accompli* since the plans were already drawn. Moreover, since this was to be a state-aided development any change would mean that the city would have to reapply to the state, thereby losing the already achieved allocation. Faced with this dilemma an appeal was made to the Housing Authority to permit a *Shabbos* elevator which would be completely automated and the chairman was found to be receptive. But, again it required state approval.

In the meantime, the rabbis felt that the *Shabbos* elevator, even if granted, would not be so readily accepted by the Orthodox community. The rabbis turned to the *Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists* in the hope that they would devise an elevator that would meet all the halachic requirements and discovered that a member of the Association was an engineer with the Otis Elevator Co. whom the Housing Authority had contracted with to install the elevator. Several preliminary meetings were held; all existing *Shabbos* elevators at various hotels and *schuls* were studied and it was found that there were still halachic problems to be surmounted, particularly the problem of sparking and the increase of electrical current resulting from increase in weight. The rabbis and the scientists went to *Reb Moshe Feinstein* and discussed some of the problems involved in constructing a new kind of elevator avoiding all possible questions. The problem was also discussed with the *Satmar Rebbe*, but neither he nor *Rav Feinstein* would formally approve the proposed arrangements for the elevator system. *Rav Henkin*, venerable halachic authority did finally approve the arrangements in a formal reply on the question. The rabbis met with the State officials in the company of the Housing Au-

thority officials and when it became known that the cost of the especially constructed elevator would not be excessive, the State granted its approval.

Despite the fact that the Housing Authority announced the installation of the automatic *Shabbos* elevator, many remained skeptical and refused to submit applications for apartments. But the rabbis were persistent and urged their congregants to apply. To add to their good fortune, the Housing Authority assigned to this project a manager who was a former Williamsburg resident, known to many old-timers, and as his assistant they sent a former rabbi of Chasidic background. Both of these extremely able men helped foster confidence in the development and rendered invaluable service in the renting of apartments.

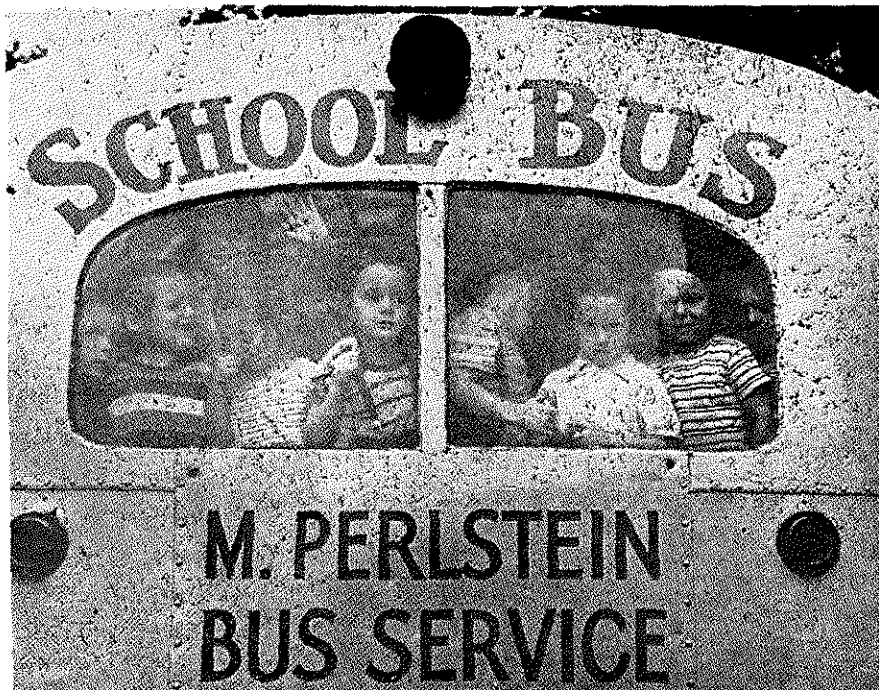
Even while the Jonathan-Williams project (at Division Ave. Roebing Street, Marcy Avenue and Broadway) was under construction the city was proceeding with plans to construct a similar project, just a trifle larger, at Bedford Avenue and Clymer Street to be known as Independence Houses. (The name derives from the fact that all the streets in Williamsburg bear the names of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence). At this point the leadership of the community was still wary of the outcome of Jonathan-Williams and so they applied pressure on the City to allow the construction of a cooperative development on this site. The City was again extremely helpful and asked the rabbis to demonstrate communal interest in a cooperative endeavor. They permitted the formation of a Williamsburg Cooperative Development Corporation which accepted applications with \$100 deposits from each prospective tenant. The understanding was that if sufficient applications could be mustered — approximately 400 of the 575 apartments—it could operate it as a cooperative. Work started at once

and a substantial number of applications were obtained.

Cooperative Planned

By this time, however, the City had invested huge sums in condemnation, demolition, and preparation of the plans. It was impossible for the City simply to bow out. An agreement was reached whereby the City would construct the entire development, with refinements that were added in view of its being converted to a cooperative, and upon completion the City would then sell the development to the Cooperative Corporation. Construction proceeded while attorneys from both sides met repeatedly to work out the details. However, one insurmountable obstacle arose—the State—whose Housing Director refused to underwrite the City's commitment and turned down categorically the idea of selling it to the corporation. The development, now completed with the suggested refinements, again reverted to the status of a City project built with State funds. To demonstrate its good faith, the Housing Authority issued an order which gave priority to any applicant who had deposited \$100 with the corporation during its designation as a cooperative. Again it assigned the above mentioned manager and his assistant to do the rentals and again the renting has attracted many eager applicants, this time including many former Williamsburg residents who had moved out of the area and now indicated a desire to return. The renting is still not complete but all indications are that Independence Houses will even surpass the success of its forerunner the Johnathan-Williams Houses.

Williamsburg has made a decisive recovery. It now has two projects that house some six to seven-hundred Jewish families, *Chasidim* and *Misnagdim* alike. It also has many Jews living in the nearby Lindsay Park Cooperative Development. It



A bus bringing youngsters to a yeshivoh in Williamsburg from nearby neighborhoods.

has seen the construction of an entirely new shopping area in the center of the community. Because of the climate of stability, many Jewish families who were unable to obtain apartments at the city projects are now seeking entry in the units now being added at Lindsay Park.

A Significant Lesson

The rebirth of Williamsburg is a story worthy of study and there are some very significant lessons to be learned. The resources that go into the making of a Jewish neighborhood are too costly and too difficult to come by, to allow them to be dissipated by population shifts that can be stopped. We can ill afford to begin building communities every few years afresh. Our sources of energy and finance are being exhausted. We are going to have to learn to live with other minority groups. Moreover, Williamsburg has borne witness to the fact that ecology is more related to psychology than to objective reality. It is when residents are led to believe that their

neighborhood is deteriorating that such deterioration takes place. When, however, a climate of renewal is fostered, all the forces that can contribute to renewal are set in motion. Furthermore, Williamsburg's revival is undoubtedly related to the determination of its leadership, particularly its religious leadership, to maintain it amidst all ostensible hardships. It is to be hoped that other neighborhoods with similar problems, such as Crown Heights, East New York and ultimately Flatbush will emulate the example set by Williamsburg.

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BOOK REVIEW

EXTRA DIMENSIONS, by *Max Munk*. (Jerusalem, 1964, Rubin Mass, \$2.50.)

THIS REMARKABLE LITTLE BOOK REPRESENTS AN EFFORT to make more intelligible to modern man the basic concepts of the Torah. "Criticism of the doctrines and commandments of the Torah is mainly founded on an overestimate of human methods of perception, leading to the proposition that only what the senses and intellect of human beings can grasp is to be accepted as the truth" (p. 9). In contrast, the author points out that our human perception is limited to a world of three spatial dimensions and that, for all we can tell, our world may be part of another world with more than three dimensions—a world of which we could not have any idea by normal means. This hypothesis is scientifically fully admissible though not provable.

Such a world might have higher beings of which we can have no knowledge, and its processes might interfere with our experiences in a manner that to us is miraculous. Likewise the concept of revelation, and the significance of the commandments, can be understood well in the light of such a theory. The author suggests that the perception of such a higher world was within Adam's reach before he sinned and, fleetingly again, within Israel's reach at Mount Sinai—and the goal of history is the reattainment of such proximity to this higher world of G-d.

The author has succeeded in presenting complex and closely-reasoned ideas in a most readable and interesting manner. In the process he has fully made his point that the human mind cannot pretend to obtaining scientifically a final and conclusive understanding of the nature of the world, and that alternative supra-scientific theories are possible, such as the author's. Up to this point the reader will readily follow. A different question is whether he is prepared to accept the author's theory of the "extra dimension" not as an ex-

ample of a possible approach but as *the* definite key to the Torah's world view. This reviewer does not know whether the author would put forward such a claim; if yes, however, he would have to express his reservations.

Does the concept of the heavenly world as a world with more spatial dimensions added to our three dimensions do adequate justice to the essentially spiritual and "different" character of the world above us? Moreover, can it be harmonized satisfactorily with all that Rabbinic tradition as formulated, say, in the *Nefesh Hachayim* has taught on this subject? It would be of great interest to see our author develop his fruitful approach in such a way as to provide answers to questions such as these.

THE ITINERARY OF BENJAMIN OF TUDELA, Hebrew text, English translation, and commentary by *Marcus N. Adler* (reprint of 1907 edition, New York, 1964, P. Feldheim, \$6.00.)

RABBI BENJAMIN OF TUDELA, IN SPAIN, WAS AN ENTERPRISING merchant who, in the years 1165-1173, traveled through the great part of the then known world—the entire Mediterranean area, ranging from Rome and Alexandria as far as Baghdad. Whether his object was trade, whether he looked for a place of refuge for his co-religionists persecuted in Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, he carefully and assiduously gathered particulars about the religious, political and social existence of the Jews in all the areas he visited. All this information he put down in his diary which, as a result, not only gives us a full insight into Jewish life in those days but also a great many fascinating sidelights on it, such as the description of the rule and power of the "Rosh Galutha," head of Babylonian Jewry (pp. 39-42); the account of the tomb of the prophet Yechezkel by the river Chebar (pp. 43-45); and the strange and sad story of David Alroy (pp. 54-56). Adler's translation is very readable, and his explanatory notes as well as the map of Rabbi Benjamin's travels make it easy to follow his journey. The publishers deserve high commendation for making this work available once more.

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SECOND LOOKS

at the Jewish scene

Again — The Jews

The Vatican Council schema which was to absolve Jews of responsibility for the Crucifixion gained world-wide press coverage when it was being debated. When it was passed it gained banner headlines in most newspapers and was the big story for several days.

On Sunday, April 4th of this year, the Pope spoke at a Lenten mass in Rome. Here are his words as published by the *L'Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper:

"It (the text in John 8:45-59) describes, in fact, the clash between J. . . . and the Jewish people. That people, predestined to receive the Messiah, who awaited Him for thousands of years and was completely absorbed in this hope and in this certainty, at the right moment, when, that is, C. . . . came, spoke and presented Himself, not only did not recognize Him, but fought Him, slandered and injured Him; and in the end, killed Him."

Could any words more clearly negate the schema? Could any statement indicate more simply that the Catholic Church was not prepared to give up its cherished dogma that the Jewish people were responsible for the death of their god? The press feebly reported the Pope's words, and made scant reference to its obvious contradiction of the tentatively adopted schema of the Vatican Council.

The American Jewish Committee which had nurtured the schema was shocked and after a day of utter silence, stated "We were both astonished and concerned to read the text of the Pope's Lenten homily. . . . It appears to us that it sharply deviates from the Declaration on the Jews . . . voted last November. . . ." The Committee closed their statement by fondly quoting the November declaration and the expression of hope that "further clarification will allay the sadness and disappointment engendered among Jews and all men of goodwill."

But Rome had different ideas, and the J.T.A. reported from Rome that Vatican sources considered the controversy over the Pope's homily a closed issue. And . . . *kach hava*, so it was; the press dropped the issue and Jews once again stand accused of decide, banner headlines of November notwithstanding.

"Simple Language"

Sherwin T. Wine, the "atheist rabbi," recently addressed the Ethical Culture Society in Cleveland, Ohio. The Cleveland Jewish News reports that Wine "acknowledged that his ideas were not startlingly novel, but asserted that he expresses familiar ideas in simple, understandable language."

When asked, "What do you worship?" Wine replied, according to the News, "that objects of reverence for his congregation are 'certain values which are ideas in our minds which motivate the best in human behavior.'" How's that again?

An interesting post-script to the Wine affair: The "congregation" which Wine heads has been ordered to vacate the premises of the Masonic Temple where it has been holding its services. While no action was taken against Wine by Reform groups, the grandmaster of Michigan Masons ruled that a commitment to the existence of a Supreme Being is required for use of the Masonic Temple.

Guidebook to Israel

It is axiomatic that an airline is in business to make money, even if it enjoys a government subsidy. From this it follows that an airline must advertise in order to win a share of a competitive market.

El Al Israel Airlines has done well in the calibre of its advertising which is prepared by a leading American agency.

It is most proper that El Al should gear its campaign to attract non-Jewish as well as Jewish travelers . . . but a large ad in a recent issue of *The New York Times* overstepped this need, and, to say the very least, crossed over the boundary of good taste.

"YOU ALREADY OWN THE BEST GUIDEBOOK TO ISRAEL," the headline reads, over a copy of a volume labeled "The Holy Scriptures." The copy takes the reader from Beersheba (Genesis) to Jaffa (the Book of Jonah) and then adds:

"*Jaffa figures later in the Bible, too. Peter's prayers raised Dorcas to life in Jaffa.*" (Acts 9:36-41) Listing further sites which figure "*later in the Bible*" the ad continues:

"*And in Jerusalem itself, one of the world's most ancient cities, are the sites of King David's tomb and of the Last Supper.*"

As if not yet satisfied with this compromise of Jewish dignity and misplaced ecumenicism, the copywriter crows:

"*Except for the rebuilding of Israel as a state in 1948, the most active period since Biblical times was during the nine Crusades.*"

Perhaps for some, the Crusades recall the age of knighthood and chivalry; when a Jew looks back at how the Crusaders busied themselves in the Holy Land and elsewhere, it makes his blood run cold.

We see no justification for Israel's national airline to compromise Jewish integrity in order to convince non-Jews to fly El Al.

Bar-Mitzvah — Modern Style

The "Yossele" case, which rocked the Jewish world just a little while ago, has quietly receded into the past. In spite of the extraneous issues which were injected into the heated discussions, the case essentially concerned the disposition of

a Jewish *nesomo*: was Yossele to be raised as an observant Jew or was he to be denied the heritage which is his having been born into the Jewish faith. When Yossele was returned to his parents who chose not to expose him to an intensive Torah education, a hostile Jewish press saw his return as a victory by the forces of "light" over the forces of "darkness."

Now, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reports the logical conclusion of the boy's return.

TEL AVIV—Yossele Shumacher, the boy who was kidnaped by his grandfather to ensure his traditional education, yesterday celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in modern style—dancing the twist with his sister Zima.

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Without Comment

BONN (AFP)—Some units of the Egyptian Army will be equipped with Israeli Uzzi sub-machineguns, the opposition Social Democratic Party declared yesterday.

It quoted the source of information as an American one.

It stated that Uzzis were supplied by Israel to West Germany, which in turn transferred a quantity to Sudan, which had apparently sold the weapons to Egypt.

The Jerusalem Post Weekly
April 2, 1965

"Religious Services"

Under the heading "Religious Services" in *The New York Times* of Friday, March 5, 1965, the following are listed as sermon topics at local Jewish houses of worship:

"'Tiny Alice' — Symbol or Symptom?"

"Hole in the Fiddler's Roof"

"Edward Albee's 'Tiny Alice' "

"Arthur Miller's 'Incident at Vichy' "

"Two Nations"

Dr. Simon Greenberg, vice chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America recently told a group in Cleveland that Conservative Judaism has prevented Orthodoxy and Reform from splitting into "two nations."

Of the two-hundred-odd Protestant denominations in this country, a good number came into existence to unify Protestantism and save it from division, only to add to the split in their own Church by becoming still another denomination.

We pray that Conservatism will be the last group to attempt to save Judaism from splitting into "two nations."

Who Speaks for Us?

In the recent intra-Jewish disagreement over President Johnson's education bill, which includes aid to religious schools, Jewish groups divided in accordance with the intensity of their concern for Jewish education. Orthodoxy, which understands education to be the most effective means of assuring Jewish vitality (and consequently survival) strongly supported the measure. Jewish groups who view 'Jewish education' from a Sunday-school perspective or as a cultural value, fought strongly against passage of the bill.

Most violent in their opposition was the American Jewish Congress, which viewed sections of the bill as a threat to American democracy. (See: *The Great Society and Aid to Religious Schools*, THE JEWISH OBSERVER, January 1965.)

The American Jewish Congress,

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for that matter any tax-payer, has the right to go to the courts to question and to test the constitutionality of any legislation, over the heads of the President, the Attorney General and the Congress of the United States. This *right* we do *not* question. But when we read headlines in newspapers throughout the nation proclaiming: Jews Hit Johnson Education Bill, and the American community is misled into believing that all, or even a significant segment of American Jewry opposes the new law, we question A.J.C.'s right to speak. Their opposition to the education bill has generated hostility against all Jews among Catholics and other Americans who have been anxious to see students of religious schools in the United States recognized as equal partners in America's educational structure.

In Christian life in this country there are national bodies which speak authoritatively for sections of the religious community. When the National Council of Churches or the Council of Catholic Bishops takes a position on a matter of current concern to our citizenry, both the press and the reading public know that the bona fide opinions of the Protestant and Catholic churches have been stated. If a group with a high-sounding name which is not representative of the group they purport to speak for issues a statement, most newspaper readers will recognize that this group does not speak for its church. Yet, when the

American Jewish Congress speaks and the press reports their position, the average reader, unsophisticated in the ways of the Jewish community, is lead to believe by the all-embracing name "American Jewish Congress" that they speak for *all* of American Jewry.

It is well in this context that we review briefly the history of the American Jewish Congress and their status today. The Congress was organized at the close of World War I, as an actual congress of Jewish organizations, hence the name, American Jewish Congress. For many years it functioned as a Jewish defense organization, speaking out against antisemitism on behalf of its own membership (organized in chapters) and its various affiliates, including several Orthodox organizations. Ultimately it became primarily a membership organization with its affiliates only nominally tied to the Congress. As Orthodoxy matured in this country, and as



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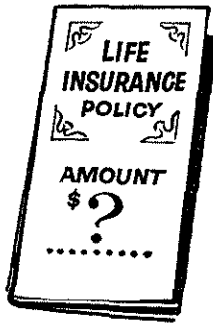
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Congress took positions which were opposed to Orthodoxy, fighting any manifestation of religion in public life, its Orthodox affiliates dropped out and Congress was left with its own membership plus several secularist Jewish affiliates. Today it represents only a fragment of the American Jewish community while it retains the terribly misleading name: *American Jewish Congress*.

Another culprit in the Jewish organization game surrounding the federal aid debate is the *American Association for Jewish Education*. This group told a Senate Committee conducting hearings on the bill that it views "with profound concern those provisions of the bill which, under the guise of alleviating deprivation, would extend financial aid to private and parochial schools." As an alternative, they proposed that public education be available during the morning hours of the day. Following the morning program, the American Association for Jewish Education proposed, the parent would have several options, among them the right to enroll their children in religious schools which open their doors after two o'clock in the afternoon. Essentially, their proposal means this: After years of failure of the afternoon 'Talmud Torah' or Hebrew School to provide adequate Jewish education, and after years of a monumental effort to produce yeshivos and day schools, the day schools should be aban-

doned and students should be returned to the bankrupt afternoon Hebrew school system. This would mean the destruction of the only effective means American Jewry has evolved to provide a minimal Jewish education of any consequence.

And who proposes this absurd plan: the *American Association for Jewish Education*. And who or what is this high-sounding body? Again, the uninformed non-Jew, or even Jew, will take it to be a significant national body, deeply concerned, as its name would indicate, with Jewish education. The A.A.J.E. is in fact a loosely-knit federation of local Hebrew School systems which can hardly speak for Jewish education even in its broadest sense, and has no connection at all with the network of day schools which is by all opinions the most dramatic and effective force in Jewish education in this country. To compound the absurdity, the proposal was formulated by the executive committee of the A.A.J.E. at a meeting in New York City, and only then distributed to its various constituent agencies whose opinions were not even solicited.

The American Jewish Congress is dedicated to the principles of liberalism and democracy. They have allowed these beliefs to go so far as to cause them to clash with the very forces of liberalism that they are constantly supporting. We repeat, they have a right to any posi-

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tion they choose, but we believe it is a distortion of liberalism and simple integrity to foist these opinions on an unsuspecting American public as 'Jewish' positions, by hiding behind a name which is utterly meaningless in the light of what Congress is today.

We submit that the American Jewish Congress should either change its name, to more realistically reflect its present constituency, or desist from speaking in the name of American Jewry.

In the same manner, local Hebrew school systems have a right to associate themselves together in a national body for whatever purposes they deem proper, but they have no right to mislead the American public by the presumptuous title, *American Association for Jewish Education* when they have demonstrated their lack of concern for

the only type of Jewish education which has proven itself.

The A.J.C and the A.A|J.E. are perpetrating a fraud which is defaming American Jewry and generating hostility in the non-Jewish community of America.

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Letters to the Editor

The Heart and the Mind

To the Editor:

I always enjoy Rabbi Jacobs' articles though I invariably disagree with him. My reaction to his article on Israel's entering into diplomatic relations with Germany is no exception.

First, I think Rabbi Jacobs confuses the issue by a discussion of Germany's present attitude toward its own past or the presence of German scientists in Egypt. The question which Israel had to face was not whether Germany has been reconstructed from its Nazi past. We all agree it has not. The question is whether this is relevant to the offer of aid which is extended along with diplomatic recognition.

Secondly, and far more importantly, I do not believe we in America have any right to advise Israel on this matter where our own physical comfort, much less our physical survival is not at stake. I will listen attentively to the statement of an Agudath Israel spokesman in Israel (whose position was much less forth-

right against recognition than that of Rabbi Jacobs) because I know his very being is bound up in that decision. The same cannot be said for us in America.

CHARLES S. LIEBMAN
Yeshiva University

To the Editor:

My commendations on your article entitled, *The Heart and the Mind* which appeared in the March issue of THE JEWISH OBSERVER. In my opinion, it should be required reading for every Jewish family in the world.

I am pleased to enclose my check in the sum of \$5.00 to extend my subscription to THE JEWISH OBSERVER for an additional year and for a copy of the Koren Haggada.

I. REINES SKIER
Hawley, Penna.

The Cult of Superficiality

To the Editor:

The article "The Jew and the Cult of Superficiality" contains the following statements:

"Surely no idea is more central to the Torah world-view than that which sees all of Creation as pointing beyond itself towards its Divine origin and purpose; which sees man's physical being as *cloaking* (my emphasis) his G-d-given and G-d seeking—*n'shomo*. . . . In the Torah's view, observed Creation is an exquisite jewelcase. . . . As attention passes from the *outer shell* (my emphasis) to the inner significance . . . the outer shell recedes . . . the sensed inner significance itself is revealed, in turn, again and again, as no more than an *outer casing* (my emphasis) enclosing

even more splendid and essential meanings and imports. . . . He (the *p'nimi*) sees physical phenomena as the *raiment of G-d-head* (my emphasis)—these phenomena *themselves* now reflect, *for the p'nimi, the Divine glory which they clothe* (my emphasis). . . . *It is this modicum of p'nimius that is surely demanded of even the least mystic of Torah-true laymen.*"

The less mystic among the Torah-true—not always laymen by any means—are shocked by expressions that physical phenomena are "the raiment of G-d-head," that these phenomena "clothe the Divine glory" as an "outer casing." All this is mentioned in connection with the concept of "man's physical being as *cloaking* his *n'shomo*." Since the writer alludes to mysticism, we must assume that these expressions are *not* to be dismissed as merely figurative or poetic, but are intended to describe mystic realities.

The writer should bear in mind that he is making a demand of fellow-Jews who have been nurtured on a clear, non-mystic formulation of the relationship of the Creator to His created universe. They follow the *ikkar* that, *unlike the relationship of soul to body in man*: "G-d is not a force inherent in the body of the universe, but is separate from all its parts. How G-d rules the universe and provides for it is a complete mystery; man is unable to solve it. For, on the one hand, it can be proved that G-d is separate from the universe, and in no contact whatever with it; but on the other hand, His *rule* and *providence* can be proved to exist in all parts of the universe, even in the smallest. Praised be He whose perfection is above our comprehension" (*Rambam, Moreh, Part One, Chapter 72*).

In more recent writings the non-

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mystic Torah-true are guided by statements like the following:

"G-d saw the light, that it was good, expresses the complete objectivity of the Creation towards the Creator, the world to G-d, and thereby opposes all those erroneous thoughts that make the Master-Worker become absorbed by His work, G-d by the world, that teach the doctrine of the *immanence* of G-d in the world, and draw G-d down . . . to the soul of the material world. . . . Not so. . . . In everlasting independence from His work is He" (Rav Hirsch's Commentary to *Braishis* 1:4).

To the non-mystic Torah-true this is an *ikkar of emunah peshutah* from which no pressure can divert them, and for which they are ready to give their very lives in an act of *Kiddush Hashem*.

Those Torah-true who are in the venerable non-mystic tradition are ever mindful of the reservations and warnings of the *Ran* (*Teshuvos Rivash* 157), of the *Ramo* (*Toras Haolah*, Part Three, Chapter 7) and others, with regard to the very concepts for which the writer demands acceptance by "even the least mystic of Torah-true laymen."

On the *practical* level, there is great merit in the criticism of the cult of superficiality among the Torah-true. P'nimius is certainly basic to authentic Torah observance and intensive Torah study. Here the writer's demand is legitimate, and we applaud it. However, on the *philosophical* level, the demand to abandon the venerable non-mystic tradition within Torah Judaism can never be made by those who follow a different school. It was never thus in Israel. Historically, criticism was in the other direction.

RABBI SHELOMOH ELIEZER DANZIGER
New York City

Rabbi Kirzner's Reply

Rabbi Danziger objects to language suggesting a comparison of the relationship between Creator and creation, to that between *n'shomo* and human body. He reads into the use of such language a denial of the independence of the

Creator from his work. Let it be stated emphatically that no such denial is to be read into my essay, and that the language objected to provides no grounds for such a misunderstanding. There may be room for legitimate debate on the role of mysticism in Torah-Yiddishkeit. However, use of the *n'shomo-body* metaphor in connection with Creator and creation is found in the Talmud (*B'rachos* 10a). The classic discussion of this talmudic usage, together with the necessary cautions to be borne in mind in connection with such usage, is in *Nefesh Hachayim* (II, 5, and glosses). It is of some interest that the particular chapter in the *Moreh* quoted by Rabbi Danziger, is cited in the *Nefesh Hachayim's* discussion, to considerably different effect. My essay was written in the spirit of the position there developed. I may add the opinion that that carefully enunciated position would surely be entirely acceptable to the "non-mystics" to whom Rabbi Danziger refers.

ISRAEL M. KIRZNER

On Transliteration

To the Editor:

I was somewhat puzzled about the fact that you published last year my letter commending you on transliterating

in the author's own pronunciations (January, 1964) with a quotation to that effect by Rabbi S. R. Hirsch, and immediately afterwards discontinuing this practice.

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We appreciate the opportunity afforded by Mr. Braunfeld's letter to explain our policy on transliteration. As closely as is possible, we transliterate Hebrew words in the manner that they are commonly spoken; i.e., *Shabbos*, rather than "Shabbat" or "Sabbath;" *Kashrus* rather than "Kashruth." However, in quoting from other works, we feel it is proper to retain the exact spelling used by the author.

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Agudath Israel on the Legislative Front

Education Aid Bill Passed; Last Minute Blows Repelled

Despite last-minute attempts to cripple the federal education aid bill, the U. S. House of Representatives and the Senate passed the Administration's legislation with overwhelming majorities. Agudath Israel's representative on Capitol Hill, Rabbi Morris Sherer, executive vice-president of the organization, worked up to the last minute to help repel attempts to scuttle the bill's effectiveness by encumbering it with such crippling amendments as a judicial review clause.

The passage of this bill represents a major victory for the efforts of Agudath Israel for over five years to convey to legislators and to the entire American public the justice of the demands for government aid to the secular programs of religious schools. For its efforts in helping the passage of the current bill, Agudath Israel received a warm letter of commendation from U. S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel.

At the outset, the organization's public relations efforts were directed towards winning public opinion, especially among the Orthodox Jewish masses, to favor the inclusion of aid to Yeshivos in federal education legislation. In recent weeks, however, Agudath Israel shifted the emphasis of its news program to clarify for the public the real meaning of the current education aid bill, by placing its benefits in the proper perspective. This was found to be necessary, in view of the prevalent misconceptions about the actual monetary benefits for religious schools from the education act, which in reality represents a victory in principle which must be ultimately utilized to help rectify the discrimination from which the Yeshivos now suffer.

Attack from A.J.C. and Education Association

The first public disavowal of the announcement by the American Jewish Congress that it would challenge the constitutionality of the administration's education aid law, was heard only several hours later when the National Broadcasting Company reported on its news

programs the Agudath Israel of America's denunciation of this drastic step. The Agudah statement, which also appeared in various newspapers throughout the country, declared: "The attempt by a Jewish organization to thwart the will of the U. S. Congress, representing the consensus of the entire American people, does irreparable damage to the interests of the Jewish community in this country." The Agudah pointed out that other non-Orthodox Jewish groups that opposed the Administration's bill have accepted the decision of Congress. "The American Jewish Congress, therefore, represents only an isolated group which persists in going to extremes in fighting for the doctrine of Church-State separation. The rash action of this group serves as grist for the mills of those elements who would defame the Jewish character," the statement concludes.

At the same time, Agudath Israel announced the establishment of a Commission on Law and Legislation (COLAL), which will include a committee of lawyers, to legally repel every attack against this law which the American Jewish Congress will make in the courts.

Previously, Agudath Israel circulated widely a sharp attack against the American Association for Jewish Education for recommending to the U. S. Congress an alternate plan under which the Yeshivos would begin their religious studies programs after 2 P.M., in order to allow their students to attend public schools during the morning hours. The statement called this proposal "a blow at the very heart of the philosophy of the Yeshivos, which schedule religious studies during the morning hours and provide their students with an all-day program in a unique Yeshiva atmosphere. This grotesque recommendation by a so-called Jewish education agency clearly indicates the deep abyss which separates non-Orthodox Jewish educators from the Torah aims and needs of the Yeshivos.

"It is indeed ironic that these non-Orthodox elements are simultaneously seeking to become the administrators of the benefits of the government's education bill in behalf of the Yeshivos, despite their opposition to the bill itself," the statement concluded, and called upon the Orthodox Jewish community to "repel every attempt to infringe upon the sovereignty of its most treasured possession: the Yeshivos."

Agudah at White House Reception

At the invitation of President Johnson, Rabbi Sherer represented Agudath Israel of America at the reception tendered by

the President at the White House on Tuesday evening, April 13th. This reception honored those who contributed to the passage of the education aid bill, and featured an informal congratulatory address by the President.

The Agudath Israel representative had an opportunity at this reception to express appreciation to the Chief Executive for including religious schools in the benefits of the education act. He also expressed these sentiments to other leading government officials and heads of the U. S. Office of Education who attended the reception.

Attention Focused on Albany Textbook Bills

Leaders of the New York State Legislature were called upon in Albany by a delegation of Agudath Israel, headed by Rabbi Sherer, to help the passage of several bills recently introduced which would provide secular textbooks to children in all elementary schools, including religious schools. According to bills introduced in the N. Y. Senate by Senators Speno and Mangano and in the Assembly by Assemblyman Ferrall, all children attending elementary schools, regardless of the type of school, would receive on a loan basis their general studies textbooks up to \$20 per child.

The Agudath Israel delegation met with Senate Majority Leader Joseph Zaretski, and Assembly Speaker Anthony Travia, as well as with Attorney General Louis J. Lefkowitz, and pointed out to them that these bills are "a natural extension" of the federal education aid bill, because they extend their benefits only to the school children. The organization has also begun a drive to inform the public about the value and justice of these bills.

Subsequently, the Agudah wrote personal letters to all of New York State's 58 State Senators and 150 State Assemblymen asking them to support this legislation. The organization also contacted other Jewish groups to help the passage of these bills.

Bill to Aid Sabbath Observers In Federal Employ

All Americans were urged by Agudath Israel to rally to the support of the bill introduced in Congress to enable Sabbath observers to work for the federal government without prejudice to their employment by reason of their religious faith. This legislation (H.R. 6873) was introduced by Rep. Jonathan Bingham of New York, to grant federal employees

time off from duty to comply with their religious obligations without loss of any employee benefits and allowing the employees to make up the lost hours at a different time.

In a statement, Agudath Israel declared: "While many Orthodox Jewish government employees, including post-office workers, have been able to arrange with their superiors time off for Sabbath or religious holiday observances, this bill is invaluable because it makes a legal concept of what till now is an accommodation dependent upon the good will of an individual. Thus, it will enable the Sabbath observer in government employ to fulfill his religious beliefs as a matter of right and not of *sufferance*."

Agudath Israel simultaneously communicated with other Orthodox groups nationally to support this bill. Several Anglo-Jewish papers have published editorials backing this measure.

Agudah's Pesach Help Received in Time

The annual Maos Chitim project of Agudath Israel, which was greatly expanded this year, was able to provide kosher Pesach provisions to needy families in various parts of the world in time for the holiday. According to reports received at the organization's national headquarters, from the Jerusalem office which supervised the *Eretz Yisroel* program and from the Switzerland office which administered the European program, the matzoh provisions were of great help to these families.

Weekly Radio Program Series Concluded

The series of weekly radio programs, sponsored by the Metropolitan Branch Presidents Council of Agudath Israel, ended the current season after presenting

twenty-five interesting broadcasts. The popular program, which was chaired by Mr. Joseph Friedenson, editor of *Dos Yiddishe Vort*, brought before the microphones a broad variety of distinguished Torah personalities, and covered a wide range of subjects. The weekly broadcasts helped to acquaint broad Jewish masses with unique Torah views on current events, and also marked important occasions in Jewish life.

National Convention Set for Nov. 11-14

The Executive Board of Agudath Israel has set the weekend of November 11-14 (Thursday through Sunday) for the 43rd convention of the movement. Plans are now being made to turn this nationwide gathering into a huge laboratory for creating constructive projects for American Orthodoxy, besides the demonstration aspects of a conclave of such large proportions.

Over one thousand of the outstanding Orthodox Jewish communal leaders and workers are expected to participate in the sessions, including the country's foremost Torah authorities. A special delegation from *Eretz Yisroel* will also join in the celebrations.

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Youngsters from all parts of Metropolitan New York and delegates from Newark, Baltimore, Spring Valley, Washington, D.C., Boston and Chicago participated. The *Siyum* was an exciting climax to the interbranch *Shabbos* in Boro Park.

The basic concept of the *Siyum Mishnayos* is study of the *Shisho Sidrai Mishnah* by all *chaverim* of Pirchei Agudath Israel throughout America. The chairman of the evening, Rabbi Yehuda Oelbaum, stressed that study of *Mishnayos* unites all Jews, wherever they live and whenever they lived. The *Siyum Mishnayos* was made by Sholom Rosengarten of Monsey who was top winner of the *Mishnayos* contest having memorized a total of 600 *Mishnos*!

Horav Moshe Feinstein, chairman of the *Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah* and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mesifita Tifereth Jerusalem, honored this gathering with his presence, and in his *D'var Torah* to the assembled youth he stressed that the *Siyum Mishnayos* should strengthen us in continuing to study Torah.



Spontaneous demonstration as *Reb* Moshe Feinstein enters the hall at Pirchei Siyum.

The guest speaker of the evening was Rabbi David Singer, *Rav* of the Sephardishe Shul in Boro Park who lauded the significance of such an impressive gathering of youngsters, whose admission ticket was "purchased" by study of Torah.

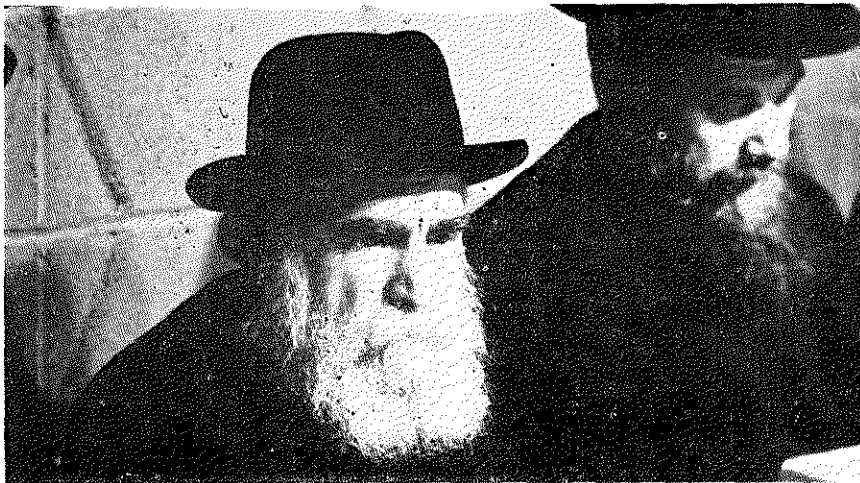
The evening's guest of honor was Rabbi Boruch Borchardt, executive director of *Zeirei* Agudath Israel, who said that Pirchei Agudath Israel as part of the Agudah movement, has one aim: the strengthening of Torah. This aim, in part, is accomplished through recreation in the spirit of Torah and actual Torah

learning in the youth groups.

Throughout the evening musical entertainment was rendered by Ben Zion Shenker of *Modziter* records fame; Avrohom Spivak, violinist, and the newly-formed Pirchei choir conducted by Eli Lipsker presented four selections.

The enthusiasm of the youngsters was dramatically demonstrated when they arose in unison to greet the revered *Rosh Yeshiva*, *Reb* Moshe Feinstein, the very personification of Torah study.

The Pirchei *Siyum* arrangements committee was headed by Eli Teitelbaum.



AT THE SIYUM — *Reb* Moshe Feinstein and *Reb* Shmuel Berenbaum, *Mirrer* *Rosh Yeshiva*.

Camp Agudah, Camp Bnos To Open July 1st

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