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LESSONS FROM THE GAZA WAR

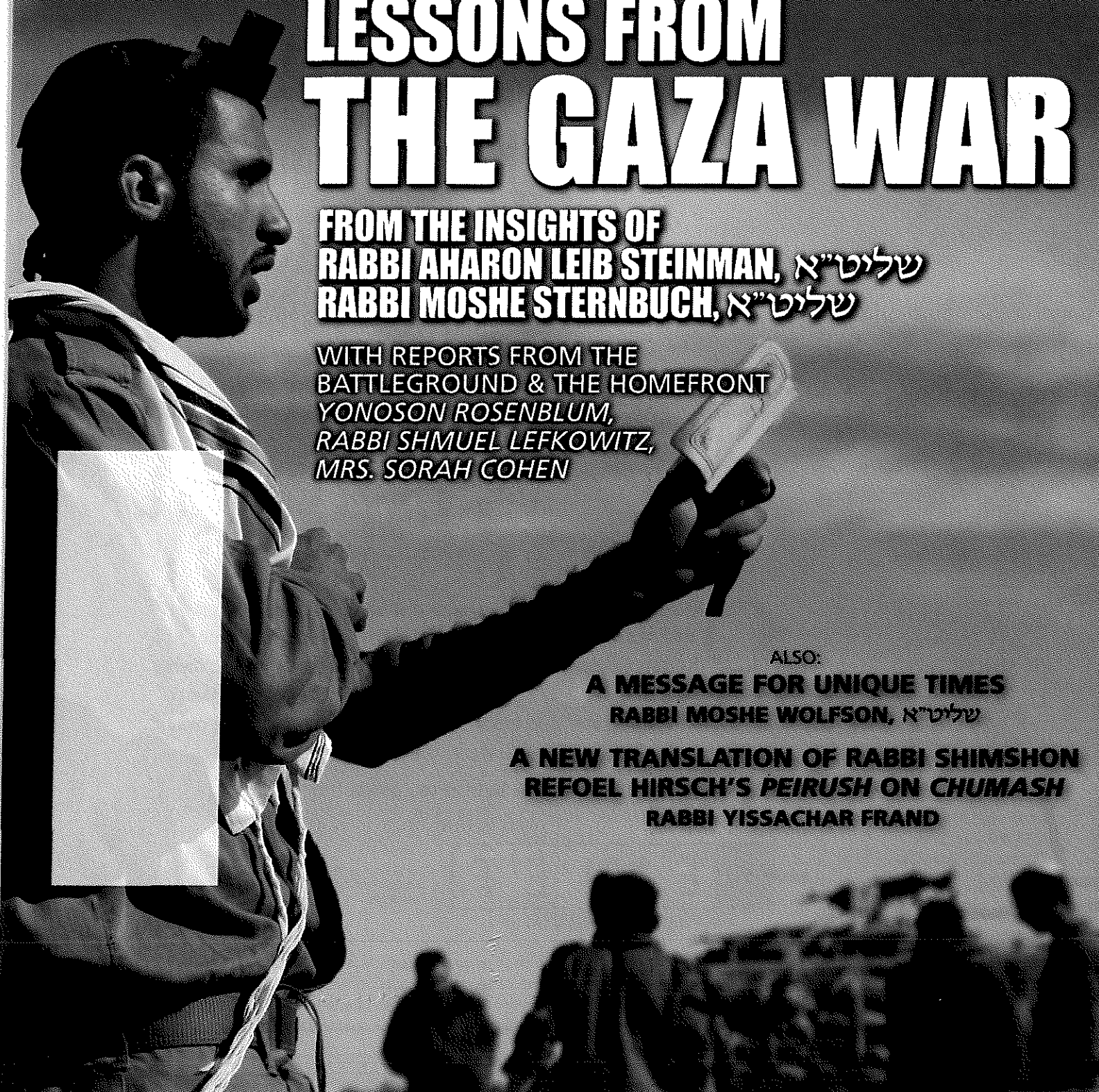
FROM THE INSIGHTS OF
RABBI AHARON LEIB STEINMAN, שליט"א
RABBI MOSHE STERNBUCH, שליט"א

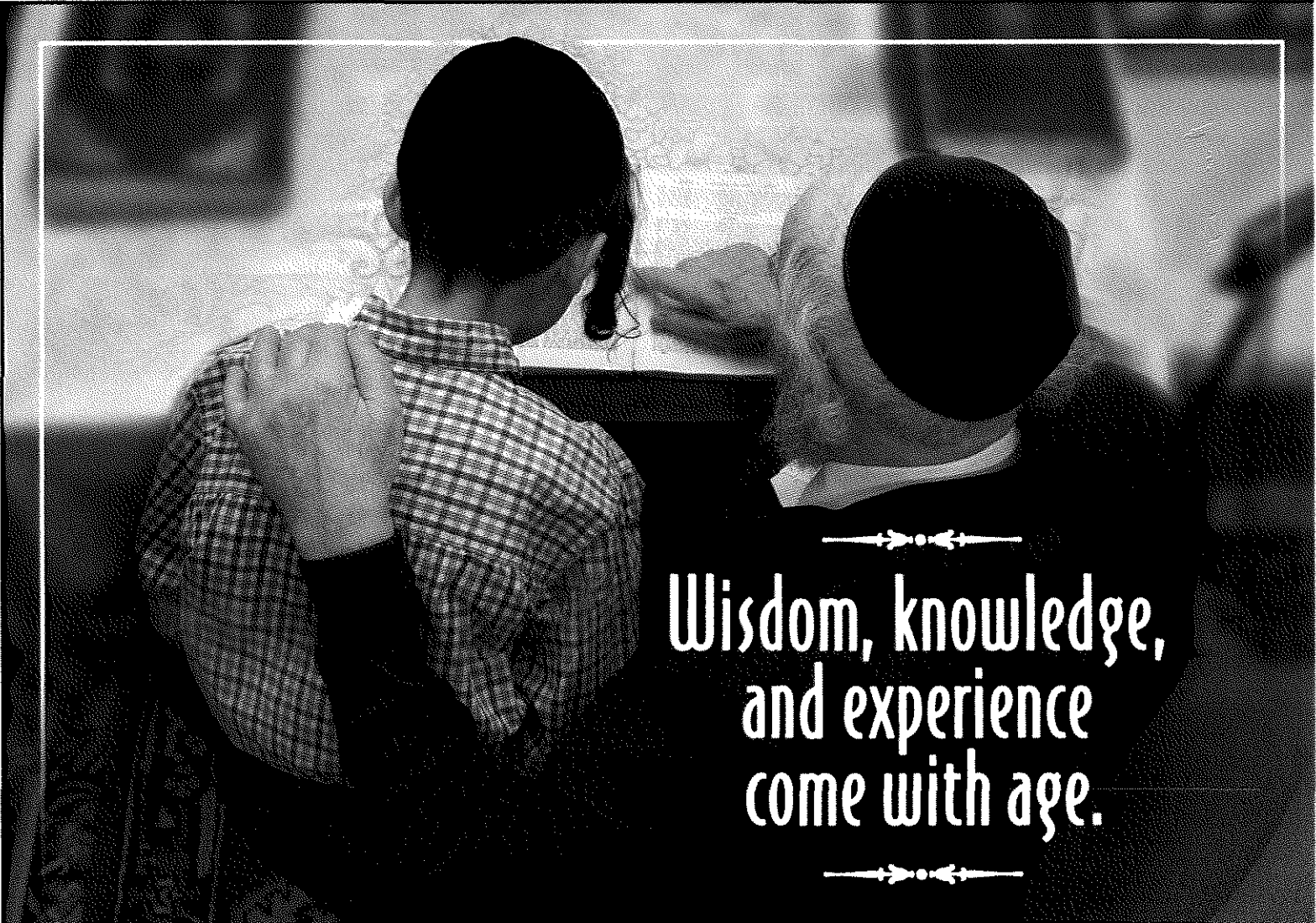
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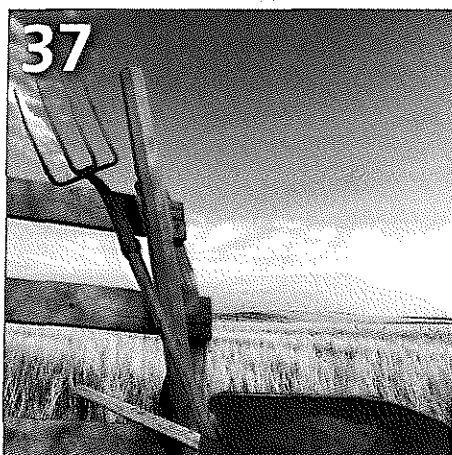
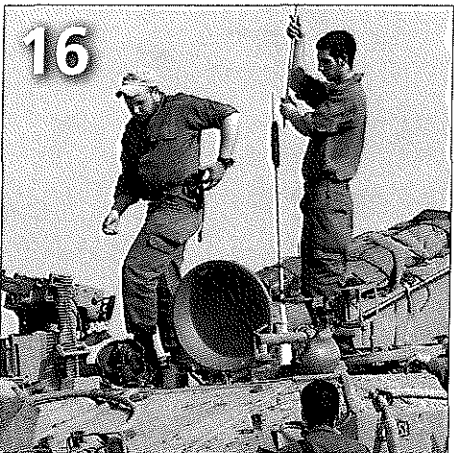
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~ NOTED IN SORROW ~

Harav Noach Weinberg, זצ"ל

AS WE GO TO PRESS, the Torah world is saddened by the passing of one of its most influential personages and charismatic visionaries.

Rabbi Noach Weinberg, זצ"ל, was the dean and founder of Yeshiva Aish HaTorah in Yerushalayim and spearheaded its worldwide network of programs and activities. In his lifetime, Rabbi Weinberg touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews, bringing them closer to the *Ribbono shel Olam*. He was 78.

Every fiber of his being was saturated with the omnipotence of the *Ribbono shel Olam* and the truth of Torah. He lived every moment of his vibrant life with an uncanny awareness of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu's* presence, His infinite love for His creations, and the power of Torah to instruct us on how to live a most meaningful life.

Born and bred on New York's Lower East Side, he was the product of a distinguished lineage which included his uncle, Rabbi Avraham Weinberg, זצ"ל, the Rebbe of Slonim. Just 16 when his father died, Reb Noach became a traveling dry goods salesman in order to ease the financial burden on his family. It was during those travels to the metropolises of America that he became keenly aware of the burgeoning assimilation and intermarriage problems among us. Reb Noach learned in the citadels of Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin and Baltimore's Ner Israel before deciding, at age 23, to seek an audience with the Chazon Ish to discuss America's plight of the uninformed and the uneducated masses.

He boarded a ship to Haifa in 1953, only to learn during mid-trip of the passing of *Klal Yisroel's* revered sage in Bnei Brak. Upon arrival, he enrolled in Yeshivas Mir where he immersed himself in constant learning – never sleeping more than three hours at a time.

Sheva yipol tzaddik vekam. Shlomo Hamelech informs us that a true *tzaddik* rises, even after falling seven times. But Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner, זצ"ל, explains that the *tzaddik's* ability to pick himself up comes *because* of his experiences with failure, not despite them. As Rabbi Nosson Scherman, שליט"א, puts it so succinctly, "Failure is not the enemy of success; it is its prerequisite."

With the encouragement of Rabbi Lazer Yudel Finkel, זצ"ל, he began his quest to solve this escalating scourge of the vanishing Jew by creating *kiruv* organizations in Israel. After Rav Noach's



Rav Noach was definitely not politically correct. He said what he wanted to say. "When G-d spoke on Sinai, He didn't say, 'I'm giving you a culture,' he said, 'I'm giving you a religion'" ... without pulling any punches.

failures with five organizations and three yeshivos, he succeeded in founding Shema Yisroel, which evolved into Yeshiva Ohr Somayach, with Rabbi Nachman Bulman, זצ"ל, Rabbi Nota Schiller and Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, שליט"א. Then he went off on his own to create Aish HaTorah.

With unique fervor and unparalleled passion, he pioneered the *kiruv* movement and built a powerful network of Torah centers that today spans 27 different cities on five continents. Under his tutelage, ancillary organizations such as Project Chazon, Honest Reporting, Discovery, Hasbara and Jerusalem Fellowships, EYAHT and JEWEL for women, and now Project Inspire broke ground and flourished. Aish.com, the world's leading Torah education website, today receives nearly 3 million visits per month. There are now similar sites in Hebrew, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Russian. Rabbi Weinberg's popular book *What the Angel Taught You* (Shaar Press/Mesorah) and his tape series "48 Ways to Wisdom" are just two avenues he utilized to reach out to members of *Am Yisroel*.

He developed brilliant systems of teaching Torah in relevant ways, and nurtured a cadre of disciples who continue his holy work worldwide. Those who sought his public teaching and personal guidance found a rare leader of sterling character, deep understanding and gentle caring who pushed himself beyond limits to help others.

His brother, Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, זצ"ל, the *Rosh Yeshiva* of Ner Yisroel, once said that Rav Noach had done more for the Jewish people than anyone else in this generation. He built an international organization that touches the lives of one million people a year. Tens of thousands of people are today Torah observant because of his groundbreaking efforts, but if you met him, you could make the mistake of thinking he was just starting out. He was so hungry, so passionate, so frustrated at not being able to do more. You never would have believed that this was a man who had so many accomplishments to his credit.

Rabbi Weinberg's outlook and vision can best be summed up in a statement he himself made:

"Our vision is to instill in every Jew pride in our heritage, confidence in our future, and an appreciation of how precious one's involvement with the Jewish people can be for himself and all humanity. By working together, we can achieve the miracle of a Jewish renaissance."

And indeed, he did.

—Rabbi Yaakov Salomon

LESSONS FROM THE GAZA WAR

An Age of Miracles

Rabbi Yonason Eibschutz (1690-1764) made a truly enlightening observation: The survival of the Jewish People in the 2,000 years of *galus* is more miraculous than the Exodus from Egypt over 3,700 years ago. Each era in our millennia of *galus* offers a distinct kind of challenge, with its own miraculous result.

OUR RECENT HISTORY, during the sixty years since the end of World War II, is truly extraordinary. In most instances, the threats that we faced were not of discrimination, persecution and annihilation, as in the past. These were falling away and were being replaced by invitations of acceptance and assimilation, and pressure to conform. After witnessing years of surrendering to an unyielding six-day work week and difficulties in keeping kashrus, and then, in the 1940s and '50s, responding to new opportunities in the business and professional worlds, one could well have predicted the end of Orthodox Jewry in America.

Instead, there were stirrings of spiritual awakening, some dedicated pioneering individuals, and the injection of energizing, inspiring, heroic souls who survived *Churban* Europe and began to transform America from a spiritual wilderness on the threshold of disappearance to a tentative pause in the melting away of Orthodoxy, and an ultimate, totally unanticipated growth and revival.

I. THE GENERAL SCENE: A SEVENTY-YEAR PERSPECTIVE

.....

Let us go back to 70 years ago. At that time, the writer of these lines was in a primary grade in a public school in Seattle. I was no different from my older brothers or other Jewish children in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver... or Detroit. The closest Hebrew Day School was over 2,000 miles away, in Chicago. In fact, there were no more than five day schools outside of New York City on the entire American continent. At that time, there were three *mesivtos*, and no *kollel* for advanced study. When my oldest brother got married in 1952, and was accepted in Bais Medrash Elyon in Monsey, NY, he was one of ten *yungeleit* there. Add another ten in Lakewood's Bais Medrash Govoha, and a few more in Bais Hatalmud in the East New York section of Brooklyn. There were less than thirty in the entire Western hemisphere.

Photo: Smoke is seen billowing from Gaza following an airstrike that was part of the IDF's Operation Cast Lead (Yehuda Boltshauser)

Today, there is a day school in every American community of at least 10,000 families. In fact, there are over 780 day schools across the continent, and over 200 yeshiva-Bais Yaakov high schools, servicing over 250,000 students.¹

Bais Medrash Govoha in Lakewood has five thousand students, including several thousand married *kollel* fellows. With the spread of community *kollelim*, there are over 30 such institutions scattered across the continent. Today, the American Torah community is led by rabbanim, *dayanim*, and *roshei yeshivos* of high caliber who are American-born and for the most part were brought up and educated in American yeshivos.

And what was *Eretz Yisroel* like 75 years ago? We quote from Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz's memoirs, published in JO Jan.'06:

Readers cannot imagine what a spiritual wasteland *Eretz Yisroel* was in those days. In 1933, not only was the "well empty, lacking water," but it was filled with "snakes and scorpions." The concept of a *ben Torah* was completely foreign to this public. The new *yishuv* could only boast of

¹ Statistics from Torah Umesorah

Living in an age of miracles has ramifications on the battlefield. It is incumbent on us to take note of these miracles and to respond to them in a variety of ways.

one or two small yeshivos in which the learning was *al taharas hakodesh*. To send one's son to a yeshiva high school, which combined secular and religious studies, was considered the pinnacle of Orthodoxy.

Even those who remained loyal to Torah values did not dream of challenging the Zionist leadership, or even the ideology of Mizrachi, permeated as it was with compromises and grateful acceptance of

whatever bones were thrown its way by its Zionist masters. One might as well have dreamed of planting a lush garden in the midst of a parched desert as of sowing the seeds of a Chareidi community in such unpromising soil.

Today, the yeshiva world in *Eretz Yisroel* is burgeoning. Chevron, Ponovezh, Mir, Brisk ... in Yerushalayim, Bnei Brak, Modiin, Tifrach ... Chinuch Atzmai – a network of *chadarim* – was founded by Rabbi Aaron Kotler, זצ"ל, just 55 years ago. Today, close to 100,000 children are enrolled in these Torah Schools, plus 45,000 in private *chadarim*. And every town and city that has had a Chinuch Atzmai school for ten years can today boast a *yeshiva ketana*-high school, a *yeshiva gedola-beis midrash*, and a *kollel*.

- The declaration of Israel as a Jewish State in 1948, the massive immigration that followed, and the phenomenal build up of the religious *yishuv* is beyond anyone's dream, let alone anticipation.
- In the 1950s, Mesivta Torah Vodaath and Telshe had scores of dormitory students who hailed from Santiago de Chile, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires,

Bogota, and Mexico City. There was no yeshiva south of the USA border. Today, most of these cities boast their own yeshiva and *kollel*. We can go on, citing Gateshead, Manchester, and London in England, as well as Melbourne, Australia. And let us not forget the return of Torah to the Former Soviet Union.

- Chassidus sixty years ago was a few scattered *shteiblach* housing hopeful survivors, with treasured memories, and a

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smattering of innocent but promising children. Today, we celebrate the revival of the thriving Chassidische world. Merely saying the names—Satmar, Vizhnitz, Ger, Boyan, Bobov, Stolin-Karlin – brings to mind flourishing *battei midrash*, elevating *tischen*, yeshivos, girls' schools, and all the appurtenances of vibrant *kehillos hakodesh*.

- The profusion of fully observant – even Chareidi – Jews in the professions, including medicine, law, and politics, was never dreamed of half a century ago.
- Another area of phenomenal growth: the ever-expanding publishing of *sefarim*, classic and original, in both Hebrew and English, by Feldheim, ArtScroll-Mesorah, Targum, and C.I.S., as well as the proliferation of Chareidi newspapers and magazines, such as *Yated Ne'eman*, *Hamodia*, *Mishpacha*, and of course *The Jewish Observer*, among others.

Step back and realize, once again, that World War II-*Churban* Europe left the Jewish People decimated, devastated, gasping for breath. One could hardly have expected America to step in and foster a rebirth of Orthodox Jewry and Torah Judaism as we are experiencing. It has not only been a matter of avoiding assimilation, but also an extraordinary experience of numerical growth and spiritual attainment. Beyond doubt, more than the product of one, or a group of builders, or a system of visionary, pioneering builders, this triumph is a testimony to *Hashem Yisbarach's* involvement in our individual, communal and national lives. This is incontrovertible evidence of His *Hashgacha*, His directing of our lives.

**II. THE SPECIFIC FOCUS:
RECENT MIRACLES IN
ERETZ YISROEL**
.....

In the above context, I would like to summon the readers' attention to how recent events in *Eretz Yisroel* have offered us a glimpse into more aspects of His *Hashgacha*, the evidence

of how it has commanded the scene there, and makes demands on us.

Living in an age of miracles has ramifications on the battlefield. It is incumbent on us to take note of these miracles and to respond to them in a variety of ways. This is not one man's observation. This has been expressed by *gedolei Torah* both here and in *Eretz Yisroel*. In the pages that follow, we present translations of the remarks and insights of the revered *rosh hayeshiva*, Rabbi Aaron Leib Steinman, שליט"א, as well as *shiurim* and *shmuessen* by Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, שליט"א, *Raavad* (*Rosh Av Beis Din*) of the Eida Hachareidis. They both made it very clear that battles may have raged in Gaza, but an even more fundamental war was being fought in the *beis midrash*. As the Novominsker Rebbe, Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, שליט"א, pointed out in a *shmuess*² in his yeshiva, the Gemara in *Makkos* (10a) makes it very clear:

Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi said, "Omdos hayu ragleinu bish'e'arayich Yerushalayim – Our feet stood firm within your gates, O Jerusalem! (Tehillim 122,2). What has caused our feet to stand firm in the war [and us to be victorious]? The gates of Yerushalayim, where they were toiling in Torah study."

When undeniable miracles take place, it is incumbent on us to recognize them, and to respond to them. Since, as the Gemara cited above states, and as our contemporary sages have underscored, we must do what we can to contribute to the learning of Torah – through both our personal participation and our financial support for institutions dedicated to Torah *chinuch* as well as for those who are totally immersed in the *beis midrash*.

And as Yonoson Rosenblum points out in his article "War in Gaza – Summing Up," we should also note with awe and admiration how the religious soldiers in IDF generated an uplifting *kiddush Hashem* with their *tefillos* and admirable conduct, risking their lives,

² Presented to initiate several sessions of four hours of uninterrupted Torah learning as a *zechus* (source of merit) for the IDF soldiers fighting in Gaza, and civilians living in the region

alongside their comrades in arms, to protect their countrymen. In addition, a report on the homefront by Mrs. Sorah Cohen, "Against All Odds," conveys to us the extraordinary *chessed* performed by the Torah community in *Eretz Yisroel* in reaching out to displaced families and meeting their needs.

Yes, we have been witness to the combination of Torah and *chessed* that *Chazal* prescribed. In fact, every victory – major or relatively small – must give us pause. First, it reminds us that we are, indeed, living in extraordinary times, giving us much to contemplate, much to admire, and much to inspire and guide us in our struggles to measure up to the messages *Hashem Yisbarach* is sending us.

Moreover, many world powers responded with outright rejection of Israel's military action against Hamas in Gaza, including most of the members of the European Union. In addition, Turkey has backed a Saudi Arabian plan that calls for Israel to pull back to the pre-1967 borders, surrendering vast amounts of settled and developed areas. In fact, overt anti-Semitic acts of vandalism have been taking place in Turkey and Venezuela.

Also, at this writing, the rather tentative cease-fire appears to be short-lived. While some look with hope to the appointment of former Senator George Mitchell as President Obama's choice as Mideast envoy, his record is marked by a number of statements that put Israel and the Palestinians on equal footing, while Israel has an ongoing record of making concessions compared to none whatsoever by the Arabs. Mitchell has credited the Palestinians with possessing one "overriding objective ... an independent state," with no mention of their refusal to recognize Israel's existence.

We draw immense encouragement and strength from the fact that the *Ribbono shel Olam* has not deserted us. We, in turn, must continue to have His expectations from us uppermost in our minds and hearts, directing us in our general policies and our personal conduct.

–N.W.

Americans learning Torah in Yerushalayim at Agudath Israel's Yarchei Kallah

The Call of the Hour:
**To Develop Strength
 in Torah & Emuna**

The Rosh Hayeshiva's Defining Words

During the recent Gaza war, the esteemed *Rosh Yeshiva*, Hagaon Rabbi Aharon Leib Steinman, שליט"א, addressed a family gathering on the tenuous state of security in Israel. Appended to his words are comments of other respected rabbanim.

WE ARE INFORMED IN *Tanach*: "Hashem's wrath flared against Israel, and He said, 'Because this nation has transgressed My covenant that I commanded their forefathers, and they have not heeded My voice, I shall no longer drive out any man from before them, from among the nations that Yehoshua left when he died.' – Hashem will test *Yisroel* through them – whether they will keep the ways of Hashem, as their forefathers did, or not." So Hashem let those nations remain, without driving them out ... "to know whether they would observe Hashem's commandments that He had commanded their forefathers through Moshe" (*Shoftim* 2,20-23, 3,1-3).

Rashi comments, "Only for this reason alone did He let them remain, so that the coming generations of the Children of Israel would know and ponder what sin causes, for now they are forced to study warfare."

We learn from here that the sole reason why G-d let the dwellers of the land remain is so that the *coming* generations would know that it is sin that causes them to be forced to study warfare. Sin; nothing else.

Everything, then, comes from G-d. Today, *the Palestinians* are not the true combatants, and *the army* does not defuse conflict. Everything is from Him, He is the source of all *berachos*. The moment that sin becomes causative, giving rise to retribution, the Arabs are but G-d's rod, in the sense of "Assyria, the rod of My wrath" (*Yeshayahu* 10,5). When sin is an active force, war is imposed upon us.

A state of war, then, puts the onus on each of us to turn away from sin. Each of us knows what is in his heart, the nature of his sin, and what is incumbent upon him to perfect. We must recognize that everything at the core is spiritual, a matter of faith, tied into reward and punishment, as consequences of our actions' spiritual effect. It is incumbent on each of us, then, to greatly strengthen one's faith and not lose

awareness that there is nothing besides G-d, and that whatever occurs comes from Him. Therefore, in addition to intensifying one's Torah study – which serves to shield and save us – one must also increase one's study of those texts that inspire faith.

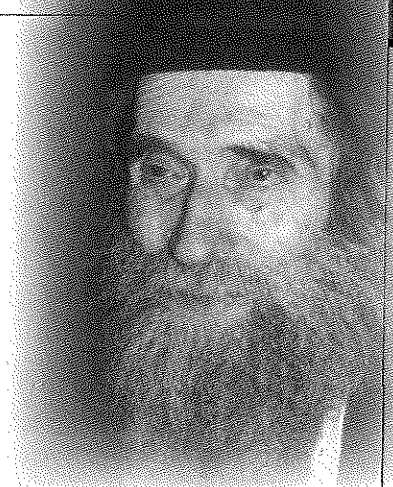
NO IRON ON THE ALTAR

Tosefta Bava Kama (7:2) states, "There you shall build an altar to Hashem, your G-d, an altar of stones; you shall not raise iron upon them' (*Devarim* 27,5). Why did the Torah disqualify iron over and above all other metals? Because the sword is fashioned from iron, and the sword is a symbol of retribution, while the altar is a symbol of atonement. Shall we pass something that is a symbol of retribution over something that is a symbol of atonement?"

Is this not a *kal vachomer* (an inference from a minor to a major)? Because the stones of the altar effectuate atonement upon the Jewish People from their Heavenly Father, the Torah states regarding these stones, which cannot see, hear or speak: "You shall not raise iron upon them." All the more so must *bnei Torah*, who are a source of atonement for the world, never be harmed by any destructive force.

In such times as these, we must increasingly care for *bnei Torah*, and not, heaven forbid, "raise iron upon them." If only the decision makers knew that even in peaceful times – and especially in trying times – it is *sin* that causes punitive suffering, *atonement* that obviates the need for war, and *bnei Torah* who bring about the world's atonement. They would surely be much more careful not to bring harm to *bnei Torah*, never seek to limit their means or compromise their sustenance. On the contrary, were they aware of the contribution of *bnei Torah* to the Jewish People, they would do everything to protect them, care for them, and even shield them from being forced to pause for an instant from their learning. All the more so, when iron and sword are raised

Today, the *Palestinians* are not the true combatants, and the army does not defuse conflict. Everything is from Him, He is the source of all *berachos*... the Arabs are but G-d's rod



Hagaon Rabbi Aharon Leib Steinman

upon the inhabitants of the Holy Land, is it unconscionable to raise a sword of ignorance and malevolence upon the *bnei Torah*. The generous supporters of Torah must be aware that in times such as these, one must bolster *bnei Torah* sevenfold, for they are the very atonement of the world, and Heaven forbid to now minimize their support!

* * *

RABBI SHMUEL MONTAGUE: OUR PRIMARY STRENGTH

In light of the *Rosh Yeshiva's* words, we would like to assess and express our appreciation for the strength of the Torah communities during these times. Hagaon Rabbi Shmuel Montague, שליט"א, Rav of Netivot's Torah community, told us that our primary source of

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strength is the Torah study of the *bnei Torah* who have remained in the *kollelim*, their regular learning schedules unchanged. "We believe that the merit of the Torah protects us," he declared, "and those who study it are the area's true protectors. I have informed many that, obviously, we must insure that our *bein adam lechaveiro* (interpersonal conduct) and modesty are up to par, but above all other forces, it is Torah study that protects us and secures our safety."

Regarding our obligation to take active steps in protecting ourselves from the war, we consulted with rabbinic leaders, and they instructed us to guide each individual according to his inner, spiritual capability. Someone living in a threatened region who is fearful, or whose family is fearful, is counseled to leave the area in light of the situation. Even Yeshivas Hanegev, led by *Hagaon* Rabbi Yissachar Meir, שליט"א, recently relocated to Netanya. Someone who is not afraid and whose family is willing to stay, however, should do so while reinforcing his Torah study and prayer.

In Netivot's main *beis midrash*, Beis Yitzchak, Rabbi Shmuel Montague posted the following announcement: "Regarding my question as to how we must respond should an air raid occur during scheduled times of prayer or study – whether we should continue

as usual or cease all activity to follow the security protocol – the *Rosh Yeshiva*, *Hagaon* Rabbi Aharon Lieb Steinman, שליט"א, informed us to follow the security protocol and fulfill our obligation of taking active steps to protect ourselves."

Hagaon Rabbi Yisroel Yaakov Pinkus, שליט"א, Rav of the Ofakim Torah community, quoted the following *Rambam* (*Hilchos Ta'anis* 1:2-3) in order to stir and strengthen his community: "For when calamity comes and they cry out because of it and sound the shofar, everyone will know that it is because of their wicked deeds that evil has beset them, as it is written (*Yirmeyahu* 5,25), 'Your transgressions have overturned these, and your sins have withheld goodness from you....' However, if they do not cry out and sound the shofar, but say, 'This thing has befallen us as part of the world's natural course, and this misfortune is happenstance,' this is the path of cruelty and causes them to [further] cling to their wicked deeds."

**NOT A NATURAL
COURSE OF EVENTS**

.....
We are living in difficult times and must remember that this is the hand of *Hashem*. We must perceive all events in this fashion. Do not listen to the media's various interpretations. Rather, know that this a Heavenly decree and is in no way part of the natural course of events. Additionally, we must increase our prayer and strengthen our faith.

We may add here the well known *segula* (protective act) of Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, זצ"ל, to focus one's mind on the words "*Ein od milvado* – There is no other besides Him," and this *segula* will shield one from all harsh forces and judgments, as is known. During the air raid siren, we suggest that children be told to bind their hearts to their Heavenly Father and remember that it is not falling missiles that are key. Rather, *Hashem* is reaching out to awaken in us an awareness of *Ein od milvado*. May this *segula* protect us. ☞

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RABBI YAAKOV BEAR

What We Have Seen, What We Must Do Wake Up Now!

The Defining Words of Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, שליט"א

The Zohar states that it is a mitzvah not only to tell of the great miracles *Hashem* performed during *Yetzias Mitzrayim* (the Exodus from Egypt), but also to relate the miracles that He performs in every generation. Whoever elaborates in relating those miracles is worthy of praise. *Hashem* gathers together all the heavenly hosts of angels to listen to our telling over His miracles. By reflecting on every aspect of what *Hashem* has done for us, we strengthen our awareness of *Hashem's Hashgacha* (Divine Providence) in the world.

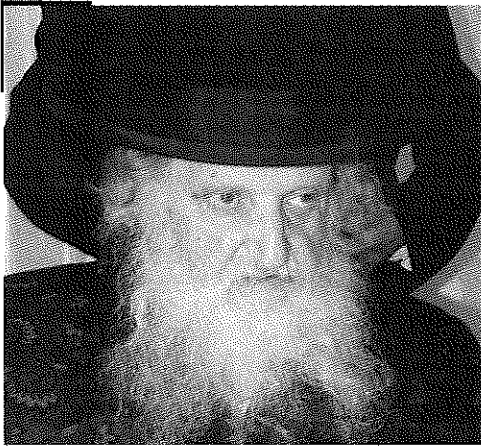
VIEWING MIRACLES AND THE DEMANDS THEY IMPOSE

THERE ARE THOSE who describe all world events in terms of natural phenomena or accidental occurrences – *teva*. They include astute strategy, the quality of soldiers, and advanced technological equipment as factors in military success. Others, by contrast, see evidence of miracles everywhere. For example, all the newspapers, both secular and religious, admit that miracles had been occurring in *Eretz Yisroel* as of late, but the secularists are not prepared to say that it was done by the hand of the Almighty. Why this reluctance? Unattributed miracles do not obligate, whereas seeing the hand of Divine Providence does. Their attitude has a precedent in the Torah. The *meraglim* (spies) in the wilderness did not want to enter *Eretz Yisroel* with open miracles, because should *Hashem* perform such *nissim*, He would demand more from them. They therefore ruled that the people should not go to *Eretz Yisroel*

RABBI BEAR IS A SENIOR TEACHER AT NEVE YERUSHALAYIM SEMINARY FOR GIRLS, AND A LONG-TIME CLOSE TALMID OF HAGAON RAV MOSHE STERNBUCH.

As of late, we have been witnessing open miracles the likes of which have rarely been seen since the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*. In that era, the wonders mainly took place inside the *Beis Hamikdash*, whereas now they occur all over *Eretz Yisroel*. The vast majority of the missiles being fired on inhabited regions are hitting open areas, and even those striking populated places have caused minimal damage. How is it possible to witness thousands of missiles falling in Israel with only a handful of casualties and not to see the open hand of *Hashgacha Prattis* over these last few years?

When a radio interviewer asked a spokesman for Hamas why they are so off-target, he said that during training, they always hit their targets. "The only explanation is your *Elokim*." Some Israeli experts claim Hamas-firing ability is inaccurate. Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch says, on the contrary, if they were scatter-shooting thousands of rockets, there should have been many more casualties. We clearly see the hand of Divine Providence. During the current Gaza War, many more Israeli casualties were anticipated, as Hamas had laid many minefields. A double miracle occurred: Firstly, Hamas made a map revealing the location of the mines; secondly, a copy of this map was found by an Israeli soldier. *Yeshayahu* the prophet exclaims, "*Yada shor koneihu vachamor eivus*



Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch

ba'alav; Yisroel lo yada, ami lo hisvonan—An ox knows its owner and a donkey its masters' trough; but *Yisroel* does not know, My people do not comprehend” (*Yeshayahu* 1,3).

Only through in-depth analysis of *Hashem's* protection of the Jewish People at large, and in *Eretz Yisroel* in particular, will we merit to catch a glimpse of His hand. If, however, we fail to view the miracles as *Hashgacha*, but rather as natural occurrences, then the Al-mighty may withhold His involvement, turn His mercy into the wrath of judgment, and deliver us to so-called natural “accidental” forces. The consequences of such a course of conduct would, G-d forbid, be too frightening to contemplate.

Rashi taught us this lesson in regard to the plague of darkness, when *Hashem* killed a number of Jews. Why did some Jews deserve this severe punishment? What are subsequent generations to learn from this? *Hashem* had already smitten the Egyptians with eight *makkos*

As of late, we have been witnessing open miracles the likes of which have rarely been seen since the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*. In that era, the wonders mainly took place inside the *Beis Hamikdash*, whereas now they occur all over *Eretz Yisroel*.

(plagues), demonstrating that He controls the world and performs miracles to protect the Jews. If, however, there were Jews who were spared, yet related to these miracles as merely natural occurrences, they apparently did not internalize the lessons of the plagues. They failed to respond to the miraculous *makkos* by doing *teshuva*, and thus did not merit to be redeemed.

WHAT IS OUR DUTY?

Hashem's open miracles and abundance of Divine mercy and kindness place demands on each and every one of us as Torah-observant, thinking Jews. Some of these responses are broad-ranged, others are of narrower focus.

• ***Teshuva* – Self Improvement**

We must not point fingers at others in terms of where they should improve themselves, but should rather focus on improving ourselves. We learn from Yona *Hanavi*, who took responsibility for the storm at sea that threatened the ship he was on. He had refused to go to Nineveh to prophesy on the coming Divine retribution should they not do *teshuva*. He knew that they would go through an external *teshuva*, which would cast aspersions on the recalcitrant Jews. When the ship was about to sink, the captain asked Yona: “Who are you?” Yona answered, “I am a Jew and I fear the Al-mighty, who made the sea and the dry land.” The sailors became very frightened, for Yona then told them that he was a prophet refusing to fulfill his mission. They asked Yona what to do to calm the sea. He answered, “Throw me into the sea, for I know that because of me this strong storm is upon you” (*Yona* 5, 10-12).

The Brisker Rav, זצ"ל, asked, Why did Yona accept responsibility? Why didn't he say that since the sailors had been praying to their false gods, they were

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responsible? The Brisker Rav answered that the degree to which a Jew is observant, so is he responsible. As a result, he blames himself, not others.

• **Prayer**

We should pray with a deep, heartfelt cry, as opposed to prayers by rote, as the *Rambam* writes in *Hilchos Ta'anis* (Ch. I: 1-3)

In the face of war, plague, or drought, it is a biblical commandment to cry out with a great and heartfelt cry (*Bamidbar* 1, 9). This is part of the process of *teshuva*—when tragedy befalls the Jewish nation and we cry out and sound the trumpets, everyone should know that it is because of their evil deeds that evil oppresses them, as it is written in *Yirmiyahu*, “Your sins led you astray” That will negate the evil oppressing them. If, however, we do not cry out, and we dismiss the tragedies as happenstance, then we are cruel, for this will cause us to continue in our evil ways, and *Hashem* will add additional suffering to arouse us to do *teshuva*.

• **Chessed**

If we extend ourselves in doing *chessed* to each other, *Hashem* will act toward us with *chessed*. On a previous occasion, during the first Gulf War, Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch explained that this is why *tzeddaka* is mentioned in the *Yamim Nora'im tefilla* as one of the three key ways in which an evil decree is overruled: If we go above and beyond our norm in *tzeddaka*, *Hashem* will do the same with us.

• **Self Sacrifice – Mesiras Nefesh**

The *Chofetz Chaim* said that we possess *emes*, truth, but we fulfill it *beshekker*, without integrity. The enemies have *shekker*, falsehood, but they do it *be'emes*, with genuine motivation. “*Me'ovai techakimeini mitzvoseichu* – From my enemies make me wise, to do *mitzvos*” (*Tehillim* 119,98). Hamas commits evil with self-sacrifice; we must perform *mitzvos* with self-sacrifice. Tens of thousands of the enemy would be happy to die, as they convince themselves that the Almighty will thus send them to paradise – whereas, unfortunately, very

few of us even recognize the hand of the Almighty in our daily activities.

• **Shemiras Habris – Guarding the Covenant**

Rebi Chiya (in *Zohar*, *Parshas Lech Lecha*) says that until this very day, descendants of *Yishmael* derive merit for fulfilling *bris milla*.¹ We, in turn, must strengthen our guarding of the covenant (*bris*) by accepting to pursue the obligation to pursue purity of thought, speech (*milla* also means “word”), and action. We must counteract exposure to immodesty as displayed and written in television, newspapers and books. Our strengthening of *os b'ris* – the holiness of the covenant – in contrast to the unrestrained immorality of *Bnei Yishma'el*, weakens the power of our enemies, even if other nations join them in inciting destructive wars.

REINFORCING BASICS ...

.....
... Such as saying a hundred berachos a day with *kavana* (intent), as instituted by David Hamelech at a time of national calamity; also: responding with ninety *Ameins* a day, and answering “*Yehei Shmei Rabba*” aloud with *kavana*. Chazal (the Sages) promise us that, as a result, *Hashem* will forgive all *aveiros*.

Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch heard from the late Manchester Rosh Hayeshiva, Rabbi Yehuda Zev Segal, זצ"ל, that he had a *kaballa* (sacred tradition) that at a time of distress, one should say Psalm 20 twelve times.

Let us not forget: We also must intensify our in-depth Torah study.

• **Reinforcing Our Recognition of the Hashgacha –**

1. In War

In war, *Hashem* is testing our *emuna* (faith) and *bitachon* (trust). If we fail to engage sufficiently in introspection, He will, G-d forbid, leave us in continual troubles, at the hands of our enemies.

After three weeks of war in Gaza, we had a significant military victory, but did not succeed in beating Hamas into

¹ Theirs is an incomplete circumcision, *s hemalin velo por'in*.

total submission. The Israelis initiated a unilateral cease-fire, with the Hamas chain of command and fighting potential still existing. Yet, we Jews did win a spiritual war. We cried out to *Hashem* and He answered us, as it says in *Tehillim* (8,20), “*Eileh varechev ve'eileh vasusim va'anachnu besheim Hashem Elokeinu nazkir*. Some come with chariots and some with horses, but we call out in the Name of *Hashem* our G-d.” While the battles were won, the war is not over.

2. In Daily Life

The world perceives miracles in unnatural events, whereas we see even natural occurrences as resulting from Divine Providence. We have thus witnessed many open miracles – in particular, how each missile has its address. This open display of *Hashgacha Prattis* calls for a more detailed discussion of this basic concept of Judaism.

The first of the *Rambam's* Thirteen Principles of Faith states: “I believe with complete faith that the Creator, blessed be His Name, creates and guides all creatures, and that He alone made, makes and will make everything.” There is nothing hidden from the Almighty, and all of man's achievements accord precisely with His will. Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, זצ"ל, explains that while the whole Torah is *ikkarim* – fundamental principles – whoever does not believe in *Hashgacha* excludes himself from the Jewish People. It is a basic cornerstone of Jewish faith.

Similarly, the *Ramban* explicitly states, “Through [accepting] the great open miracles [displayed in the coming out of Egypt], man acknowledges the hidden miracles [cloaked in the regularity of daily life], which are the foundation of the whole Torah. For a man has no portion in the Torah of *Moshe Rabbeinu* unless he believes that all occurrences that happen to us are miracles, and not merely natural occurrences nor the ordinary way of the world – both when concerning the community and the individual.” (*Ramban end of Parshas Bo*)

We are witnessing the fulfillment of *Shlomo Hamelech's* prophecy: “*Kol dodi*

dofeik. Pischu li – My beloved is knocking [on the door]. Open it for me.” (*Shir Hashirim*) Hashem is knocking loudly on our door to wake us up; He is proclaiming that He is here to protect us.

3. In the Economy

Hashem is also speaking to us through the economic crisis in America, in which billions of dollars have been lost, with disastrous consequences. The focus, however, should not only be on the monetary loss, but rather on the realization that lives are at stake. Our present essential obligation is the proclaiming of Divine Providence and acting upon it by doing *teshuva*, which will protect us from all sorts of troubles and suffering. It is, then, the duty of each and every one of us, particularly rabbis, to teach boys and girls to recognize that we are seeing with our own eyes the unfolding of *Hashgacha* to the extent that when simply recounted, it serves to protect us.

David Hamelech draws a distinction between the non-Jewish and Jewish outlooks regarding Divine Providence when he says: “High above all nations is Hashem, and above the Heavens is His glory.” To others, Hashem’s Providence extends downward until the heavens, whereas the Jewish viewpoint is expressed in the next verse: “Who is like Hashem, our G-d, who is enthroned on high, yet deigns to look upon the heavens and the earth? He raises the needy from the dust. He lifts the destitute from the trash heaps, to seat them with nobles” (*Tehillim* 113, 5-8). The Almighty supervises and leads the entire world, as Chazal say, “In the place where you find His greatness, there you find His humility – that He descends to take care of all our mundane needs.” This is our approach.

We also need to understand the deeper meaning of *Tehillim* 121, 1-2: “*Shir lama’alos essa eimei el heharim me’ayin yavo ezri. Ezri me’im Hashem osei Shamayim va’aretz.* A song to the ascents. I will lift up my eyes to the mountains – from where will come my help? My help comes from Hashem, Maker of Heaven and Earth.”

We must recognize that there is no way out, and that by *teva* (natural means), salvation is impossible. If I remember that the Almighty made both the heaven and earth from nothing, *yeish me’ayin*, then we will be saved. This principle should guide us as we eagerly anticipate redemption. We must cease to delude ourselves *shekochi ve’otzem yadi asu li es hachayil hazeh* – that our own military strength brings salvation – for then the Almighty removes His help, and He leaves us in the hands of our false god – *kochi ve’otzem yadi*. (*Chachma Veda’as – Parshas Vayeitzei*)

THE PRE-MESSIANIC ERA

Recognizing Hashem’s Hand in open miracles can spare us from impending cruel decrees, as the Sages comment: “If they do not repent, will they not be redeemed? Rather, the Holy One, blessed is He, will appoint a king over them whose decrees over them will be as harsh as [were] Haman’s.” The Almighty is unfolding His plan of the coming of the *Moshiach*. It is explicit in the book of *Daniel* that “before the coming of *Moshiach*, there will be a multitude of wars and there will be a time of troubles as there never was since there was a nation to that time” (*Daniel*, ch. 12). Only then will the salvation of Hashem come. The Gemara cites, “An apparent contradiction from the prophet Yeshaya ‘Hashem will save us *be’ita* (in its time – in the future) *achishenah* (I will hasten it).’ Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi explains: ‘*Zachu, achishena* – that if [the Jews] are deserving, I will hasten it. If they are not deserving, *be’ita* (the redemption will come in its time)’” (*Sanhedrin* 98a). This means that if we do not do *teshuva* on our own accord, the Almighty will compel us to do so. He will bring hard times upon us, bitter persecution and terrible trials, and then we will have no option but to return to Him. The essential point is belief in *Hashgacha Prattis*, even through difficult situations.

At the end of *Eicha*, it says: “*Ki im ma’os me’astanu katzafta aleinu ad meod* – Even if You had utterly rejected

us, You have already raged sufficiently against us. *Hashiveinu Hashem eilecha venashuva, chadeish yameinu kekedem* – Bring us back to you Hashem and we shall return; renew our days as of old” (*Eicha* 5,21-22). The *Yeshuas Yaakov* explains that even if Hashem is exceedingly angry with us, the fact that He punishes us is a sign that He has not utterly rejected us and truly wants us. For if He did not want us, He would simply discard us and show no interest in us.

CLOSING MOMENTS

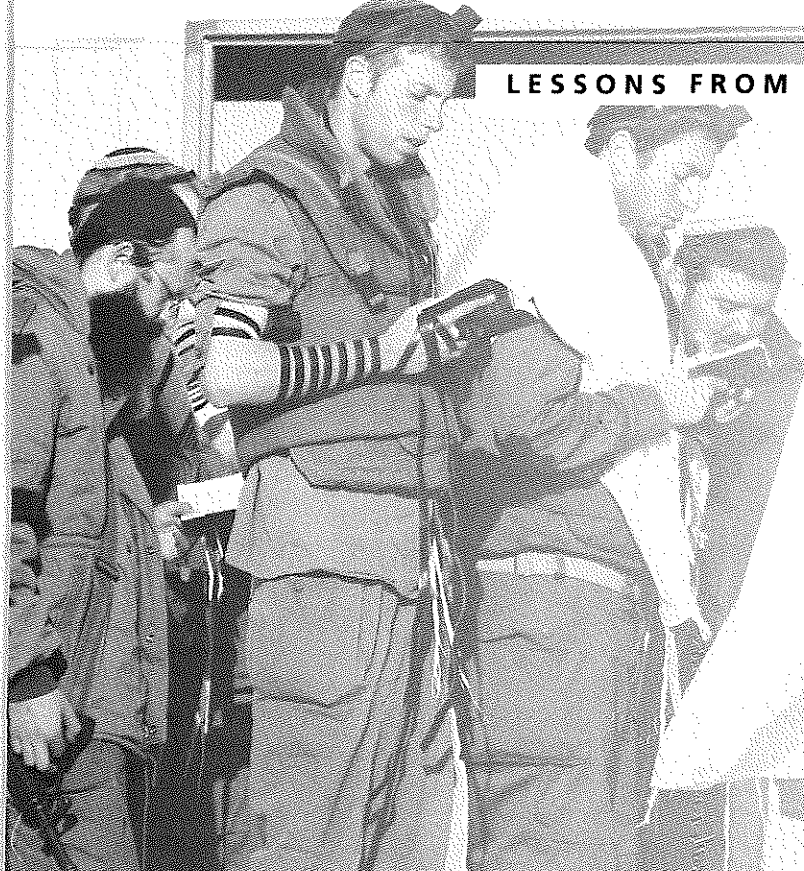
The Vilna Gaon says that each day of Creation corresponds to one thousand years in human history. According to the Gaon, then, the period in which we are currently living is *Erev Shabbos* after *chatzos* (late afternoon). *Erev Shabbos*, Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch explains, is a time of *teshuva*, a time when Hashem sends away all the accusing angels and turns to Klal Yisroel and pleads with us, “I’m alone. Just a little *teshuva*, and I will forgive you.” But that little bit of true *teshuva* is crucial. It is a time when Hashem speeds things up and takes control Himself. He leaps over mountains of sins, skips over hills of bad deeds.

Our redemption is dependant upon *emuna* and Divine Providence. A story is told of a great Rebbe, who, before he died, said that he would do his best to hasten the coming of *Moshiach*. After he died, he appeared in a dream to another great rabbi and said that from the vantage point from heaven, it looks different. For once he had seen how great the reward for every mitzvah was, he could not do as he promised to hasten the coming of *Moshiach* because if we are able to stand strong and continue to do mitzvos in this period of darkness, the reward will be immeasurable.

Now is the time to wake up before it is too late. What does it take to wake us up? If, through the merit of proclaiming of the presence of *Hashgacha*, we act upon it in all the above mentioned ways, we will help hasten the coming of *Moshiach*. □

RABBI SHMUEL LEFKOWITZ

An Unforgettable Experience at the Kosel



AN ENCOUNTER DURING THE RECENT WAR

AS I WAS LEAVING the *Kosel* on Sunday, approximately 50 Israeli soldiers, young boys – maybe a few of them were *frum* – came to the *Kosel* wearing their army uniforms and carrying their machine guns. In the past, I've seen soldiers come to the *Kosel* to participate in some kind of ceremony and leave. At first, I thought that this is what they came for, and I continued on my departure.

Suddenly I heard a loud lone voice: “*Shir Hama’alos*,” followed by a chorus of voices shouting: “*Shir Hama’alos*.” The lone voice cried out: “*Essa einai el heharim*,” and the voices responded: “*Essa einai el heharim*”; the voice cried out: “*mei’ayin yavo ezri*,” and the voices echoed: “*mei’ayin yavo ezri*.”

I looked back and saw an incredible sight. The 50 armed soldiers in uniform had their hands on the *Kosel*. The front of the *Kosel* was lined with the soldiers. All others who had been standing directly at the *Kosel* moved away to

make place for the soldiers. Everyone was standing in awe, quietly, not moving, watching the scene. You could hear a pin drop. That is how quiet it was by the *Kosel* – people just stood there with tears running down their faces.

The lone voice was an elderly man who was the *sheliach tzibbur*. He was standing behind the soldiers with a tallis over his head, and shouted out: “*Ezri mei'im Hashem*,” and the soldiers repeated those words. Then he said “*oiseh Shamayim va'aretz*,” which the soldiers repeated.

Everyone standing in the *Kosel* area was literally frozen in their places, unable to move, yet emotionally moved and crying. It was obvious that the soldiers had come to the *Kosel* as a group before they went to Gaza.

The *sheliach tzibbur* said a few more *kapitlach Tehillim*, *passuk* by *passuk*, and then went on to *kaballas ol Malchus Shamayim*.

He shouted: “*Shema Yisroel*,” and the soldiers shouted: “*Shema Yisroel*.” He yelled out “*Hashem Elokeinu*,” and the soldiers responded: “*Hashem Elokeinu*.” He yelled out: “*Hashem Echad*,” with a long *Echad*, and they did the same: “*Hashem Echad*.” They said “*Baruch Sheim kevoid Malchuso le'olam va'ed*,”

and then the lone voice cried out seven times: “*HASHEM HU ELOKIM*,” followed by the soldiers crying emotionally: “*HASHEM HU ELOKIM*.” Everyone standing around was joining in the *tefillos*, and crying uncontrollably.

Then the *shaliach* cried and the soldiers repeated, “*Anna Hashem hoshiya na. Anna Hashem hatzlicha na ... Hashem yimloch le'olam va'ed. Vehaya Hashem lemelech al kol ha'aretz*,” ... and then they said the first *parasha* of *Shema* and *Acheinu kol Beis Yisroel*.

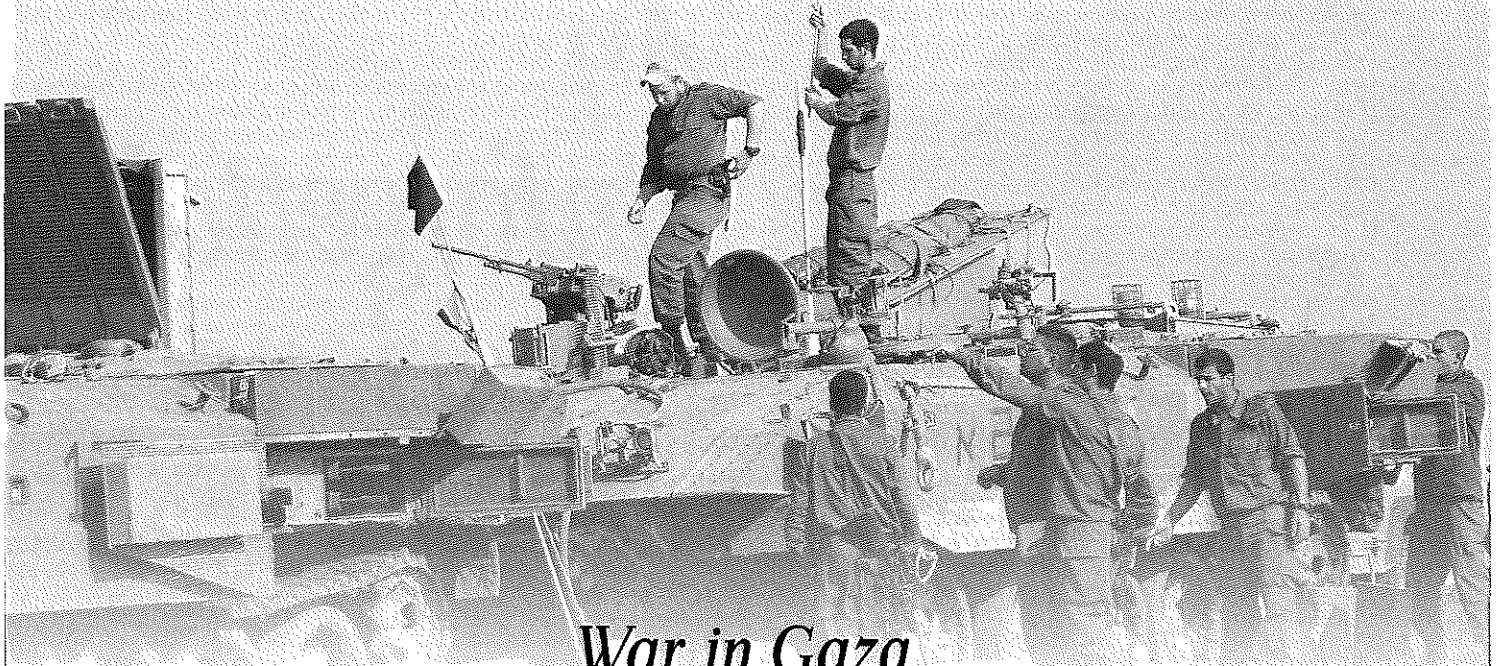
I was completely taken by this experience, crying like a baby, watching this, and thinking, “*What is going on in the mind of each and every soldier? Will they live? Will they come back injured?*”

The davening ended, and the soldiers went on their way. I and others remained there, unable to move, having witnessed such a *kiddush Hashem*. I just stood there, thinking about those young boys, the dangers that they are going to encounter, and reaffirming that deep down in every Jew, there is a *pintele Yid*. Yes, there is a war going on, and it is an opportune time to get closer to *Hashem*.

Only in *Eretz Yisroel* and only with *Yidden* can such an experience take place. □

RABBI LEFKOWITZ SERVES AS VICE PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES OF AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA.

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War in Gaza

Summing Up

I. A WAR LIKE NO OTHER

AT THE OUTSET of Operation Cast Lead, the major question was which one of Israel's most recent military campaigns would this be like: Operation Defensive Shield, initiated in response to the murder by Palestinian terrorists of 130 Jews in March 2002, a month which culminated with the Seder Night Massacre in Netanya, or the Second Lebanon War, which began with the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers by Hizbullah in July 2006. The answer appears to be neither.

On the one hand, Operation Cast Lead was no repeat of the disastrous Second Lebanon War. The Winograd Commission found grave failures in the conduct of the Second Lebanon War at both the political and military levels. After 34 days of inconclusive fighting, Hizbullah was still able to fire 300 missiles at Israel on the day the cease-fire went into effect, and claim, not implausibly, victory. Since the con-

clusion of the war in the summer of 2006, Hizbullah has tripled the number of missiles it had at the beginning of the fighting and extended their range, despite the presence of U.N. peacekeepers in southern Lebanon. In addition, Hizbullah has become the dominant power in Lebanon's government.

Operation Cast Lead did much to remove the stain of Lebanon. IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-General Gabi Ashkenazi whipped into shape the army he inherited after the Lebanon debacle. And Chief of Southern Command Major-General Yoav Galant led a disciplined ground operation, in sharp contrast to the aimless moving about of troops in Lebanon. The Israeli government did not authorize a major ground offensive in 2006 until time ran out and the U.N. Security Council convened to vote a

cease-fire resolution. Over thirty Israeli soldiers were killed in the last two days of fighting, in an action that had no chance of achieving any goals.

Israel's deterrent capacity has been restored to a large extent by Operation Cast Lead. Even in Henry Kissinger's terms – a guerilla army wins if it does not lose – Hamas cannot claim victory. The fighting ended with Hamas leaders cowering underground, its fighters having fled the field of battle, and Gazans embittered by the destruction that Hamas had caused to be visited upon them. Hamas could not point to a single achievement as a result of having dared Israel to strike.

At the same time, the achievements of Operation Cast Lead fall far short of those of Operation Defensive Shield in 2002. The latter transformed Israel's security situation. The reentry of the IDF into West Bank cities brought an almost total end to suicide bombings from the West Bank, after a period in which Israelis had begun to feel like ducks in a shooting gallery.

Operation Defensive Shield stands for the proposition that ultimately only IDF troops on the ground can control what comes out of a particular territory.

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That is why the results of Operation Cast Lead may prove short-lived and indecisive. If Hamas is able to quickly rebuild the tunnels through which arms are smuggled via the Philadelphi Corridor, then Operation Cast Lead will likely have achieved no more than a brief interlude before the next round of missile attacks. Shin Bet head Yuval Diskin told the cabinet, as a cease-fire went into effect, that it will be no more than a few months before Hamas has rebuilt the smuggling infrastructure and is once again bringing in Iranian-supplied missiles of ever increasing range.

The key to preventing that smuggling rests with Egypt. Without Egyptian determination to interdict arms smuggling, the various side agreements and commitments by the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Czechoslovakia to provide technical assistance to prevent smuggling are meaningless. Egypt has little love lost for Hamas, which is an offshoot of the Moslem Brotherhood, the greatest internal threat to Hosni Mubarak's regime. At the same time, Mubarak has little desire to be seen as Israel's policeman.

The threat of a sharp cut in American aid might pressure the Egyptians to act more decisively against arms smuggling, but that is not likely to happen. Meanwhile, the repeated denials by Egypt's foreign minister that any significant arms smuggling takes place via the Philadelphi Corridor and Egypt's insistence that it will not allow any foreign troops on its side of the border are not good omens with respect to what can be expected from the Egyptians.

II. THE POLITICAL ECHELONS

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the rest of the government performed far better than during the Lebanon War, during which weeks passed without the cabinet being able to decide one way or another on a ground operation. Olmert did not collapse after the U.N. Security Council passed a cease-fire resolution, with only the United States abstaining, that would have left Israel without a single tangible

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gain from the fighting. "Israel has never let an external body decide its right to protect the security of its citizens," he responded bluntly.

Nevertheless, the government seemed to have no clear end game in mind, even though it had had many months to plan for the operation. There were no surprises in the diplomatic sphere. The hysterical European reaction to Israeli air strikes and the pressure for an early

cease-fire followed the pattern already established during Operation Defensive Shield. Prime Minister Olmert, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, and Foreign Minister Tzippi Livni – of which the latter two are in election campaigns for prime minister – publicly disagreed about the goals of the war.

Their disagreements had the effect of confusing the Israeli populace and foreign governments. They also caused the military at various points to have to halt its offensive pending further instructions from the government. Those halts not only cost the IDF its momentum, but left soldiers in stationary positions and thus vulnerable to Palestinian attack.

Above all, the conduct of Israeli political leaders served as a reminder of how our current leaders completely lack the ability to set aside personal considerations and the demands of ego that has characterized Torah leaders throughout the generations.

A diplomatic spat with the Americans highlighted the lack of self-control. After the passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1860, Prime Minister Olmert told the press that he had made a last minute phone call to President Bush to get him to order Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice to abstain on the motion, of which she was the principal

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Such a large number of national religious soldiers in the combat units inevitably had an impact on other soldiers. The press reported many non-religious soldiers donning tzitzis before going off to battle, requesting sifrei Tehillim, and even joining minyanim, some for the first time.

draftsman. "I made Rice sizzle," Olmert boasted. Both the White House and the State Department responded that Olmert's story was a pure fabrication, and that Rice had always intended to abstain.

But whether or not the story is true is entirely beside the point. What could have possessed Olmert to publicize it even if was totally accurate? To make himself look like a bigshot? His political career is already over so there was not even any tangible personal gain involved. Surely he realized that the story would not only infuriate Rice, with whom there would still be upcoming negotiations about ending the fighting, but also President Bush, from whom Israel still needed one big present: a pardon for Jonathan Pollard. But none of this was sufficient to prevent the prime minister from a little bragging.

For the entire duration of Operation Cast Lead, the press was filled with the political calculations of the three lead-

ing Israeli actors. There was scarcely a person in Israel who thought that their life and death decisions were entirely disinterested and free of personal considerations. For Israeli citizens, who are more likely than citizens of almost any other country to have to send their sons to battle, the loss of faith that Israel's leaders, whatever their personal foibles and weaknesses, put the good of the country above their own personal interests is devastating.

III. FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

The outcome of Operation Cast Lead was of direct and immediate consequence to every single resident of Israel. Had Hamas been able to claim at the end of fighting that it had defeated Israel, as Hizbullah did in the summer of 2006, Israel's deterrent capacity would have been severely dam-

aged, perhaps beyond repair. The entire Moslem world would have concluded that Israel is a spent force that will not or cannot act to defend itself. Fortunately, that did not happen.

There were also aspects of the operation of particular significance for *shomrei Torah umitvos*. Operation Cast Lead brought to the fore the increasing dominance of the national religious community in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The exact opposite might have been expected after the Gaza withdrawal in the summer of 2005, in which the army forcibly evacuated 8,000, mostly religious, residents from settlements in Gaza. A very high percentage of national religious youth participated in protests – some violent – against the expulsions.

Moreover, national religious youth has to contend with the fact that the settler movement (which is largely religious) is the most demonized segment of Israeli society. The settlers are portrayed as inhuman thugs who spend their time uprooting the olive trees of innocent Palestinians and who would gladly sup on Palestinian children. In the eyes of much of the mainstream media, the settlers are the major, if not only, impediment to peace, at least on the West Bank.

And yet, the national religious community, which is little more than 10% of the population, supplied close to half the combat officers in Gaza, and roughly the same percentage of the Israeli casualties.

Stories of young men from the national religious community inspired the entire nation: Dvir Emmanueloff, the first soldier to fall in battle, who left his officer training course in order to rejoin his combat unit. Aharon Karov, an officer in the paratroopers from Karnei Shomron, who was critically wounded less than two days after his wedding. Yonatan Netanel, an officer from Kedumim, who left behind a wife of less than a year and a four-month-old baby daughter. At the shiva house, Yonatan's mother, Malka, beseeched President Shimon Peres to do everything he could for another Yonatan ben Malka, Jonathan Pollard.

Such a large number of national religious soldiers in the combat units inevitably had an impact on other soldiers. The press reported many non-religious soldiers donning tzitzis before going off to battle, requesting *sifrei Tehillim*, and even joining minyanim, some for the first time. At least one of the miracles reported from the fighting resulted from tzitzis. A group of Israeli soldiers was on a roof in Gaza, with an Israeli bomber bearing down on them, its pilot unaware that they were not Palestinians. Only when they held up and waved their tzitzis did the pilot realize that they were fellow Jews.

The increasing dominance of national religious boys in combat units also buttresses a point that we have made frequently in these pages: Only a strong Jewish identity can provide the determination that Israelis will need to survive and prevail in a perpetually hostile environment. An Israeli identity detached from Jewish sources will not be enough.

IV. WORLD REACTION

World reactions to the fighting provided yet more evidence of Jewish chosenness, and that Israel and the Jewish People will never be treated like any other nation. The world's 3,000-year-old obsession with the Jews is an outgrowth of Jewish chosenness. That obsession was on full display throughout Operation Cast Lead, as Europeans took to the streets to protest Israel's "disproportionate" assault on Gaza's civilian population. When a British colonel being interviewed on BBC offered his opinion that no army in history ever did so much to prevent civilian casualties as the IDF, the interviewer looked like she would faint.

Some pro-Israeli commentators focused on the overtly anti-Semitic comments on placards and shouted at the demonstrations – e.g., "Jews to the gas" and "Back to the oven" – and the failure of those participating in the demonstrations to disassociate themselves from such hateful sentiments.

Far more worrying, however, was the way that so many "respectable" people proved totally incapable of a moment's rational thought when it comes to the Jews. Those protesting Israeli "war crimes" felt no need to even respond to the questions like: Did you protest when Israeli civilians were targeted by 8,000 missiles over the last eight years? What would you want your government to do if you and your family were under constant missile attack by missiles shot from amidst civilian populations?

A few hundred Palestinian civilian casualties in Gaza aroused more concern and fury around the world than the 400,000 black Moslems killed by their coreligionists in Darfur, or the 800,000 Tutsis slaughtered in Rwanda (both of which the world could have done much to stop). While Operation Cast Lead was going on, the Sri Lankan army was over-running the last stronghold of Tamil rebels far more brutally and at a higher cost in civilian life than in Gaza. Yet, who even heard about it? More people have been killed in interethnic fighting in Sri Lanka than in all Israel's wars from 1948, but who cares? The Tamil rebels specifically targeted the island's minority Moslem population, killing far more Moslems than Israel killed in Gaza, but what Moslem group ever demonstrated or even protested? Moslems have killed each other by the millions in the Iraq-Iran war, the Algerian civil war, the Syrian city of Hama, etc., without occasioning demonstrations.

Only when the Jews are involved does the world take note. That may be anti-Semitism. But it is also a sign that we are His chosen People.

One little discussed aspect of Operation Cast Lead was its import for the future of the community of Torah learners in *Eretz Yisroel*. There is a dire housing shortage at present in the Chareidi sector. Almost no new building has been authorized in the new Chareidi cities of Kiryat Sefer, Beitar, and Elad. Thousands of young couples are living in tiny, windowless storage rooms, with little more than a bathroom, kitchen, and bedroom. And as the world financial crisis worsens,

the number of Chareidi families who can afford to buy one apartment, much less eight or nine, for their children dwindle.

One of the few options for young *bnai Torah* are apartments on the so-called periphery, where apartment prices are one-third to one-quarter of what they

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-YOSSI HUTTLER

YOSSI HUTTLER, WHO LIVES IN LOS ANGELES, CA,
IS AN ORAL HISTORIAN. HE IS A FREQUENT
CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES.

are in Jerusalem or Bnei Brak. The catch is that the Chareidi settlements on the periphery – Ofakim, Tifrach, Netivot, Kiryat Gat– and the new Chareidi cities currently on the drawing board, are all well within range of missiles in the possession of Hamas or Hizbullah. Ashdod, with the third largest Chareidi population, has been hit repeatedly by Hamas missiles in recent weeks. There is a potential for 30,000 new building units in Beit Shemesh, which just elected its first Chareidi mayor, but the city is also only a few kilometers beyond the range of Hamas missiles.

Thus, if a way is not found to neutralize the missile threat of Iran’s proxies in Gaza and southern Lebanon, or to scare

Miracles are not only cause for rejoicing. They obligate us. When Hashem has visibly shown us His love, we are called upon to reciprocate and draw nearer to Him. That is the immediate task before us.

Hamas and Hizbullah out of employing those missiles, one of the few avenues for expansion of the Chareidi community and providing affordable housing for young couples will be cut off.

Let us end on an upbeat note. We were privileged over three weeks to witness continuous miracles. In one authenticated story, a group of religious and non-religious soldiers had just begun to *daven Maariv* on *leil Shabbos*, when Palestinian sniper fire broke through the window. The bullets all passed harmlessly over the soldiers, who were bowing at “*Barchu es Hashem Hamevorach*.” A group of ground troops was holed up in a Palestinian school building. Just before going to sleep, two of the soldiers left the building briefly, and noticed an electrical wire running from the building. It had not occurred to them that Hamas would booby-trap a school building.

The ten soldiers killed and dozens wounded, many of them seriously, were by no means a light price. It is forbidden to ever describe Jewish casualties as “light.” Yet, it remains true that the Israeli government had long predicted casualties many times greater in any ground action in Gaza. The main reason that Israel hesitated before reentering Gaza, even after missile fire from there had shot up 500% after the 2005 Gaza withdrawal, and agreed to the six-month cease-fire that ended on December 19, was the fear of heavy casualties in any ground operation.

Hamas had been training and preparing for an Israeli ground action for years. It had 25,000 trained fighters under its command, and had received thousands of tons of munitions from Iran, including the types of weapons

that had exacted such a high cost in Israeli lives in the Second Lebanon War. Hamas preparations included extensive networks of underground tunnels from which it could surprise Israeli troops and perhaps capture other soldiers to join captive soldier Gilad Shalit.

In any ground action, Israeli soldiers would be fighting on Hamas’s home turf, in densely populated areas, against an enemy often dressed in civilian clothes, and among booby-trapped buildings. (One Israeli soldier told Israel radio of being warned against entering a certain Palestinian home, by a woman dressed in black, who identified herself only as Rochel, moments before the house blew up.) In those circumstances, the IDF was justified in expecting high casualties upon entering Gaza’s cities.

No less miraculous was the low number of civilian casualties from the missile barrage mounted by Hamas. Hamas scored numerous hits on school buildings and playgrounds in Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Beersheba, but always at hours when they were empty. A shul was hit by a missile on Shabbos between *Shacharis* and *Mincha*. In Ashdod, the siren failed to sound to warn of a missile headed towards the port. Had it sounded, hundreds would have been huddled inside or rushing to the only shelter in the vicinity, on a narrow strip of land jutting out into the water, precisely where the missile fell.

But as Rav Moshe Sternbuch noted in a *shmuess* given in the midst of Operation Cast Lead, miracles are not only cause for rejoicing. They obligate us. When *Hashem* has visibly shown us His love, we are called upon to reciprocate and draw nearer to Him. That is the immediate task before us. ☞

Ezer Mitzion food packages for displaced families from the South

MRS. SORAH COHEN

Against All Odds

Interviews & Vignettes from the Recent War

IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBILITIES

It's true: "The difficult we do at once, and the impossible takes a little longer." But what if it's harder than that? When the war broke out on Shabbos Chanukah, numerous impossible possibilities transpired, challenging many to discover their indomitable spirit, their own specialness, their Divine task, and the chance to share them with others. Lifesaving operations. Round-the-clock humanitarian services. Beyond belief hospitality. Faith amidst fire. Wholehearted devotion to *talmidim*. Unflinching commitment to the community. Leaders and laymen alike rose to the Divine occasion, and didn't think twice – or even once – that the odds were against them. They needed another Chanukah miracle for the small, pure flask of oil to burn for a long time.

IT WAS A WAR AGAINST TIME as much as it was a war against people. There were only fifteen seconds from the time an air-raid siren was sounded until the missile crashed. Fifteen seconds for parents to scoop up their young children and run to a "safe zone": bomb shelters, the stairwell of the apartment building if there were two floors above them, etc. Fifteen seconds for a bus driver to stop and let the passengers exit and run to the nearest building.

No one had more than fifteen seconds to tell me much; they were too busy responding, rescuing, and reviving. Instead of the "every day is another dollar" mentality, it was the "every second is another life" philosophy. Literally seconds.

Chaim Weingarten, Project Manager for ZAKA International Rescue Organization, sat in the army's Home Front Command post in order to provide the fastest, most professional rescue services. Highly sophisticated, costly equipment informed them fifty-five seconds before a missile attack, plus the predicted vicinity. In some cases, once the signals were received, he alerted his volunteers to advance to the site, and he directed the operation from afar. In other instances, he also arrived.

"A missile fell in Be'er Sheva," he began. "It hit one building just as a mother of three young children arrived in the stairwell. When I arrived, the building collapsed, and I saw the mother and her little ones bent over and covered with falling debris, screaming. They were unscathed – a veritable miracle. I told her to write down this date on her calendar, and remember it: the day she was reborn into this world. Like surviving clinical death."

Chaim himself was practically "reborn" a month ago when he survived the difficult rescue mission in India with repeated death threats from terrorists, Indian commandos, and innumerable hidden explosives. On his other lifesaving missions in Sinai, Poket and Nambiya, he also rose to the occasion and adopted the age-old Chassidic approach of jumping over the barrier – rather than crawling under it – to proceed resolutely to his objective.

"Against all odds, I circulated in the southern settlements," he continued. "People were wailing and screaming to the high heavens. Yet, I had to detach myself from the emotional impact of the screaming and maintain a focused, action-oriented front in order to assist them. I feel I was given special *kochos* from *Hashem* to deal with these things, and I want to serve *Klal Yisroel* in this way."

But even serving the deserved had its set of unconventional oddities. Atrocious scenes. Entering the twilight zone. Incessant beepers in the middle of the night. The heavy toll on family life.

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Ezer Mizion Medical Equipment Loan Center

“Yet, my wife knows this is a sacred mission for *Klal Yisroel*. There is a war going on here, and people must be saved. So she encourages me to do it – despite the odds.”

**ALL IN A DAY'S
(AND NIGHT'S) WORK**

And there were many odds. In one settlement, a missile killed a *chassan* only two days before his wedding, while he was distributing invitations. In Sderot, there was a dire economic crisis, as people had been out of work for a long time. In Ofakim and Netivot, there were large *frum* families with panic-stricken children, special-needs children, and elderly people.

“A family called me from Be’er Sheva,” noted Rabbi Chanania Cholak, founder and director of Ezer Mizion, *Eretz Yisroel’s* largest health support organization, with 25 branches throughout the length and breadth of the country. “The father of a large family needed to go for chemotherapy every ten days in Siroka Hospital there. We brought him to Oranit, our guest home for children with cancer, and arranged for him to receive chemotherapy in Rabin Medical Center (Belinson Hospital), in Petach Tikva.”

Ezer Mizion’s national headquarters in Bnei Brak worked literally around the clock to create a special trauma support hotline for war victims. When the war broke out, they arranged a two-day con-

ference for mental health professionals to review basic strategies. In spite of their own heavy workload, many professionals volunteered for the help-line and traveled all the way to Bnei Brak to man the phone lines. Others received cell phones to work from their homes. The support line was inundated with callers from 8:00 a.m. until midnight, seeking advice, support and guidance. In some cases, psychiatrists were even sent down south to their doorsteps – or bomb shelters. One young, *frum* pregnant woman began her ninth month of pregnancy and was afraid she’d give birth in the shelter. Another *frum* family was left completely alone in their building, since all of their neighbors had gone north. The mother was at loose ends. She was left alone with one mentally retarded child, another child obsessed with death, and a teenager who raised questions in *emuna*.

“Our telephone line,” began Yehuda Silver, one of the directors of Ezer Mizion’s mental health services department, “gave people the feeling that they are cared about. Also, we validated their feelings and explained to them that their behavior is completely normal in these abnormal circumstances.”

But the real point was to help the individual draw upon his dormant or battered spiritual resources. Like the pruned tree that rebounds with colossal growth, many bruised individuals tapped into the depth of *Hashem Yisbarach’s* Divinity in the universe, and

emerged with a deepened and enlarged capacity for faith, for gratitude, for sensitivity, and for recognizing the purpose of our existence.

Yehuda himself was also in a war against time, fielding calls and responding to beeper messages every night of the war until two a.m. He would leave Bnei Brak and drive home to Yerushalayim with the beeper ringing the remainder of the night. Then he would drive back the next morning for another round.

“A missile fell in Ashdod,” Rabbi Cholak said, “and a family had a distraught elderly relative, an MS patient with serious disabilities. He became hysterical, and I had to speak with him to remind him that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* had saved him.”

With a huge picture of Rabbi Shach, זצ"ל, on the wall, sandwiched between pictures of Rabbi Steinman, שליט"א, and Rabbi Lefkowitz, שליט"א, it seemed to me that Rabbi Cholak’s unflinching commitment to round-the-clock humanitarian services was intertwined with the guidance he received from his mentors. Every regular day – and night – is a challenge of impossible possibilities, and that’s without the added weight of the war. Besides the standard thousands of sandwiches distributed daily, another 1,200 hot meals were distributed each day of the war to guests from the south and their hosts. After all, how could the average Bnei Brak family of some eight to fifteen people be expected to feed another five to fifteen people? Notwithstanding, they had already divided up their two-by-two living quarters – and in many cases, for complete strangers – for an indefinite amount of time. Not to mention the needs of the children.

**CHILDREN:
SEEN BUT NOT HEARD**

Entertaining all of those “refugee” children from the south was a project in itself. Dina, Chasdei Naomi’s representative in Bnei Brak, told me that they took upon themselves this essential task, in order to help the children as well as their hosts. In their



Ezer Mitzion volunteer

**Periodically,
Chasdei Naomi
sent out its large
truck, stocked
with massive
amounts of
food products
for hundreds of
destitute families
in Ofakim, Netivot
and Sderot.**

wedding hall, Armonot Chein, on 16 Shlomo Hamelech Street, they blocked off 1,500 meters each afternoon to serve as a recreation center, so that their hosts could see them at night without hearing them all afternoon. Separate hours were designated for boys and girls, and only southern youngsters and their hosts' children received entrance.

"Many children from the south began to release their pent-up tension," she explained, "as they jumped on trampolines and inflatables. It was a blessing for everyone. While we ran this project, we also received calls from many parents in Ofakim and Netivot that didn't have coats and warm clothing, since the stores closed up as the war began."

Periodically, Chasdei Naomi sent out its large truck, stocked with massive amounts of food products for hundreds of destitute families in Ofakim, Netivot and Sderot. Hundreds of winter coats and clothing items were placed in the trucks. The drivers from the main headquarters in Bnei Brak brought the shipment to the Chasdei Naomi pickup station in the given towns. Then, against all odds – and several missiles – drivers and organizers from the different localities transferred the numerous items to bulletproof vehicles and brought the goods to designated pickup stations. When the sirens went off – more often than not – they stopped driving and ran to the nearest shelter. After the all-clear signal was given, they continued their

route, since "people needed to eat and we needed to find them."

But feeding and clothing people was not the only immediate concern. There were many special-needs children who simply could not function under war conditions, and needed to be transported to appropriate frameworks up north. Autistic children. Children with cerebral palsy and spina bifida. Mentally retarded children. Elderly people. Sick people. Mothers with young infants. The list of special needs was so staggering that "normal" children of families who remained in the south were nearly ignored. Nearly.

**ONCE A REBBI,
ALWAYS A REBBI**

Rabbi Yitzchak Gershoni, a seventh-grade rebbi in Ashdod's Talmud Torah Ponevezh, worried about his seventh-grade *talmidim* as he worried about his very own children.

"When the war began," he said, "I called up every one of the boys in my class and spoke with them and their parents. I sensed there were some boys who were in great distress, especially those in close proximity to crashing missiles. As seven in our class had already left for Bnei Brak to stay with relatives, I offered the other ones to come with me to Bnei Brak. I told the parents that I would find them a place to stay, and we'd learn."

His brainstorm became a reality and was blessed with real *siyatta diShemaya*. Several parents agreed, and the young boys left Ashdod with their cherished rebbi. Rabbi Gershoni placed them with a wonderful family who treated them "as their very own," for two and a half weeks: They provided them with warm Shabbosos, gave them daily meals, spoke with them, etc. Then, he secured a place for them to learn every day: the Batei Avot of Ponevezh. After the Holocaust, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, the Ponevezher Rav, זצ"ל, first established this institution for homeless refugees. Eventually, the building became a dormitory and a school for boys from troubled backgrounds who could not live at home.

"I told the boys," Rabbi Gershoni explained, "that when there is extreme darkness, there's a purpose behind it. We used this time for reviewing the material I'd taught since the beginning of the year. I also told them how we see how *Hakadash Baruch Hu* is actually holding us in His Arms, the way we hold a baby."

His classes – and his entire demeanor – revolved around making the most of the life *Hashem* had given them: accepting the cards handed to them and heading for destiny through meaningful choices. And there were many hands-on experiences.

"Before we left, I asked the boys to thank the boys of the institution who were so gracious in giving up their playroom, library and playground for us. They were very impressed, especially considering their backgrounds, and it was a real learning experience for them."

Commitment and dedication: a Divine task with ripple effects.

BEYOND SELF

But Rabbi Gershoni was not the only one of his breed. Many *kehillos* in the south needed their spiritual leaders as badly as they needed shelters and food, and fortunately, the leaders tapped into this, and

“When my beeper went off, and I had to run to save Jewish lives, I often worried about my own family. But my wife always told me she would fend for herself and all of the children in wartime. ‘You are needed elsewhere now.’ By now, even my own children have adopted this attitude toward helping others.”



Ezer Mizion Ambulance Transport

did not head north just to “save their own skin.”

“I am staying here,” said Rabbi Shmuel Montague, the Asheknazi Rav of the Chareidi community in Netivot, “as long as there is even one person left here. As the rav, it is my sacred privilege to worry about my people – and not just

to save my own skin. And surely, this is *Hashem’s* will for me right now.”

For 28 years, Rabbi Montague served as the *Rosh Kollel* of Yeshivas Hanegev, and now he is the *Rosh Kollel* of Yissachar Beohalecha, in addition to being the rav. When the war began, the Home Front Command ordered all the residents of Netivot living in wooden

homes to occupy the public shelters. Unlike the shelters in the homogeneous neighborhoods, these were populated with religious and secular Jews living side by side – even on Shabbos. And Rabbi Montague, the spiritual leader, needed to circulate among the people, arbitrate their disputes, and console and encourage them.

“In our neighborhood,” said Nissim Yishai, the director of the Religious Community Center of Netivot, “many secular Jews took upon themselves not to smoke on Shabbos for the sake of the soldiers in Gaza.” He, too, was snowed under a mound of requests for basic necessities in the shelters: mattresses, food, diapers, baby bottles, hooking up electricity and gas lines to the building’s lines, medical supplies, blankets and much more. In fact, one day, on his journey out of Netivot, there was a *shachar adom* (siren), and no buildings nearby for shelter. He stopped his car and lay flat inside until the all-clear signal, and then proceeded on his journey.

But not everyone caught in his car as the wailing cry of the *shachar adom* went off had such an easy time of it.

“A missile crashed in Ashdod,” said Yossi Landau, a ZAKA volunteer who lives in Ashdod, and is formerly of Boro Park. “I was the first on the scene, and when we arrived, we saw the missile [had] hit the middle of the road right near [a] bus. All the passengers [had] escaped into shelters. Nearby, I saw a



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car with a person sitting with his head between his knees, by the driver's seat. At first, it seemed he was killed, as he was immobile, but I realized he was breathing; he [had] passed out from shock. An iron ball from the missile went right through his front windshield, across the headrest, and through the back window on to the street. By crouching down, his life was miraculously saved."

Another Chanukah miracle, "in those days, and in our time." But that was not the only one.

**SMASHED WINDOWS,
NEW WINDOWS**

The miracle in Tifrach crashed everyone's logical thinking. On Shabbos morning in *Eretz Yisroel*, as on every other day, *Birkas Kohanim* is standard. As is customary, the young children, who generally play outside the shul, come in and slip beneath the tallis of their father at this point. Just as the *sheliach tzibbur* began the words, "May *Hashem* bless you and watch over you," a missile crashed in a nearby empty shul only 10 meters away. All of the men – and children – went through an odyssey of terror as the windows of their shul were blasted and the walls quaked. Walking through the valley of the shadow of death, but emerging alive, in the pink of health, opened new windows of intense faith. A blessing in itself.

"There is a sense of unique elevation when a person is in danger," said Rabbi Montague, only a week before this incident in Tifrach occurred. "At that moment, he feels intensely that his only salvation is from *Hashem*. This realization arouses a deep bond between man and his Creator. We feel that *Yad Hashem holeich bamachaneh*, the Hand of *Hashem* accompanies us in the camp. But you need a positive outlook to discern it."

Positive thinking. Those were the new windows that replaced the smashed windows, and turned new neighbors into new friends.

**NEW NEIGHBORS,
NEW FRIENDS**

Positive thinking spells giving. When you open your hands to give, you receive a great deal in return. Especially in wartime.

"Recently, we moved into a mixed secular and religious neighborhood," said Rabbi Azriel Siegel, a resident of Ashdod, formerly of Baltimore. "As there were no lights in the stairwell on Shabbos, we put in a fluorescent bulb right outside our apartment for Shabbos. When the war began, each time a siren went off, many neighbors gathered in the stairwell, a "safe zone," right outside of our door, as we kept the fluorescent light burning throughout the war. It gave us a chance to meet our new neighbors and speak with them, which otherwise might not have happened. Hopefully, this will enable us to ignite their dormant sparks of *Yiddishkeit*."

Yossi Landau also spoke of giving: "When my beeper went off, and I had to run to save Jewish lives, I often worried about my own family. But my wife always told me she would fend for herself and all of the children in wartime. 'You are needed elsewhere now.' By now, even my own children have adopted this attitude toward helping others."

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Indeed, this war really challenged many to discover their own specialness, their Divine task, and the chance to share it with others. Judging life by its length rather than its depth, or by its peaks rather than its valleys, is often shutting the door on spiritual ascent – our true purpose here.

The war ended. The Southerners who were camping out across the country packed their bags – and souls – with all their belongings and cherished memories. Feeling they were cared for – even, in some cases, by total strangers – they headed south hoping to find their homes intact. Their neighbors who had remained in the south also unpacked their bags – and souls – with all their cherished moments of feeling the Hand of *Hashem* accompanying them in the camp, grateful to be alive.

But it was indisputable. Many leaders and laymen, parents and children, teachers and students, organizers and drivers, rose to the (Divine) occasion, and didn't think twice – or even once – that the odds were against them, that their small, pure efforts would make it.

But against all odds – or even BECAUSE of them – their efforts were blessed. A Chanukah miracle in the war that began on Chanukah. □

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A Unique Generation in Unique Times



Rabbi Moshe Wolfson

In Search of the 70th Soul

Based on an address by Rabbi Moshe Wolfson, שליט"א, Mashgiach Ruchani of Mesivta Torah Vodaath and Rav of Beis Medrash Emunas Yisroel

This address was given at a Hakhel gathering at Agudath Israel of Madison, in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn.

IN PARASHAS VAYIGASH, following Yoseif's revelation to his brothers, Yaakov Avinu and his family descend to *Mitzrayim*. The Torah enumerates the members of Yaakov's family and concludes, "All the souls of Yaakov's household who came to Egypt—seventy."

The Midrash¹ notes that the names listed in that *parasha* add up to only sixty-nine. Who is number 70? The Midrash offers four possible answers. The first, cited by *Rashi*, is that Yocheved, the daughter of Levi and mother of *Moshe Rabbeinu*, is the 70th soul. She is not mentioned in the Torah because she did not actually "descend" from the Land of Canaan; rather, she was born as her mother entered the gates of Egypt.

The other three answers are:

The 70th is *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

The 70th is Serach *bas Asher*.

The 70th is Chushim *ben Dan*.

The last two answers, in particular, demand explanation, for the list of sixty-

nine in the Torah includes both Chushim *ben Dan* and Serach *bas Asher*!

Yefei To'ar answers that because of his or her special importance, either Chushim or Serach is counted as two. What was so special about these two individuals?

When the sons of Yaakov returned to Canaan after their reunion with Yoseif, they were concerned as to how to break the incredible news to their aged father. The solution was found in the person of Serach *bas Asher*, granddaughter of Yaakov, a young *tzaddeikes* who played the harp. Serach played a joyous tune to which she sang the words, "Yoseif still lives." Yaakov's spirit was revived and Serach was rewarded with unusual longevity. She subsequently entered *Gan Eden* alive.²

The Gemara relates that when Yaakov was brought from *Mitzrayim* to the Cave of Machpeila for burial, Eisav interfered, claiming that the remaining spot in the cave was reserved for himself. The fleet-footed Naftali raced back to *Mitzrayim* to get the contract that stated that Eisav had relinquished his rights to the cave. Chushim *ben Dan*, a deaf-mute, could not follow the conversation, but he understood enough to know that Eisav was holding up the burial of his righteous grandfather. Chushim took a stick,

hit Eisav on the head and killed him, and Yaakov was then buried without delay.³

True, both Serach and Chushim had achieved something great. But did this make them more important than Yaakov and his sons? Why should either of them be counted as two and not one?

PESACH AND TISHA BE'AV

In *Megillas Eicha*, we read: "He filled me with bitterness; sated me with wormwood."⁴ The Midrash links the Hebrew "*vameromim*" (with bitterness)—with "*marror*," the bitter herb eaten on the Seder night. In any given year, the first (and in *Eretz Yisroel*, the only) Seder always falls on the same night of the week as *Tisha Be'Av*.

The Midrash is telling us that there is a deep connection between Pesach and *Tisha Be'av*. On the surface, this is quite perplexing, for, as we know, Pesach is the *Yom Tov* of *ge'ula*, redemption, while *Tisha Be'av* represents *galus* (exile) and *churban* (destruction).

The answer to this is simple and instructive. A fundamental truth of Judaism is that all that the *Ribbono shel Olam* does is for the good. This is especially true of the *galus* experience. The

1 Bereishis Rabba 94:9

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2 See *Targum Yonasan* to Bereishis 46:17.

3 Sota 13a

4 3,15

Torah and the *Sifrei Nevi'im* are replete with *Hashem's* expressions of His great, unconditional love of *Klal Yisroel*. And as we say in *Shacharis* every morning, "Ahavas olam ahavtanu ... With an eternal love You loved us, *Hashem*, our G-d." *Hashem* did not send us into *galus* to be rid of us, Heaven forbid. *Galus* serves an important, positive purpose.

The Gemara teaches that the Jewish people were sent into exile so that *geirim*, righteous converts, could be brought under the wings of the *Shechina*. While this statement is certainly meant literally, it has a broader meaning, as well. Throughout this world, there are *nitzotzos*, sparks of holiness, that have been separated from their source and are in need of "redemption." When a Jew studies Torah, engages in prayer, or performs other mitzvos in *galus*, he redeems some of the *nitzotzos* in that particular place.

This is only one purpose of *galus*. When the Final Redemption will come, we will be given to understand why this long *galus*, with all of its great difficulties and tribulations, was necessary and ultimately for our benefit. Until that time, we live with the firm belief that all is for the good.

Maharal teaches that the words *ge'ula* and *galus* are phonetically related. He explains that *galus* is the preparation for *ge'ula*. We need the *galus*; we could not merit *ge'ula* without it.

This is the symbolism inherent in the linkage of the Seder night and the night of *Tisha Be'av*. *Tisha Be'av*, with all its sadness and tragedy, contains within it the roots of redemption. And, as the Midrash informs us, *Moshiach* is born on *Tisha Be'Av*.

YOSEIF AND THE BROTHERS

The story of *Yoseif Hatzaddik* and his brothers mirrors the *galus* experience and subsequent redemption. From the moment they first descended to Egypt, the brothers were unfairly singled out by the ruler of Egypt, *Tzafnas Panei'ach*, who, unbeknownst to them, was their brother *Yoseif*. He accused them of being spies;

demanding that they bring their youngest brother Binyamin to him; imprisoned their brother Shimon; planted money in their sacks; and finally, planted his silver cup in the sack of Binyamin and said that Binyamin would have to remain in *Mitzrayim* and serve as his slave.

At that point, the situation became intolerable for the brothers; realizing this, *Yoseif* could no longer restrain himself from revealing his identity. "I am *Yoseif*!" he declared, and suddenly, the picture changed for the brothers. With those two words, everything suddenly made so much sense. As *Yoseif* explained, the entire story that had begun with his being sold into slavery was actually *Hashem's* way of providing for *Yaakov's* family during the years of famine. Furthermore, the family of *Yaakov* knew of *Avraham's* prophecy at the Covenant Between the Parts, when *Hashem* informed him that his descendants would be slaves in a foreign land. Now, after *Yoseif's* revelation, it became clear that his slavery and subsequent ascension to the throne was Divinely orchestrated so that *Yaakov* and his family could descend to *Mitzrayim* with dignity.

Similarly, the time will come when *Hashem*, in His infinite wisdom, will decree that this *galus* must end. And just as *Yoseif* declared, "I am *Yoseif*," *Hashem* will declare, "Behold, I have redeemed you in later times as in earlier times ... I am *Hashem*, your G-d." At that time, we will view the *galus* in retrospect and perceive what we accomplished over the course of time, and we will be happy with what we have achieved. At that time, the nations of the world will also perceive that all along, the *Ribbono shel Olam* was doing that which was for our ultimate good, and they will praise Him for this, as we say in *Hallel*, "Praise *Hashem*, all nations ... for His kindness has overwhelmed us"

YEHUDA AND SHIMON

*Tur*⁵ writes that the twelve months of the year correspond to the Twelve Tribes, in the order of how they traveled in the *Midbar* (Wilderness)

and in which their princes offered sacrifices at the *Mishkan's* inauguration. *Yehuda*, who led the way in the *Midbar* and at the *Chanukas Hamizbei'ach*, corresponds to the first month, *Nissan*, the month of *Pesach* and redemption. *Shimon* corresponds to the fifth month, *Av*, in which *Tisha Be'av* falls.

In *Tanach*, we find a close association between the tribes of *Yehuda* and *Shimon*. At the end of his life, *Moshe Rabbeinu* blessed each of the tribes – with the exception of *Shimon*. *Rashi*⁶ explains that *Moshe* was upset with *Shimon* because of the terrible incident of *Zimri* and the Midianite princess.⁷ However, notes *Rashi*, *Shimon* was included in *Yehuda's* blessing; the words שמעיה קורל יהודה are an allusion to *Shimon*. Furthermore, when *Yehoshua bin Nun* apportioned *Eretz Yisroel* among the tribes, *Shimon's* portion was found within the portion of *Yehuda*. *Yehuda* and *Shimon*, *Nissan* and *Av*, are intertwined. The blessing of *Av/galus* is rooted in the blessing of *Nissan/ge'ula*.

As long as the *galus* lasts, the hidden blessing of *Av* is no more than an allusion. But when the Redemption arrives, we will perceive that *Av* is, in fact, a month of redemption on a par with *Nissan* – and even greater, for the holy *sefarim* teach that *Tisha Be'av* is destined to become the greatest of all *yamim tovim*.

AT THE GATEWAY TO EGYPT

In *Chazal*, we find the concept that *Hashem* prepares the "cure" before the "malady." For example, Providence placed *Esther Hamalka* in the position of queen before *Haman's* ascension to power. In a similar vein, *Hashem* does not send *Klal Yisroel* into exile until the seeds of redemption have already been planted.

Let us return now to the four explanations of how the total of 70 souls was completed.

Yocheved, the mother of the redeemer, *Moshe Rabbeinu*, was born at the gateway, part of her linked with *Eretz Yisroel* and the other part of her in *Mitzrayim*. Even before the Jews actually

5 Hilchos Rosh Chodesh

6 Devarim 33,7

7 See Bamidbar ch. 25.

entered their place of exile, the Divine plan for their redemption had already been set in motion. There is an added message in this. It was as if *Hashem* were saying, "Do not think that your exile is an insufferable punishment. In fact, it also serves as a preparation for redemption, a redemption that will bring you to a spiritual level that you have never before attained. And the seeds of that redemption have already been planted."

SERACH BAS ASHER

In the *zemiros* of *Motza'ei Shabbos*, we sing of *Eliyahu Hanavi*: "The man appointed over all good tidings." *Sefer Me'or Einayim*⁸ writes that whenever someone relates good tidings, he is accompanied by the spirit of *Eliyahu*. This is why people want so badly to be the first to relate good news. The soul yearns to attach itself to the spirit of *Eliyahu*. Furthermore, the moment when good tidings are conveyed is a most opportune time for both the bearer and the recipient to engage in *teshuva*. As *Sefer Malachi* says of *Eliyahu*, "He shall return the heart of parents to children and the heart of children to parents."

The previous verse states, "Behold! I send you *Eliyahu* the Prophet before the arrival of the great and awesome day of *Hashem*." *Eliyahu's* primary mission is to bring the news of the Final Redemption to the entire Jewish People.

As the three *Avos* of our people, *Avraham*, *Yitzchak* and *Yaakov* each encompassed within himself the entire Jewish People. When *Serach bas Asher* sang before her grandfather *Yaakov* that *Yoseif* was alive, she was not bringing good tidings to an individual. She was paralleling the future action of *Eliyahu* in bringing good tidings to the entire Jewish nation. And like *Eliyahu's*, her message was one of redemption. From *Yoseif Hatzaddik* will come *Moshiach ben Yoseif*, whose arrival will precede that of *Moshiach ben Dovid*. *Serach* was informing the Jewish people that,

indeed, the day would come when *Moshiach ben Yoseif* would appear. Her tidings, therefore, allowed her not only to be momentarily accompanied by the spirit of *Eliyahu*, but to have the spirit of *Eliyahu* remain with her forever. Therefore, like *Eliyahu*, she merited unusual longevity and ascended to Heaven alive.

Because she was accompanied by the spirit of *Eliyahu*, she is counted as two among those who descended to Egypt, thus completing the count of 70, alluding to the fact that the impending *galus* was rooted in *ge'ula*.

WITH US IN OUR SUFFERING

When *Hashem* spoke to *Yaakov* prior to his journey to *Mitzrayim*, He said, "I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up."¹⁰ *Pirkei Derabi Eliezer* states that *Hashem* completed the total of 70 when *Yaakov* descended, and He completed the total of 600,000 when the Jews were redeemed from Egypt. As the *passuk* states: "I [*Hashem*] am with him in distress."¹¹

That prophecy was told to *Yaakov* "in visions of the night," and *Hashem* called his name twice, "Yaakov, Yaakov." As *Rashi* states, the double use of *Yaakov's* name is *leshon chiba*, a sign of special love, as if to say: "Do not fear the darkness that is *galus*. My love for you is as strong in *galus* as it is in times of *ge'ula*, and I will be as close to you then as I was in brighter times. I am the seventieth member of your family as you descend, and I will be the 600,000th member when your descendants depart."

A Jew must believe and internalize that when he is experiencing the travails of *galus*, be they personal or communal, the *Ribbono shel Olam* is with him, suffering as well, as it were. He was with the Jewish People throughout their sojourn in Egypt, and He has been with them—and continues to be with them—in every exile. As *Dovid Hamelech* said, "Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of

death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me."¹²

CHUSHIM BEN DAN

In the Torah, the Tribe of Dan appears to be most inferior. While Dan led one of the *degalim*, tribal formations in the Wilderness, it brought up the rear as the Jews marched from one encampment to another. "The division of the camp of Dan ... they shall be the last to journey."¹³ The Midrash relates that members of Dan were expelled by the Clouds of Glory because of their sins, and it was these Jews whom *Amaleik* attacked soon after the Jews left Egypt. The city of Dan in *Eretz Yisroel* was a place of idol worship.

Throughout their 210 years in Egypt, the Jewish People, despite their being enslaved, maintained their high standards of morality—with the exception of one person. *Shelomis bas Divri* of Dan was lax in maintaining the barriers of *tzenius*¹⁴ that are so crucial, and this led to a tragic sin.

And who was the sole offspring of Dan *ben Yaakov*? *Chushim ben Dan*, a deaf-mute. *Chushim ben Dan* serves as a metaphor for our generation. In comparison to previous generations, we are spiritually deaf and mute. We are so consumed by our troubles and by distractions which we bring upon ourselves, wittingly and unwittingly. We find it so challenging to express a word of *tefilla* with proper intent, to comprehend a *daf* of *Gemara* with our minds fully focused. Yet, this is the unique mission of our generation, the generation of *Ikvesa Dimeshicha*, the period that heralds the arrival of *Moshiach*. Previous generations suffered all forms of terrible persecutions, but they had one advantage. Their awareness of *Hashem* was clear, their minds were focused. These generations possessed scores of great *tzaddikim* endowed with *ruach hakodesh* who imbued their fellow Jews with a deep awareness and connection to the *Ribbono shel Olam*. Our generation, though it does have its outstanding

8 By the Chassidic master, R' Nachum of Chernobyl
9 3,24

10 *Bereishis* 46,4
11 *Tehillim* 91,15

12 *Ibid.* 23,4
13 *Bamidbar* 2,25 & 31
14 See *Rashi* to *Vayikra* 24,11.

**The economic crisis that has hit
America and the rest of the world has
caused people to watch their money
carefully and to spend less.
As a result, some have also cut
back on their *tzeddaka* giving.
This is a mistake.**

tzaddikim and Torah leaders, lacks the spiritual state of mind that was typical of the average Jew in days gone by.

We are beset with worry over our financial situation, health issues, problems with shidduchim, children at risk and other serious matters. We live under the threat of terrorism and concern for our brethren in *Eretz Yisroel*. Yes, we are each a "Chushim *ben Dan*." Nevertheless, as Chushims, with our limited focus and our many tribulations and distractions, we relentlessly carry on and strive to serve *Hashem* with devotion to the best of our ability. Precisely because our service of *Hashem* is performed amid such difficult obstacles, every mitzvah that we perform, every *tefilla* that we utter, every word of Torah that we study is so precious to *Hashem*.¹⁵ Because of the many spiritual obstacles that we face, including the immoral society that surrounds us, our *avodas Hashem* is even more precious than that of previous generations. We are the generation to whom *Hashem* calls "Yaakov, Yaakov" with special fondness.

Of all the members of *Yaakov Avinu's* family, it was Chushim *ben Dan* who killed Eisav and made Yaakov's burial possible. There is a deep symbolism in this. Chushim *ben Dan* brought about a redemption of sorts, and therefore merited, according to one opinion, to be counted as two and to complete the total

of 70. We, our generation of "Chushim *ben Dan*," can be the one to merit greeting *Moshiach*. We can bring about the fulfillment of the verse, "The saviors will ascend Mount Tziyon to judge Eisav's mountain, and the kingdom will be *Hashem's*."¹⁶ *Chushim* has the same letters as *Moshiach*: משיח, חושים.

FAITH IN THESE TIMES

.....
We are living through difficult times, times in which there is much that we do not understand. It is at such times that a Jew must strengthen himself with the words of *Dovid Hamelech*: "If I were to take the wings of the dawn, and dwell in *acharis yam* – the uttermost part of the sea [an allusion to *Acharis Hayamim*, the End of Days, the period before *Moshiach*] – even there, Your hand would lead me, and Your right Hand would hold me."¹⁷

The Chofetz Chaim and other great *tzaddikim* of his era declared that in their time, the period of *Ikvesa Dimeshicha* had already begun. No one knows how long this period will last, but they pointed out that the signs given at the end of *Masechta Sota* for *Ikvesa Dimeshicha* were all there.¹⁸ Our times are certainly no different.

¹⁶ *Ovadiah* 1,21

¹⁷ *Tehillim* 139,9-10

¹⁸ "In *Ikvesa Dimeshicha*, insolence will increase, inflation will soar, the vine will give its fruit but wine will be expensive, the government will turn to heresy, there will be no rebuke, the meeting places of the wise will be used for immorality, the *Galil* will be destroyed and the *Gavlan* will be desolated Those who fear sin will be despised and the truth will be hidden The face of the generation will be like the face of the dog On whom do we have to rely? On our Father in Heaven."

This is a time when a Jew must strengthen his *emuna*, faith in *Hashem*. In earlier times, the simplest Jew possessed *emuna* that was rock-firm. In our generation of Chushim *ben Dan*, in our world of *tzaros* and confusion, this is not always the case. One should note that the onslaught of *tzaros* in our times should give us reason to hope that the Redemption is near. "If you see a generation in which numerous troubles come upon it like a river, expect him [*Moshiach*], as it is written, 'For distress shall come like a river with the spirit of *Hashem* devouring within it,'¹⁹ and next to that it is written, 'A redeemer shall come to Zion.'"

A Jew is required not only to believe that *Moshiach* will come and that he can come at any time, but to await his arrival. "For there is yet another vision about the appointed time ... though it may tarry, await it, for it will surely come; it will not delay."²⁰ And as the Gemara teaches, when a Jew departs this world, one of the first questions he is asked by the Heavenly Court is, "Did you wait in hope for the salvation [of the Final Redemption]?"²¹

There are individuals who are plagued by fear that their *emuna* is lacking; they are burdened with *sfeikos*, doubts, concerning the fundamentals of Jewish faith. This is another device of the *Satan*, to depress a Jew by making him think that he does not truly believe.

A Jew once came to the author of *Tzemach Tzedek* and poured out his woes. "Rebbe," he wailed, "I have *sfeikos* in *emuna*! What should I do?" The rebbe appeared not to comprehend the problem. "Nu, so you have *sfeikos* in *emuna*. So what?"

The Chassid became more agitated. "Rebbe – *sfeikos* in *emuna* ... in *emuna* ... and I cannot rid myself of them!"

The Rebbe responded softly, "Do you see how much it bothers you that have these *sfeikos*? Isn't that the biggest proof that, in fact, you do have faith?"²²

¹⁹ *Yeshayahu* 59,19

²⁰ *Chavakuk* 2,3

²¹ *Shabbos* 31a

²² It should be noted, however, that lack of vigilance in matters of *kedusha* can cloud one's

¹⁵ Translator's note: Rav Wolfson frequently exhorts his *talmidim* to make every effort to minimize the distractions to *avodas Hashem* that modern technology presents. Inside Beis Medrash *Eminas Yisroel*, cell phone use is strictly banned, even for learning purposes. In an address to the *kehilla* this past *Asseres Yemei Teshuva*, members were instructed to purchase "kosher phones" that do not allow for text-messaging.

**ESCAPING
CHEVLEI MOSHIACH**

People are fearful of the *chevlei Moshiach*, the “birth pangs” that our Sages say will herald *Moshiach’s* arrival. The Gemara teaches that to escape these troubles, one should busy himself with Torah study and acts of *chessed*.²³ Now is the time to

emuna. This topic has been dealt with by Rabbi Wolfson in a *shmuess* that has been rendered into English and can be obtained by contacting Rabbi Mordechai Brown at 917-613-0824.

23 *Sanhedrin* 98b

strengthen one’s commitment to Torah, *tefilla* and *gemillas chassadim*.

The economic crisis that has hit America and the rest of the world has caused people to watch their money carefully and to spend less. As a result, some have also cut back on their *tzeddaka* giving. This is a mistake.

When *Hashem* decreed that *Sedom* be destroyed, he sent Lot two angels disguised as wayfarers. Lot welcomed these wayfarers into his home at risk to his life, for the policy of *Sedom* was to

persecute guests, not to welcome them. As the Midrash relates, those who acted kindly toward strangers were liable to be killed by the people of Sodom.

The *Zohar* states that the two angels who appeared before Lot were a “gift” to him from *Hashem*, for they presented him with the opportunity to earn the *zechus* he needed to escape the destruction of *Sedom*. *Hashem* was granting Lot a chance to risk his life to fulfill the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*. Lot rose to the challenge and thus he was saved.

It is the same in our times. The economic crisis makes our *tzeddaka* giving even more potent in Heaven. We should seize the opportunity and give *tzeddaka* with *mesiras nefesh*.²⁴

There is another mitzvah that is a primary means of escaping *chevlei Moshiach*: “Whoever observes the three meals [of Shabbos] will be spared three tribulations: *chevlei Moshiach*, the judgment of *Geihinnom*, and the war of Gog and Magog.”²⁵ One should experience the Shabbos meals in the proper way, combining culinary delights with *divrei Torah*, *zemiros*, and avoiding conversation that is contrary to the spirit of Shabbos.

We should take a lesson from the *Satan*. The *Satan* knows that when *Moshiach* arrives, his job will be over, and so he is using every means at his disposal to try to pull us away from anything spiritual. Each day, we see the appearance of some new technological device that in moments can, G-d forbid, wreak havoc on one’s *neshamah*.

Let us respond to the *Satan’s* final onslaught by going about our *avodas Hashem* with renewed energy and joy. In this merit, may all of *Klal Yisroel* soon witness the arrival of *Moshiach* and the building of the *Third Beis Hamikdash*, *amein*. ☞

24 Rav Wolfson mentioned the daily miracles that the Jews in Southern Israel have witnessed these past few weeks, with so many rockets missing their target or causing minimal damage. He suggested that this may be in the *zechus* of the *hachnasas orchim* being performed by the scores of families in other parts of *Eretz Yisroel* who are opening their homes to the Jews of the South, despite the difficulties involved.

25 *Shabbos* 118a

During the past five and a half years, families that made weddings conforming to the Guidelines, saved many thousands of dollars in unnecessary expenses. The Guidelines reduce stress and anxiety, and enable *baalei simcha* to enjoy the spirit of the wedding, rather than being focused on the excess trimmings.

Simcha Guidelines

THE VORT

- The *Vort* celebration is to be discontinued. The *L’chaim* (held at the time that the engagement is announced) should also not turn into a *Vort*.

THE WEDDING

- For typical families, only 400 invited guests may be seated at the *chassuna seuda*. (The Guidelines make provision for exceptional circumstances – see full text.)
- The *kabbolas panim smorgasbord* should be limited to basic cakes, fruit platters, a modest buffet, and the caterer’s standard chicken or meat hot dishes.

- The menu for the *seuda* is limited to 3 courses followed by a regular dessert.
- No Viennese table and no bar.

THE MUSIC

- A band may consist of a maximum of 5 musicians (one of the musicians may act as a vocalist) or four musicians and one additional vocalist.
- A one-man band is recommended.

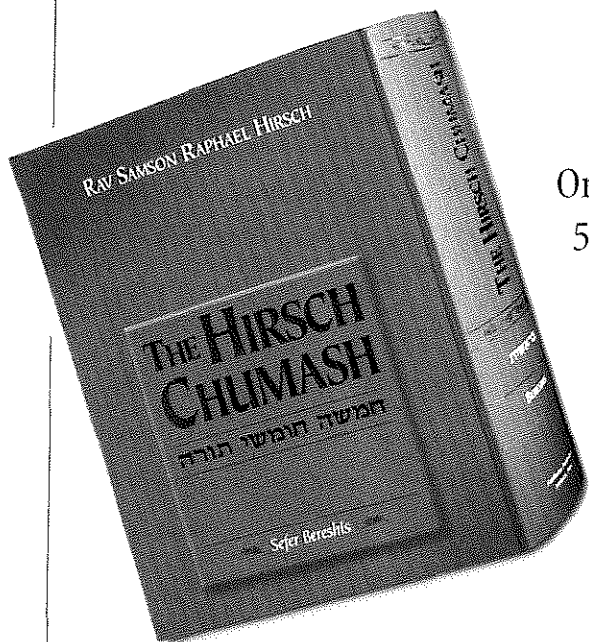
FLOWERS & CHUPA DECOR

- The total cost of these items for the entire wedding should not exceed \$1,800.

FOR THE FULL VERSION OF THE SIMCHA GUIDELINES WITH ITS RABBINICAL ENDORSEMENTS AND THE ACCOMPANYING KOL KOREH, please call 212.612.2300

RABBI SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH'S COMMENTARY ON CHUMASH

~ AN APPRECIATION ~



One hundred and twenty years ago, on 27 Teves, 5649 (1888), Rabbi Shimshon Refoel Hirsch, זצ"ל, passed away. What can be a more appropriate way of marking this *Yahrzeit* than taking note of the publication of a new English translation of his classic commentary on *Chumash*, by Daniel Hoberman (published by Feldheim Publishers, Judaica Press)? The following essay is based on a *shiur* delivered by Rabbi

Yissachar Frand at a gathering sponsored by the Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer Foundation commemorating this occasion.

THIS SHIUR is not meant to be historical or biographical in nature. I am not a historian nor an expert on the life and times of Rabbi Hirsch. Rather, this shiur is meant to offer the reader a taste of this most unique peirush on the Chumash in connection with the completion of the new English translation of Rav Hirsch's peirush (commentary) on Chumash, with the hope that it will spark a renewed interest in the peirush, and that people who in the past may have found the previous translation too cumbersome to plow through will be able to explore this treasurehouse with relative ease and rewarding insight.

Rabbi Hirsch's *peirush* (commentary) on *Chumash* is truly revolution-

ary. Usually the word "revolutionary" conveys the idea of discarding the past and setting out on a new path. But Rabbi Shimshon Refoel Hirsch, in his essence, was a traditionalist in every sense of the word. The bedrock of his commentary is *Chazal*, drawn from Midrash and Gemara, as interpreted by the classic *mefarshai haChumash*, and the entire corpus of thousands of years of *mesora*.

Yet, his use of linguistics, etymology, and sociological and psychological insights to uncover the Torah's wisdom is nothing short of revolutionary. Perhaps his most unique contribution was his use of phonetic relationships – the concept that words that sound the

RABBI FRAND, A REBBI IN THE BEIS MIDRASH OF YESHIVA NER ISRAEL IN BALTIMORE, IS A NOTED LECTURER AND AUTHOR.

same in Hebrew are somehow related. Rabbi Hirsch was a traditionalist revolutionary.

One could also describe his *peirush* as a symphony: Just as the composer and the conductor of a symphony use string, wind, and percussion instruments to create a masterpiece, so did Rabbi Hirsch orchestrate various modes of commentary within his *peirush*, as we intend to demonstrate. Moreover, this *peirush* was published over 150 years ago, yet it speaks to modern man as it spoke to our 19th-century predecessors.

In the lines that follow, I will highlight some examples of his unique approach.

PHONETIC RELATIONSHIPS

Let us start with *Sefer Bereishis* and work our way through the *Chumash*.

First, an example of the concept of phonetic relationships from Rabbi Hirsch's comment on the *passuk* that defines how the *Ribbono shel Olam* created woman, using the words "e'esh eizer kenegdo." This is loosely translated as "I will make a helpmate for man."

The word *eizer* comes from the *shoresh* (root) *azar* – which means to help. Rabbi Hirsch points out that words related phonetically to the *shoresh azar* have in common the concept of limitation. For instance, the words *asar* (to bind), *otzar* (vault), and *azar* (assist) all involve limiting. As Rabbi Hirsch writes, "An *ozer* (aide) relieves his friend of part of his obligation, enabling him to concentrate his energies in a more limited sphere."

That is why, for instance, the courtyard in the *Beis Hamikdash* is called the *azara*. The bulk of the *karbanos* were sacrificed in the *azara*, facilitating the designation of the *Kodesh* and the rest of the *Beis Hamikdash* – inner chambers of the sanctuary – for specific tasks.

Thus, Rabbi Hirsch writes in regard to woman's function: "Eizer *kenegdo* assumes part of the prodigious task of mankind, thus enabling her husband to concentrate on some of the remaining

tasks." But Rabbi Hirsch points out that it is only possible for her to do this task as an *eizer kenegdo*, not *imo* – an *eizer opposite* him, not *with* him. He writes, "The *eizer* should not work with him in the same place, but opposite him: in the same line, beside him – each one working within his or her own special sphere."

This comment not only exemplifies his unique approach to *Lashon Hakodesh*, but is prescient in underscoring the roles of men and women in *Yahadus*. The concept of "women's liberation" did not exist in the 1850s, yet this comment speaks to our generation in how to approach the role of the sexes in *Yahadus*. In contradistinction to current thinking, that men and women must have the right to assume the same roles to achieve equality, the Torah says that equality can be achieved with each person knowing his and her specific and different tasks.

Rabbi Hirsch addresses the equality of sexes in the context of another of his concepts – the psychology of language, if you will. Rabbi Hirsch points out that languages inform us about the people who speak them and how they view the world. For instance, the word in German for people is "volk" – as in Volkswagon – similar to the English word "folk," and is related to the word "folgen," which means to obey. This implies that the people's existence depends on its leader, and that all are obligated to obey him, as in "folgen."

This Weltanschauung says much about the German people, and can lead to disastrous consequences.

THE INTER-GENDER SIMILARITY

The words for male and female in *Lashon Hakodesh* – *ish* and *isha* – come from the same *shoresh*. Rabbi Hirsch points out that we find no such parallel in ancient languages. *Lashon Hakodesh*, he writes, is the Divine language, the language of the *Ribbono shel Olam*. As the *Ramban al haTorah* says, it is called *Lashon Hakodesh* because it is the language in which the *Ribbono shel Olam* speaks. As

such, it is not a reflection of people's view of the world, but projects how the *Ribbono shel Olam* sees things. *Lashon Hakodesh* thus informs people rather than expressing what the people are thinking.

Rabbi Hirsch continues: "As long as they are called *ish* and *isha*, man does not need to be freed from woman and woman does not need to be freed from man. For neither of them ever made the other into a slave, or into a god or goddess." A 21st century statement written by *Rabbiner Hirsch* circa 1850. An eternal truth, it does not change *midor ledor*, from generation to generation.

A MATTER OF NUANCE

Another example of Rabi Hirsch's classic exegesis is the nuances of words of *Lashon Hakodesh*. In *Parashas Mikeitz*, Yoseif accuses his brothers of being spies. They defend themselves, saying: "We've come to Egypt to get food. We are all sons of one man. Your servants were never spies."

Rabbi Hirsch takes notes that in this *passuk*, they use the words "nachnu" and "anachnu." Both words means "we," but "nachnu" is a very uncommon form of the word. This *passuk* starts with "kulanu bnei ish echad nachnu – we are all sons of one man," and then changes to "keinim anachnu – we are upright" – your servants were never spies."

Rabbi Hirsch focuses on a nuance. "Nachnu" is a more modest form of the word. When one does not wish to assert himself, he will use "nachnu," the diminished form.

When referring to their exalted *yichus*, "Kulanu bnei ish echad" – we're the sons of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov – they used the word *nachnu*, with the intimation of modesty. *We're just stating who we are. We are not out to glorify ourselves with being bnei Yaakov.*

But when their integrity is challenged and they are accused of being spies, they respond unequivocally. They say, "Keinim anachnu; lo hayu avadecha meraglim." They assert themselves. *We are truthful people. They do not shy*

back. The worst insult one can inflict on somebody is to question his integrity.

Thus, in the very same breath, they use the word “*nachnu*” to demonstrate their modesty, and forcefully say “*anachnu* to defend their honor!”

Sometimes, a person’s *vort* offers an insight into his personality. It strikes me that whenever Rabbi Hirsch’s integrity was impugned, he would assert himself as forcefully as the brothers did. After all, Rabbi Hirsch personified the quintessential hallmark of German Jewry that we still see today – extraordinary honesty and integrity, exemplified in the expression: Something must not only be *glatt kosher*, it must also be *glatt yosher*, uncontestedly honest.

A close friend and colleague, Rabbi Shlomo Porter, referred me to the following story:

By contract, Rabbi Hirsch would be paid his entire salary for the approaching year on January 1st. During the year that *Rabbiner* Hirsch was *niftar*, he feared that he would not last until the year’s end. So he informed his family that should he pass away in the middle of the year, they should prorate his salary and return the balance to the government. As *Hashgacha* would have it, Rabbi Hirsch was *niftar* on 27 Teves of that year, corresponding to December 31st.

ON THE OTHER SIDE

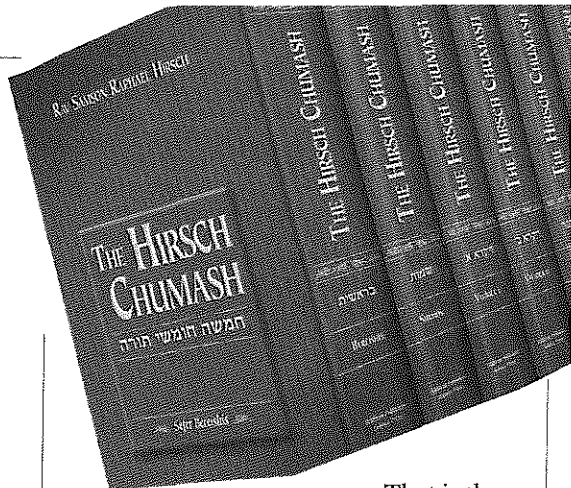
Another example of a *vort* that offers an insight into Rabbi Hirsch’s personality is a comment he makes in the beginning of *Sefer Shemos*. When speaking about *Klal Yisroel* in *Mitzrayim*, the *Ribbono shel Olam* assures *Moshe Rabbeinu* that the Jews will harken to him, and instructs him to go to Pharaoh and say, “*Hashem Elokei Ha’ivriyim nikra aleinu – Hashem, the G-d of the Ivriyim, happened upon us*” (*Shemos* 3,18). Rabbi Hirsch points out that this is the only time in all of Torah that the expression *Ivriyim* appears. Otherwise, the word *Ivrim* is used. He cites the Midrash in *Bereishis Rabba* that the expression “*Ivri*” stems

Rabbi Hirsch personified the quintessential hallmark of German Jewry that we still see today – extraordinary honesty and integrity, exemplified in the expression: Something must not only be *glatt kosher*, it must also be *glatt yosher*, uncontestedly honest.

from “*eiver*” – across a barrier. A Jew is known as an *Ivri*, reflecting how *Avraham Avinu* was an iconoclast who took on the entire world, and introduced the concept of monotheism to a polytheistic world. As Rabi Yehuda said in the Midrash, “*Kol haolam kulo mei’eiver echad vehu mei’eiver echad*. Avraham was on one side of the river [so to speak] and everybody else was on the other side.”

One of the special *kochos* (attributes) that *Avraham Avinu* passed on to his descendants – to you and to me – is the ability to be an *Ivri*, the capacity to take on the world and say, “This is the way that I will do it. We don’t care what anyone does or says.”

Rabbi Hirsch writes, “Moshe, in presenting his demands to Pharaoh, is in essence saying, ‘Each one of us is an *Ivri*. Each one of us has the courage to uphold the nation’s mission, alone against the whole world.’”



That is the message implied in the expression “*Elokei Ha’ivriyim*.” You do not know with whom you are starting up. Each one of us is an *Ivri*—each one of us has in our spiritual DNA that ability to take on the world. *Elokei Ha’ivriyim* is the G-d of every single *Ivri*.

FROM CONCEPTUAL TO ACTIVE TO EMOTIONAL

This *shiur* is not a historical account of Rabbi Hirsch’s life. Yet, even a superficial knowledge of Rabbi Hirsch recognizes that he took on many challenges. In Frankfurt-am-Main, he not only battled against the Reform, but also against anyone who he felt was compromising *Yahadus*. He started out with barely a minyan in Frankfurt-am-Main, a small, seemingly insignificant *kehilla*, and he fought against the world. Today, more than 150 years later, that strength is still alive and well in the *kehilla* that he built. That German *kehilla* is still influenced by that *koach* of *Ivriyim*—the ability to do what is right and to take on opposition, no matter how hard it may seem.

In *Sefer Shemos*, Rabbi Hirsch highlights a concept on the *Asseres Hadibros* that I have not seen in other *mefarshim*. As is well known, the first of the *Luchos* (Tablets of Law) contains *mitzvos bein adam laMakom* – between man and the *Ribbono shel Olam* - while the second Tablet is made up of *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro* – mitzvos between man and his fellow.

Further on, Rabbi Hirsch points out that the *mitzvos bein adam laMakom* begin with intellectual concepts, more theory than practice: “*Anochi Hashem*



The epilogue to the Ten Commandments emphasizes that these three major sins “undermine our relationship to G-d. To banish them, to eradicate every trace of them from our midst is the object of the Divine Lawgiving.”

RABBI SHIMSHON REFOEL HIRSCH, זצ"ל, had a gift for approaching what at first glance might appear to be a random listing of Torah commands and perceiving a message of profound implications. For example, it is well-known that to avoid violating a Torah command, one must be prepared to go to any expense or inconvenience – except for giving up one’s life. In regard to such a situation, the Torah commands us: “*Vechai bahem* – and you shall live by them [the commandments]” (*Vayikra* 18,5). There are, however, three cardinal sins which are governed by principle of “*yehareig ve’al ya’avor*” – one must rather give up one’s life than transgress any of them: *avoda zora* – idol worship, *shefichas damim* – bloodshed, and *gillui arayos* – immoral acts. Where is this stated or implied?

Rabbi Hirsch points out that the *Asseres Hadibros* are followed by an epilogue that focuses on how “the altar that you build up to Me should represent the earth being raised up to G-d.” This is followed by three commands:

- “Do not make gods of silver and gods of gold” (*Shemos* 20, 20), forbidding idolatry.
- “If you make an altar of stone do not build it of hewn stone ... using a sword” (*ibid* 20,22). As Rabbi Hirsch elaborates: “The altar over which you have swung an iron tool is desecrated for the altar of G-d.” Something that is associated with taking human life clashes with serving G-d.
- “You shall not ascend to My altar with steps [– instead, a ramp was to be built for that purpose], that your nakedness not be exposed up on it [as you climb the steps]” (*ibid* 20,23). Rabbi Hirsch explains that the altar should not be mounted in a manner involving indecent exposure. Before *Hashem* brought the *Mabul* (Great Flood) on the world, the Torah records: “The world became morally corrupt before G-d.” (*Bereishis* 6,12). To this, Rabbi Hirsch adds, “Without morality and modesty, justice and humanity in society will be sought in vain.”

To summarize, the epilogue to the Ten Commandments emphasizes that these three major sins “undermine our relationship to G-d. To banish them, to eradicate every trace of them from our midst is the object of the Divine Lawgiving.” Under no circumstances can any of these three sins be tolerated– even at the expense of martyrdom.

N.W.

Elokecha” – the conviction that there is a *Ribbono shel Olam*; “*Lo yihyeh lecha*” ... – the prohibition of *avoda zara*, idol worship. Those are mitzvos that have to do with conceptual, cerebral ideas that a person has to embrace.

Yet, that side of the *Luchos* ends with the mitzvos of Shabbos and *kibbud av va’eim*, honoring one’s parents, going from the realm of the transcendental to the practical.

On the other hand, he points out that the *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro* deal with deeds that we should or should not do. *Lo sirtzach* ... do not murder, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not bear false witness – all mitzvos involving action. The last of the *Asseres Hadibros*, however, is “*Lo sachmod beis rei’echa* – Do not covet your friend’s house.” They begin in the realm of activity and end in the conceptual, addressing emotion – how we should feel towards another person.

That is his point. *Mitzvos bein adam laMakom* cannot only be conceptual, intellectual things. To be a *Yid baleiv* – a Jew at heart – is not enough. The commandments must translate into *ma’asim* – the realm of action.

On the other hand, *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro* must begin with the tangible: Don’t kill. Don’t harm somebody. But ultimately they should transform the person into a being with different approaches and attitudes. The person has to reach the *madreiga* (stage) where he does not covet that which his friend has.

This leads to another compelling point. The *Aseres Hadibros* represent the fundamentals of *Yahadus*. One can recognize how each of the Ten Commandments is basic to faithful Jewish life, from “*Anochi*” and “*Lo yihyeh*” – belief in the Creator – through “*Lo signov*” and “*Lo sa’aneh*” – living with integrity, so basic to society. Nine out of the Ten Commandments are obviously integral to our People’s existence. But “*Lo sachmod* – Do not be jealous of your fellow”? Do not desire his house, don’t covet his wife, don’t want his car? Important, yes. But a fundamental of faith?

Yes, says Rabbi Hirsch. Because *Lo sachmod* addresses *Hashgacha Prattis: Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is intimately involved in our lives. The house that I own, the spouse that I have, and the car that I drive ... the *Ribbono shel Olam* wants me to possess those things, so He granted them to me. When I aspire to acquire something that does not belong to me, I am, in effect, attempting to thwart the will of G-d and denying that the *Ribbono shel Olam* really runs the world. "*Lo sachmod*" mandates *emuna* in *Hashgacha Prattis*.

The *Aseres Hadibros* begin with *emuna* in theory: "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*" – a lofty concept – and end with accepting that the car that I drive is the one that the *Ribbono shel Olam* wants me to have ... *emuna* in practice.

In sum, *emuna* in theory is "*Anochi*." *Emuna* in practice is that this year's salary is what the *Ribbono shel Olam* wants me to have. No more, no less.

That is why *Lo sachmod* is in the *Aseres Hadibros*.

PHILOSOPHIC UNDERPINNINGS

Much of Rav Hirsch's *peirush* on *Chumash* is devoted to explaining the philosophical underpinnings of the mitzvos. The *Rambam*, before him, wrote *Moreh Nevuchim* in response to his generation's need to understand the rationale behind the mitzvos. So, too, did *Rabbiner* Hirsch provide his generation with a glimpse into the reasons behind many of the mitzvos.

There are almost as many examples of this as there are mitzvos. To cite but a few, in the beginning of *Parashas Mishpatim*, Rabbi Hirsch introduces *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro* – how one should treat another person; what one does if he causes damage to someone; how one should borrow from another. The whole corpus of *Choshen Mishpat* (the section of *Shulchan Aruch* dealing with financial matters) begins in *Parashas Mishpatim*.

If you were formulating a *Parashas Mishpatim*, would you begin with the

laws of owning a Jewish slave? Yet, *Parashas Mishpatim* opens with "*Ki sikneh eved Ivri* – If you buy a Jewish slave" (*Shemos* 21,2).

Rabbi Hirsch explains that a person becomes an *eved ivri* by stealing. Lacking the money to compensate for the theft, he is sold into bondage and the money from the sale goes to the victim. *Parashas Mishpatim*, then, begins with how to treat such a *ganav*.

When hearing "*ganav*," people recoil with disgust. *Thief! Dregs of society!* Yet, the Torah instructs us to treat him with dignity. As opposed to other societies, where a thief is thrown into a dungeon to rot, the Torah entrusts this person to a Jewish home, to observe how responsible people interact, how men treat their wives and families. We thus rehabilitate him.

The Torah demands that we treat an *eved Ivri* in this fashion, informing us that every person, even a thief, is a *tzellel Elokim*, created in G-d's image. That sets the tone for all *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro*.

OF CARRYING

One more example of the philosophy behind mitzvos also illustrates the metaphor of symphony for the interplay of various interpretations mentioned earlier, wherein Rabbi Hirsch brings together so many different aspects of *Yiddishkeit*. Here, he explains the *melacha* of *hotza'a* – the prohibition to carry on Shabbos.

On Shabbos, we refrain from doing the other 38 *melachos* – creative acts or labors – thus declaring that the *Ribbono shel Olam* is Master over the physical world. I cannot plow, I cannot sow, I cannot harvest, I cannot launder, I cannot write on Shabbos – to declare that the *Ribbono shel Olam* created the world. "*Sheishes yamim assa Hashem es hashamayim ve'es ha'aretz*. For in six days Hashem made the heavens and the earth ... and He rested on the seventh day" (*Shemos* 20,11). Refraining from doing any of these *melachos* is my declaration: "You're in charge!"

Melachos are usually creative acts, bringing about changes, showing my apparent mastery over things. When I plow my land, I'm master over that land. When I abstain from plowing on Shabbos, I'm saying, in effect, "*Ribbono shel Olam*, You are really the master."

And so it is with all *melachos*, with the exception of *hotza'a*. When I take this paper clip from my house to the *beis midrash*, my act does not alter it. There is no expression of mastery over it. What, then, is the *melacha* of carrying?

Rabbi Hirsch alludes to a statement in the *Rishonim's* commentary on *Masechta Shabbos*. They describe *hotza'a* as a *melacha gerua* – an inferior *melacha* – because one does not change the substance of anything when one carries. Rabbi Hirsch points out that this depiction actually predates the *Rishonim*, i.e., *Tosafos* in *Masechta Shabbos*.

It is expressed in a *passuk* in *Yirmeyahu*, where *Yirmeyahu* says: "Do not carry burdens from your houses on the Sabbath day, and you shall do no *melachos*, and you shall sanctify the Sabbath Day" (*Yirmeyahu* 17,22). *Yirmeyahu Hanavi* divides the Shabbos restrictions: Do not carry, and do not do *melacha*. *Hotza'a* is something different.

Here is Rabbi Hirsch's symphony. He quotes *Rishonim* in *Masechta Shabbos*, and then turns to *Yirmeyahu Hanavi* in *Tanach* to declare that *hotza'a* is unique. He says that *hotza'a* represents social interaction – by bringing something to you, I am relating to you. The sum total of all social interaction is called history, for history is the relationship between man and man, between states, between countries. It then becomes obvious that not only is the *Ribbono shel Olam* Master over the physical world, He is also Master over history. When I refrain from carrying on Shabbos, I am declaring precisely that. Thus, says Rabbi Hirsch, we refer to *Hashem* through Shabbos in two ways: *Zikaron lema'asei Bereishis* – a memorial to the *Ribbono shel Olam's* mastery as Creator of the world – and "*Zeicher litziat Mitzrayim*" – a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt, marking the *Ribbono shel Olam's* mastery over history.

**A MATTER OF
WHEN TO COUNT**

I will conclude with a sampling of the great wisdom of *Rabbiner Hirsch* on the subject of *chinuch*.¹

Why did the census of *Sheivet Levi* include all males who were at least thirty days old, whereas everyone else in *Klal Yisroel* was counted only if they were at least 20 years old?

When a man reached 20 years old, he was subject to conscription in the army. That is when he was counted. By that logic, a Levi should have been counted from the time he was eligible to serve in the *Beis Hamikdash*, at age 30. Yet, Rabbi Hirsch points out, a Levi was counted from the time that he is 30 days old, because the *avoda* of a Levi was not merely to serve in the *Beis Hamikdash*. He was generally entrusted with the spirituality of *Klal Yisroel*.

The *Levi'im* were the teachers of *Klal Yisroel*, and as such – as guardians of the Jewish faith – their own *chinuch* began not at age 30 nor at 20. It began at 30 days. A Levi was entrusted to fulfill “*yoreh mishpatecha leYaakov*,” to teach Torah to *Klal Yisroel* (*Devarim* 33,10). This called for a special *chinuch* that began at the tender age of 30 days. *Chinuch* must be tailor-made to fit the

¹ I am not citing a commentary from *Devarim* because, as of this writing, it has not yet been published. I must mention that the greatest challenge for me in formulating this was not in deciding what to include, but what to exclude.

potential of each child. If there is one area of life in which one size does not fit all, it is *chinuch*.

Rabbi Hirsch expresses the same thought in *Parashas Vayechi*. After recording how *Yaakov Avinu* blessed all of his children, the *passuk* concludes: “*Ish asher kevirchaso beirach osam* – He blessed each according to his blessing” (*Bereishis* 49,28). How does one bless someone “according to his blessing”? To quote Rabbi Hirsch:

“After characterizing them, he blessed each one in keeping with the blessings appropriate to his individuality. After describing the individuality and the significance of each of his sons, he blessed each accordingly ... that each one should find blessing and happiness by remaining true to his individuality.”

To have written such a concept in 1850 is truly revolutionary. Truth be told, it is consistent with *Shlomo Hamelech's* advice: “*Chanoch lana'ar al pi darko* – train each young man in accordance with his way.” But Rav Hirsch articulates it: You have to look at every child, see who he is, and work with what you have. Trying to fit a square peg in a round hole never works.

Rav Hirsch writes in *Parashas Toldos*: “Each child should be guided in accordance with the path intended especially for him – the path that suits the tendencies and qualities

latent in the depths of his personality – and thus should be educated both as a man and as a Jew.”

CARVED IN STONE

The *matzeiva* (tombstone) of *Rabbiner Hirsch* reads in part:

Ohr chadash hei'iru
P'nei teiveil hizhiru
Ve'emuna tehora le'am
kodesh heitziru
Tuv taam hamitzvos
Sod chukei Boreinu.

Those few words encapsulate what he accomplished. The *peirush*, indeed, was and is an *ohr chadash* – a new light shone on the words of the Torah.

Ohr chadash hei'iru. Ve'emuna tehora le'am kodesh heitziru – his commentary strengthened the *emuna*, not only of his generation, but of generations to come.

Tuv taam hamitzvos sod chukei Boreinu – his commentary gives insights to so many precious secrets of the Torah.

Someone who visited the kever of *Rabbiner Hirsch* told me that he found the *matzeiva* covered with little stones. Such is the *minhag* – when visiting a kever, we put a stone on the marker. These little stones were testimony to the many people that had visited his grave.

Not far from the kever of *Rabbiner Hirsch* is the gravesite of a member of the *Rothschild* family, who in their heyday were the wealthiest people in the world. In fact, they financed some of the wars of different countries. There are no stones on his kever.

If one were to have predicted 200 years ago, 150 years ago, who would have a greater impact on the world – *Baron Rothschild* and his family, or this little *rav* in a small town in Europe, who eventually became *Rav* in *Frankfurt* – one would have said the *Rothschilds*. And yet, we do not hear from the *Rothschilds* anymore. But we hear from *Rabbiner Hirsch*. He endures, and his *peirush* endures, because the Torah endures. And because authentic *Yiddishkeit* will endure until the end of time. That is why this *peirush* is a classic, because a classic is defined by whether it passes the test of time. □

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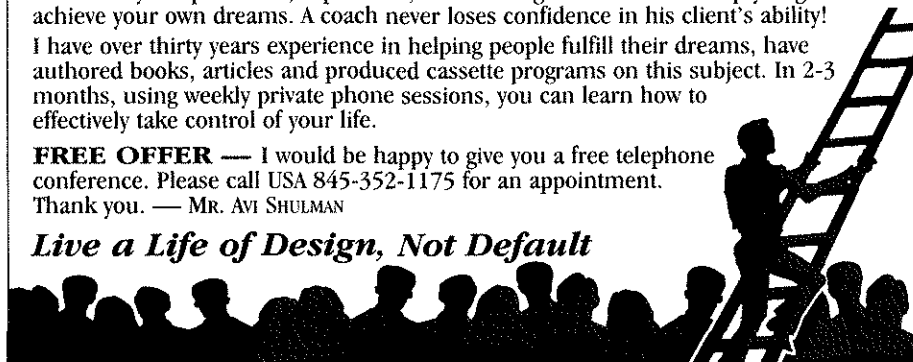
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RABBI DOV LEDERMAN

SHMITTA 5768*A Shmitta
Like No Others**A Retrospective Appreciation***FROM VISION TO REALITY**

FOR MANY DECADES, *Shmitta* observance was confined to a number of individuals or to certain groups, such as the kibbutzim of Poalei Agudas Yisroel, or Aguda settlements such as Yesodot, Kfar Gideon, Komemiyus and others. It was the towering sage, Rabbi Benjamin Mendelsohn, Rav of Komemiyus, who brought *Shmitta* observance into the public domain and made it into the birthright of each Torah-observing Jew to the degree that it is as much a part of his life as are Shabbos and the festivals. Rabbi Mendelsohn fervently believed that all the obstacles to *Shmitta* observance could be overcome with perseverance and devotion to the cause.

This was the dream of all to whom the Holy Land and the commandments associated with it were dear, but as with all visions, it had to be implemented. To this end, in 1973, Rabbi Mendelsohn established Keren Hashviis, which not only took upon itself to convince individual religious farmers that this great mitzvah is not dead, or something that can be circumvented in one way or the other, but also assumed the obligation to assist them in achieving this goal.

Since that time, *Shmitta* observance has become a permanent feature in the agricultural economy of the Holy Land. As the number of *Shmitta*-observing farmers rose from year to year (2000 farmers in the previous *Shmitta* in 5761, over 2700 farmers in the most recent *Shmitta*), it left its imprint on the entire country and could not be ignored by the governing bodies. The Ministry of Agriculture appointed a high-ranking official to deal with the changes in crop production that *Shmitta* observance entails. In fact, for at least the past three *Shmittos*, the government has participated in financing part of the burden carried by the *Shmitta* observing farmers. It is quite obvious that it is only due to the existence of

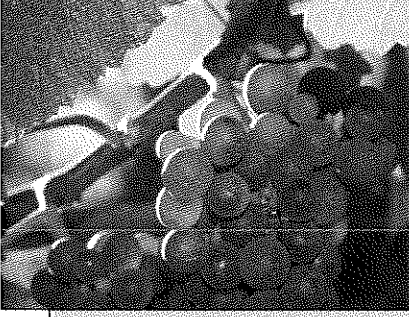


Keren Hashviis, and the legions of brave Jews who observe *Shmitta*, that our representation in the Israeli parliament was able to induce the government to allocate the money. Lest someone ask *If so, why is money collected for this purpose?*, here is the story. Of the over 2700 farmers who observed this past *Shmitta* year, only some 200 (!) could conform to the sometimes draconian criteria established by the Ministry of Agriculture. This left the remaining 2500-plus forced to rely on the benevolence of their fellow Jews.

Still, *Shmitta* has been brought to the attention of the public at large and *Shmitta* observing farmers are no longer lone individuals who are doing (or rather not doing) something that the public cannot understand. As a matter of fact, when a highly unusual frost brought extensive damage this year to crops of non-observing farmers, which reduced the agricultural produce output to the point that some staples had to be imported in massive quantities, the Minister of Agriculture declared in public that "we are going to have not one, but two *Shmitta* years."

A cursory examination of the *parshios* in the Torah that discuss *Shmitta* might give one the initial impression that a farmer who does not work his fields or orchards during *Shmitta* would face a grave problem in providing sustenance for himself and his family. Further reading, however, underscores that there is blessing associated with *Shmitta* observance. One must be aware, however, that this blessing primarily applies to *Shmitta deOraisa*, when keeping

RABBI LEDERMAN, OF BNEI BRAK, IS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TREASURERS OF KEREN HASHVI'IS. HIS ARTICLE, "OF SEVENS, SABBATHS, CYCLES, AND SCYTHES," APPEARED IN JO, APR. '07.



FRUITFUL BYPASS

FRUITS GROW BY THEMSELVES, and can be picked and distributed under the aegis of *Otzar Beis Din*, (an agency acting under *beis din's* guidance), which sells the fruit at no profit. The *Otzar Beis Din* compensates the grower for his expenses and pays him wages for the work that he performs for them, while charging the populace for the above plus the costs of storage and distribution. In this way, the grower regains the money he spent on safeguarding the tree – something that is permitted on *Shmitta* – and is left with some money to buy food. This arrangement, however, does not apply to grains, vegetables, flowers (which are ordinarily a “red-hot” export item), spices (same) and similar crops. Quality suffers, however, since fruits are not sprayed nor otherwise treated because of *Shmitta*, and are often not of a calibre that can be distributed. The grower, then, will not realize any proceeds from such fruit and Keren Hashviis must step in.

Shmitta is fulfillment of a Torah command. When its status is *mide Rabbanan* (of rabbinic origin), as it is today according to most *poskim*, one must be moved by pure motives to merit *Hashem's* special blessings. Thus, only truly deserving individuals would merit this blessing nowadays. While this may sound limiting, more people would very likely qualify currently than in the past.

COMPLICATING FACTORS

Other factors are present that complicate the scene. We are living in a technologically advanced era, which removes substantial backbreaking toil from the farmer, but also harbors a number of problems. Gone are the days when a farmer would work a patch of land that he owned. Today, farmers till increasingly larger areas that they rent from the land's owners. This is necessitated by the use of highly expensive machinery such as tractors that sell for \$650,000 (at least half of the cost is provided “courtesy” of the Israeli tax system), and similarly expensive items such as plows, seeding machines, sophisticated irrigation equipment, and vegetable or fruit pickers. The only way in which a farmer can obtain use of such equipment is by a leasing agreement, with all the payments that this entails. Since there is no regular income during the *Shmitta* year, the farmer finds it impossible to keep up his payments. In addition, he has to continue paying rent for the land that he was tilling. True, there exists the alternative of turning the land over to its owner for the *Shmitta* year, but then the latter will not only work it on *Shmitta*, but

may well decide not to rent it to that observant farmer when *Shmitta* is over.

Nonetheless, the recent *Shmitta* was strikingly different from those preceding it. Not only did the number of *Shmitta* observing farmers increase by 35% from the prior *Shmitta*, but *Shmitta* observance encompassed 270 locations in the Holy Land as compared with 197 during the previous *Shmitta*.

But most dramatic is the rise in the land areas that were left fallow in the observance of *Shmitta*. It was 18,460 hectares (or over 45,000 acres) during the earlier *Shmitta*, and it was 30,000 hectares (over 74,000 acres) this past *Shmitta* (close to a 65% increase). This does not include orchards under *Otzar Beis Din* arrangements, which account for another 5000 hectares (12,350 acres).

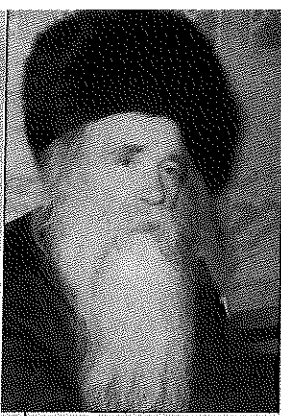
But this is not all. With *Shmitta* so solidly entrenched into the fabric of Israeli life by the extensive activities of Keren Hashviis, the current chairman of Keren Hashviis, the indefatigable Rabbi Ben Zion Kugler, was able to arrange with the rabbi of *Keren Kayemes* that no forestry plantings of any kind would be carried out during the *Shmitta* year. The total produce-growing land area in Jewish hands in the Holy Land is 110,000 hectares, with another 110,000 hectares of forests and similar uncultivated lands. Taken together (and including the *Otzar Beis Din* arrangements), a total of 145,000 hectares of the Holy Land out of 220,000 hectares in Jewish hands, amounting to 66% (or 2/3), rested on *Shmitta*!! This is as unprecedented as it is mind-boggling. And it would not have happened if it were not for the all-pervading presence of Keren Hashviis.

THE LEAP YEAR “BONUS”

This past *Shmitta* was different from the preceding ones in a number of other respects, as well. One of them is that this was the first time that *Shmitta* was observed at such an unprecedented scale in a Jewish leap year, which lasted 13 months (as compared with the standard *Shmitta* duration of 12 months). Moreover, it is not entirely correct to regard *Shmitta* as something that lasts a year (regular or leap).

Preparations for *Shmitta* must begin months before it starts. For most farmers, this means being thoroughly instructed in preparations for the coming *Shmitta* year, and Keren Hashviis bears the expenses of this instruction. For some of them, *Shmitta* actually starts at that time because their crops “run” into *Shmitta* and can no longer be harvested then. Some crops can only be seeded or planted during the summer or the early spring, and this again means that the farmer has nothing to harvest for months after *Shmitta* is over.

But this is not all. Keren Hashviis faced a new challenge in its care for *Shmitta* observers. It was called upon to address the problems of people who earn a living by tending private house gardens and those who drive farm tractors, who could not work during *Shmitta*. Many of them came from the ranks of *ba'alei teshuva* who had returned to their spiritual roots these past several years. During the previous *Shmitta*, there was less than a handful of them, and it was possible to help them without



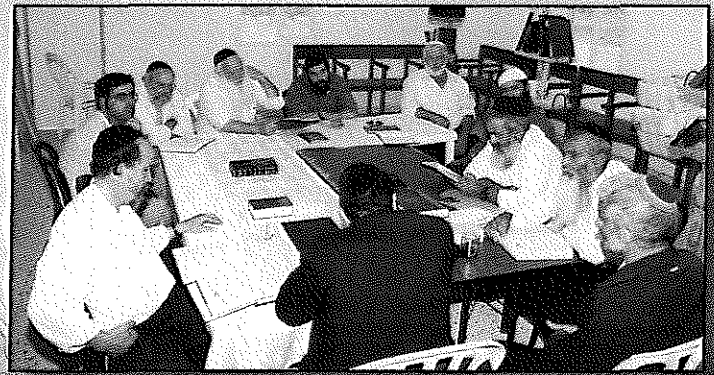
A MATTER OF TWO AGENDAS

BECAUSE OF STATUTORY restrictions, Keren Hashviis is divided into two departments. One is the National Center for *Shmitta*-Observing Farmers.

Headquartered in Komemiyus, it is directed by its present rav, **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Mendelsohn**, who renders all the halachic decisions, and, in general, guides and directs, with a small but very efficient staff, all the preparations for *Shmitta*, and determines what kind of work may or may not be performed on *Shmitta*, dealing with a host of halachic intricacies.

The second is Keren Hashviis, also presided over by Rabbi Mendelsohn, which is responsible for all the financial affairs. This body is made up of public personalities who have party affiliations as individuals, but leave them behind when they enter the Keren Hashviis meeting room. Then, their only concerns are the proper conduct of the fund and the benefit of the farmers. One of its members is the past president of Israel's Accountants Union, whose expertise made it possible for the fund to avoid major pitfalls and to conduct its activity in a most exemplary way. Another member (who also happens to be an accountant) is a Komemiyus resident and an expert in crop production; his timely advice aided the fund's board of treasurers in making the proper decisions.

As above, there were questions that even this dedicated group with all their expertise could not resolve. At the suggestion of *Maran* Rabbi Elyashiv, שליט"א, all these questions were referred to a special *beis din* headed by Rabbi Nissim Karelitz, שליט"א, nephew of the Chazon Ish and head of Kollel Chazon Ish, to which all the problems were presented and resolved by.



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:
Kollel of *Shmitta*-observing farmers; Visit of rabbanim to *Shmitta* farm;
Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky at kever of Radvaz, pioneer of *Shmitta* observance.

digging deep into the funds designated for farmers. This past *Shmitta*, the Keren Hashviis governing body dealt with several dozens of such non-farmer *Shmitta* observers, and the decision as to what should be done was too complex for these devoted people to make. In addition, there arose a number of priority questions concerning certain farming occupations that were too knotty for the group to resolve.

PRE-SHMITTA EFFORTS AND BEYOND

As mentioned, observing *Shmitta* starts months before Rosh Hashana. This requires having money before appeals can be made and before any money comes in. In other words, Keren Hashviis needed "seed money," but not for seeds. Here, Agudath Israel in the US came to the rescue

by providing a \$100,000 loan so that work could be started. Keren Hashviis was privileged to have the unstinting cooperation of then-Executive Vice President of the American Agudah, Rabbi Shmuel Bloom, and Agudah's treasurer, Rabbi Shlomo Gertzulin, who put in great effort to make the American Keren Hashviis campaign as successful as it was. They were assisted by Rabbi Moshe Borenstein, who coordinated the weekly Shabbos appeals, and Rabbi Avi'ezri Wagshal, the American "Mr. *Shmitta*." They were "seconded" by Rabbi Eziel Shechter of London, responsible for the success of the appeals in England. He was joined in this effort by Rabbi Yisroel Meyer Bloch in Switzerland, Rabbis Chaim Mandel and David Glaksbard in Antwerp, Mr. Hans Rosen in Holland, and Rabbi Shlesinger, Rav of Strasbourg, France.

It should be acknowledged that the public support in the Holy Land and abroad (with US in the lead) has been over-

Miracles: ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

We all draw inspiration from stories of miracles that occur during *Shmitta*. As befits a year that deserves the title of “A *Shmitta* Like No Others,” we present two unusual stories.

I.

A FARMING FAMILY CONSISTING of nine brothers owns fields not far from Bnei Brak. One of the brothers decided on his own initiative to observe this past *Shmitta* for the first time in his life. Yes, he was observant to a degree, but he had never observed *Shmitta*. Nobody had come to him to explain the greatness of the mitzvah, nor did anyone offer him any financial assistance. He simply got up and said, “This is what I am doing.”

He immediately faced two problems. One – he owned the fields in partnership with one of his brothers, who did not observe *Shmitta*. The other – he did not have any visible means of support. A halachic way was found to separate his part of the fields from his brother’s, and a fence was erected to divide the two land portions.

Then, he suddenly found that he had some monies here and there on which to live. But this supply ran out after a while. In the meantime, the hero of our story decided to dedicate the time on his hands to learning more than he had before, and started attending a number of

the *shiurim* that abound in the Bnei Brak vicinity. This not only brought him much closer to more dedicated mitzvah observance, but also established a relationship with one of the *maggidei shiur* (lecturers). The latter started inquiring as to what his new *shiur* participant was doing, and was surprised to learn that he was the only farmer in the entire country who had started observing *Shmitta* on his own initiative without contacting Keren Hashviis, and was now lacking any means of sustenance. The *maggid shiur* contacted Keren Hashviis, and an appropriate check was on its way almost immediately.

One of the *gedolei Yisroel*, who had never gone on any of the visits to farmers, was so impressed with this person’s story that he decided to pay him a personal visit. Our hero declined this unusual honor because he did not want to embarrass his brother, who was not *Shmitta* observant.

II.

AVRAHAM AND TSILA ARE A COUPLE who were not observant. They live up North, close to the Lebanese border, and work in their hothouses and plantations. They are a family that “had everything” and could have expected to “live happily ever after,” if not for the fact that one of their sons had been childless for many years. The parents did not spare any effort in assisting their son and his wife in this respect. Recognized experts in the field were consulted, but after a while, they had to acknowledge that they had exhausted all that modern medicine could offer.

Avraham and Tsila heard that prayer in Meiron at the graveside of Rav Shimon *bar* Yochai is a *segula* (spiritual influence) in such a predicament, and decided to go there. There they met a group of young Chassidic men who, after inquiring of the purpose of the visit of such a visibly non-religious couple, told them, “Observe *Shmitta*. This mitzvah carries within it a special blessing.”

At the beginning, our couple had no idea of what *Shmitta* was all about. As they pursued the subject, they were directed to Rabbi Zimmerman, the Keren Hashviis coordinator in the North. The couple hesitated. To them, it was a journey into a double unknown: observing a mitzvah as such – after all, they were not religious; and, primarily, doing so at such a great sacrifice. Rabbi Zimmerman guided them gently but firmly at each step, and provided all the assistance that Keren Hashviis extends to *Shmitta* observers. Our couple also had to overcome the tremendous peer pressure that was applied by all the other residents of their village, who did everything they could to dissuade them from observing *Shmitta*, to the point of offering to work their land for them. But, with Rabbi Zimmerman’s assistance, they held fast.

They suddenly found that they had spare time, something that a farmer rarely has. They went for extended visits to the childless couple who lived in the South. Tsilah even went to the US to visit a son who lived there.

A few months passed, and then, on an *Erev Shabbos*, the young couple suddenly appeared in their parents’ house with the happy announcement that was immediately transmitted by phone to their mother, who was still in the US. Because of *Shmitta* observance, the young couple now has a baby girl. Not only this. The son who lived in the US decided to come back to Israel, something that was very much his parents’ desire. And Abraham and Tsilah, after confronting *Shmitta*-observance – deliberate desolation of their fields – are now starting to realize their dream of many years. They want to plant a vineyard, and are also considering opening up a winery. Even now, Avraham is deep in consultation with Rabbi Zimmerman concerning the halachic aspects of planting and running a vineyard. Avraham is eyeing another farmer residing in this highly non-religious village as a candidate for observing the next *Shmitta*. A part of his enthusiasm stems from the fact that the family’s fortunes continue to improve at an incredible pace since they became *Shmitta* observers.



Farmers and visiting rabbanim celebrate year of *Shmitta*.

whelming, to the point that ultimately, Keren Hashviis expects to be able to distribute to the farmers more than threefold the amount of money that it did in the previous *Shmitta*.

There is no doubt that a part of this success is due to the personal involvement of *gedolei Yisroel*, who spared no time or effort to assist in this great mitzvah. Some of our *gedolim* were *mispalleil* at the burial places of Rabbi Shach and the Steipler Gaon for contributors to Keren Hashviis, whereas others visited farmers to encourage them in performing this great but challenging mitzvah.

Prayers were also offered at the gravesite of the *Ridvaz*, the Rabbi of Slutzk, who in his later years moved to Tzefas. He was the first major Torah personality to raise the flag of *Shmitta* observance in the budding agricultural settlement that had started in the 19th century. He pleaded with and encouraged the farmers of that era to observe *Shmitta*, but with little response. Even those who understood the importance of this mitzvah could not cope with the problems that its observance entailed. (In other words, there was no Keren Hashviis.) The farmers recently came to pray at his graveside, as if to say, "Look, Slutsker Rav. We have done what you yearned to do."

It was with a feeling of great accomplishment that farmers gathered in Netivot in the south and in Afula in the north to celebrate the end of the *Shmitta* year. They were joined in these celebrations by an impressive gallery of Israeli Torah Sages and by personalities such as Rabbis Shmuel Bloom and Avraham Heilprin. The latter, the son of Rabbi Nachum Heilprin, the mainstay of Keren Hashviis almost from its inception, had spared no effort in encouraging the American Jewish community to rise to its task.

Special mention should be made of the Chareidi newspapers, the Israeli *Yated*, and the *Hamodia*, both in its Hebrew and particularly the English versions, that put their resources and the talents of their writers at the disposal of the Keren Hashviis campaign.

We all hope that *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* will be with us by the next *Shmitta*. If this does not happen, Keren Hashviis, with the assistance of world Jewry, will be there as it had been until now. This *Shmitta* demonstrated that with sufficient funds, it is possible to bring *Shmitta* observance to at least the majority of Jewish farmers. May we surpass our accomplishments during the next *Shmitta*, and succeed in promoting 100% *Shmitta* observance. May we then be *zocheh* to welcome our Redeemer. □

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From the Memoirs of Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz

CHAPTER THREE:

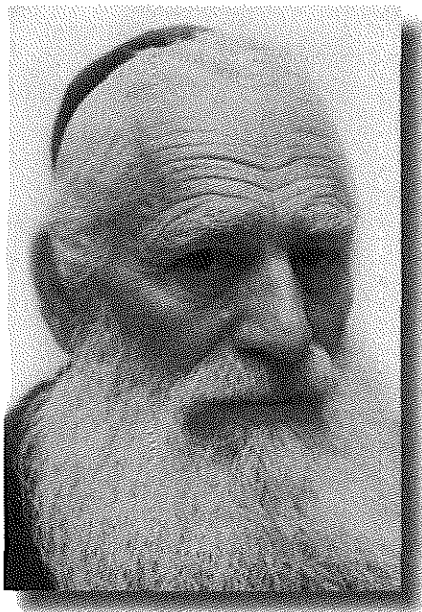
“Adam Ki Yamus Ba’Ohel – Self-Sacrifice For Torah”

THE PONEVEZHER RAV’S SELF-SACRIFICE FOR THE YESHIVA

THE PONEVEZHER RAV was involved in a myriad of activities, including the building of Torah institutions and the numerous other projects in which he participated— such as his many heartwarming addresses to *ba’alei battim* – that took up so much of his time that he once commented, “I sacrificed the Ponevezher Gaon for the Ponevezher Yeshiva.”

Indeed, the Rav knowingly and willingly sacrificed himself in order to establish a center of Torah that would produce Torah leaders for all of *Klal Yisroel*. From the time he was a youth, the Ponevezher Rav was renowned for his burning love for and unceasing toil in Torah. Yet, he

RABBI LORINCZ REPRESENTED AGUDATH ISRAEL IN THE ISRAELI KNESSET FROM 1951-1984, DURING WHICH TIME HE WAS AN INTIMATE OF A NUMBER OF TORAH LUMINARIES OF THE PAST HALF CENTURY. THE EXTENSIVE NOTES THAT HE KEPT ON THOSE MEETINGS SERVE AS THE BASIS OF *BIMECHITZASAM* VOL. I, NOW AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH. EXCERPTS WERE FEATURED IN THESE PAGES. THE SECOND VOLUME, FROM WHICH THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS TAKEN, WAS DRAWN FROM HIS EARLIER EXPERIENCES. IT WAS TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY MRS. D. BREINES.



relinquished his personal advancement in Torah for the sake of a Torah future for *Klal Yisroel*.

In the words of Ponevezher *Rosh Yeshiva* Rabbi Shmuel Rozovsky:

“When he was still a young man, in the generation before the *Churban* – the generation of the Chofetz Chaim, Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky and other Torah giants – the Ponevezher Rav was already included among the greatest Torah scholars and leaders of *Klal Yisroel*.

“After the terrible *Churban*, the Gaon of Ponevezh took the crown of *Gadol Hador* and recognized Torah genius off his head; he removed the mantle of a leader in *Klal Yisroel*.

And although he remained that same Torah genius and leader of a generation, he removed the title willingly, because he saw that he had one life mission and one only: the rebuilding of Torah and the establishment of yeshivos for *bnei Torah*, *yarchei kalla* yeshivos for working men, and Torah schools for children. ‘The deed of a righteous person brings life’ (*Mishlei* 10:16) – to the rest of *Klal Yisroel*.”

YOUTHFUL ENERGY

THE Ponevezher Rav collected money piecemeal by traveling from city to city and from one philanthropist to another. His monumental projects give the impression that he convinced great philanthropists to donate large sums of money with ease. But that was not the case. He ran around with the vigor of a young man, expending superhuman energy to collect the necessary funds, penny by penny. His *talmid*, the Biala-Lugano Rebbe, שליט"א, recalls that one of the rebbei'im in the yeshiva once joined the Ponevezher Rav on his travels. But after a few days, the rebbi returned to the yeshiva. He simply lacked the stamina to keep up with the Rav’s hectic pace.

The Rav described his activities in a letter to his son, Reb Avraham: "My work can be compared to the *avodas hakemitza* (closing one's fist, using the three middle fingers to grasp part of a *mincha* meal offering to be put on the *mizbei'ach*) in the *Beis Hamikdash*, which *Chazal* say was the hardest *avoda* of all. I – a *kohein* – have to open tight-closed fists (*yadayim kemutzos* in Hebrew, a play on the word *kemitza*) in order to fill my hands."

But in Heaven, his hard work was acknowledged, and from time to time he saw extraordinary *siyata diShmaya* (Heavenly assistance) completely disproportionate to the efforts he invested. "I see that I do not have enough merit to be absolved from the yoke of troubles," he wrote to his son. "Perhaps it is in the merit of the suffering and worry that Heaven brings about miracles in the last minute."

SACRIFICING ONE'S GROWTH IN TORAH

The **Ponevezher Rav** learned this approach from his revered mentor, the **Chofetz Chaim**.

"The **Chofetz Chaim** once gave me an insight into the *passuk* of '*Ve'ahavta eis Hashem Elokecha bechal levavcha uvechal nafshecha uvechal me'odecha*,'" related the **Ponevezher Rav**. "*Chazal* teach us that the words '*uvechal me'odecha* – and with all your resources,' are directed at those whose money is dearer to them than their bodies. The words '*uvechal nafshecha* – and with all your soul' are directed at those whose bodies are more precious to them than their money. This teaches us that we must take that which is dearest to us and give it up for *ahavas Hashem* (love of G-d). What is our most precious possession? The Torah! Is there anything more precious than the Torah? So we have no choice but to extrapolate that one must also sacrifice part of his Torah for *ahavas Hashem*."

The **Ponevezher Rav** presented this lesson to all who hold positions in *chi-*

They must dedicate themselves to their students even at the expense of their own personal growth in Torah. They are responsible to Hashem to sacrifice their precious time to give their students a solid foundation in Torah

nuch – *roshei yeshivos*, *maggidei shiur*, or *rebbei'im* in *cheder*. They must dedicate themselves to their students even at the expense of their own personal growth in Torah. They are responsible to *Hashem* to sacrifice their precious time to give their students a solid foundation in Torah, and arouse within them love of *Hashem* (*Peninim Mishulchan Gavo'ah*).

"ZEH SEFER TOLDOS ADAM" – THE ACCOUNT OF ADAM'S DESCENDANTS

When **Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach**, זצ"ל, eulogized the **Ponevezher Rav**, he told the following story:

Once, **Rabbi Shach** asked the **Rav** a question. "Why doesn't the **Rav** commit his *chiddushim* to writing and publish them?"

"I don't have time to sit and write down my *chiddushim* because of my obligations to the yeshiva," answered the **Ponevezher Rav**. "I am writing a different kind of *sefer*. It is a *sefer toldos adam*, a *sefer* of people. All whom I've built

up and ushered into the occupation of Torah learning – they are my *sefer*."

"BETTER SOMEONE LIKE ME"

Whoever watched the way the **Ponevezher Rav** dedicated his time and his entire self to his enterprises saw the above-quoted words of the **Chofetz Chaim** regarding one's ultimate dedication to spreading Torah come to life. In his great devotion to the future of Torah, he gave up his very self and his greatness in learning and accepted the role of *Zevulun* – the entire generation's supporter of Torah.

The **Ponevezher Rav** once said jokingly to **Rabbi Shmuel Vosner**, "Just as the world cannot survive without the tanners and the spice manufacturers, so it cannot exist without those who study Torah with diligence – or without those who never learn Torah at all. So if there must be those who are lax in their Torah study, better it should be me – because as a result of my not learning, thousands of other people are."

FOREVER IN HIS LEARNING!

Despite all his involvements, the **Ponevezher Rav's** head – his very essence – was always in his learning. His vast command of the entire Talmud was astounding.

Rabbi Yaakov Edelstein was one of the first students in the **Ponevezh Yeshiva**. His father-in-law, **Rabbi Mordechai Shmuel Karol**, **Rav** of **Kfar Chassidim**, told him a number of times that even the students of the yeshiva did not know how to properly appreciate the **Rav's** greatness in Torah. "There is no *Tosafos*, big or small, in all of *Shas* that is not stored in his [the **Ponevezher Rav's**] memory as though it were actually placed into a box," he said.

When the **Rav** returned to the yeshiva from his extensive travels, his very face mirrored his exhaustion. Yet, he would immediately go to the *beis midrash* to see what the *bachurim* were currently studying. There were even times that he gave a *shiur*, on the spot, on the topic

1 "Mishna lo zaza mimekoma," in the original

under discussion – despite having had no time to prepare.

GRUELING LABOR

Society at large came to view him as a public-service version of King Midas. It seemed that every project in which he was involved became a thriving success.

But the Rav himself saw things differently. “May Hashem have mercy upon those in whom the public has complete confidence, and therefore absolves itself from helping them,” he told me repeatedly.

The superhuman effort that he invested in raising money abroad is incomprehensible. He ran from one place to another with literal *mesirus nefesh*.

He once traveled by train from Manchester to London. After a while, his family members tried to get in touch with him at the prearranged address in London, but were told that he had not yet arrived. Panic seized both his family and the yeshiva in Bnei Brak. Those who escorted him in Manchester attested that he had boarded the train as planned, and those awaiting him in London could not trace him.

The Rebbetzin turned to me and asked me to help locate the Rav. It turned out that he had arrived in London burning with fever and was barely conscious. He did not have the strength to disembark at the station, and had to be transported directly to the hospital.

“I cannot and do not wish to heed the frightening [words] of the doctors,” he

wrote to a friend. “Their advice to eat, sleep and rest in an orderly manner is difficult for me. I place my trust in the One Above, and *baruch Hashem*, all is well with me.”

SOLITARY SHABBOS

The Ponevezher Rav suffered through many difficult periods, both physically and spiritually. I heard him say that when he traveled to the United States, it happened more than once that he was unable to pray with a minyan because the local *mechitza* was inadequate. Apparently, the Shabbos *se’udos* (meals) that he ate alone in his hotel room were also a far cry from *mei’ein Olam Habba* (a taste of the World to Come).

He once wrote a letter to his son in which he described Shabbos spent in a city with no appropriate place to daven. “My hope is that I will leave as I came, entirely for the sake of that most holy of places – the yeshiva,” he concluded.

“IF THERE IS NO FLOUR, THERE IS NO TORAH”

The Ponevezher Rav’s testimony as to the Chofetz Chaim’s opinion on opening a yeshiva with no financial base corresponds to that which I heard from Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach, זצ”ל, in the name of the Chofetz Chaim.

The Vizhnitzer Rebbe was suffering from unbearable indebtedness, and he turned to me for help. When I asked the

Rebbe what had brought him to incur such heavy debts, he answered, “I cannot bear to see a Jewish child roaming the streets and losing all semblance of *Yiddishkeit*. I must help him, and so the debts continue to mount.”

When I happened to be in Rav Shach’s house, I asked him his opinion on the issue.

“There is no *hetteir* (dispensation) to incur debts if one does not have the means to repay them,” Rav Shach answered.

He continued by telling me that at the beginning of the *z’man*, the Chofetz Chaim had told the *gabbai* of his yeshiva, “If there is not enough money in the yeshiva’s coffers to sustain it for one *z’man*, then I have no intention of opening the yeshiva.” Why? Because the Chofetz Chaim did not want to fall into the category of “the wicked one borrows but repays not” (*Tehillim* 37:21).

“AVEIRA LISHMA”

Financing the yeshiva building, as well as various other institutions, caused the Ponevezher Rav to incur enormous debts. His mindset on this issue can be discerned from a conversation he had with Rabbi Sholom Noach Berzovsky, זצ”ל, the previous Slonimer Rebbe, who at the time was the Slonimer *Rosh Yeshiva*.

Rabbi Berzovsky described the intractable financial state in which his yeshiva found itself, and asked the Rav what he should do. “Without a doubt, the Chofetz Chaim would have *paskened* that one may not found a yeshiva under such circumstances,” replied the Ponevezher Rav.

Aware of the Rav’s personal approach to the subject, the Slonimer *Rosh Yeshiva* reacted with surprise. “So we are going to build yeshivos, and then, in the World to Come, we will be punished for doing so?” he asked incredulously.

The question caused the Ponevezher Rav great excitement, and he cried out emotionally, “*Ober vi zis vellen zein di shmitz* – how sweet and pleasant will those swats be!”

Commented Rav Berzovsky: “Now I hear the voice of the Ponevezher Rav!”

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Uttered words can sometimes be more revealing than their speakers intend. They can be a source of deeper understanding—some yielding smiles; others, tears. With the goal of mining contemporary quotations for insights, intended or otherwise, The Jewish Observer here continues its feature, "Of Public Record," which presents illuminating citations culled from various media.

Of Public Record

"The Jews created the Holocaust so we would prostrate ourselves on our knees before them and approve of their new State of Israel ... Jews made up the Holocaust, Protestants get their orders from the devil, and the Vatican has sold its soul to liberalism."

— Richard Williamson, an excommunicant welcomed back into the Catholic fold by Pope Benedict XVI, in a 1989 sermon. The Pope later insisted that Mr. Williamson "must absolutely, unequivocally and publicly distance himself from his positions on the Shoah."
Arutz-7, January 30

"One woman I didn't serve made huge noise. I love it. I love it. It's how I want it to be."

— Mustafa Tekinkaya, a Muslim café owner in Invercargill, New Zealand, who refuses to serve Israeli customers
News Talk New Zealand, January 15

"Good and evil are present in this world, and between the two there can be no compromise."

— Former President George W. Bush, in his final address to the nation
The New York Times, January 16

"If our rulers would let us, we would catch you in the street and we would devour you with our teeth."

— Sheikh Safwat Higazi, reacting to the publicizing of Muslim incitement against Jews and others
Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), January 15

"World Liars"

— English translation of an intentional misspelling of the Hebrew word *tikshoret* (media) as *tishkoret* in a *Yediot Aharonot* headline about press reports concerning the Gaza invasion
The New York Times, January 7

"the real picture, every angle, every side"

— What viewers of *Al Jazeera* will get, according to an advertisement for the Arabic news service
The New York Times, January 9

"a defensive tunnel being dug by Hamas"

— Former President Jimmy Carter's characterization of the target of an Israeli air attack in November
The Washington Post, January 9

FROM THE MOUTHS OF
VOODOO PRIESTS DEPT.

"If there is no tolerance, religious hatred will spawn what is happening today [in Gaza], where dozens of infants and innocents are paying for the intolerance of their parents."

— Voodoo high priest Dah Aligbonon, as he slaughtered a rooster in Benin and prayed for an end to the conflict in Gaza
Reuters, January 10

WE TOO DEPT.

"I prefer you as a martyr"

— A Hamas terrorist's wife, responding to her husband's question "What if I am injured?"
The New York Times, January 14

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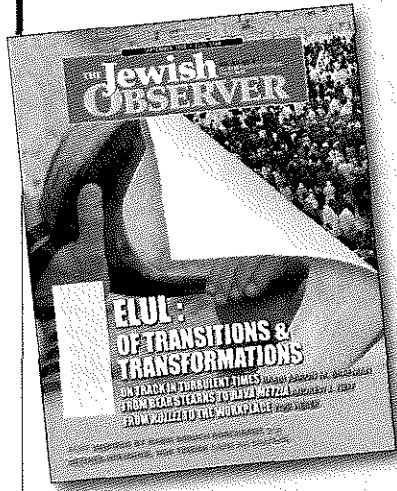
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READERS' FORUM

TORAH STUDY AT THE WEDDING CELEBRATION

To the Editor:

In Eliyahu Mayer's article "Hasmada 101" (JO, May '08), the author singled out for praise a pair of *chavrusos* (study partners) at a bar mitzvah celebration who took photocopies of a *daf* of Gemara ... and transformed the catering hall "into a *beis midrash* while I made small talk with the guest on my left."

A *se'udas mitzvah* is not meant to be an alternative *beis midrash*. Nowhere in Chazal do we find that in the various *se'udos* mentioned in the Gemara and elsewhere, the participants broke off for a learning session! 'Redden in lernen'—sure thing! What else do *bnei Torah* talk about when they meet? They may even talk *milei de'alma* (worldly affairs) where there is a *tachlis* (purpose). But to pointedly ignore other *bnei Avraham*, Yitzchak and Yaakov at the table, or worse still, to clearly demonstrate to the *ba'al simcha* and *kol hamesubin kan* that they are bored with the *simcha* and with the rest of the company at the table, and that their attendance is only to politely share the *simcha*, and thereby be *masmidim* at the cost of *menschlichkeit*, appears to me to be a rudeness which ill behooves us.

I have often seen rabbanim and *bnei Torah* come with a small *sefer* in their pocket, which they use quietly when there is no company, but which they correctly put to one side if there is company at the table.

Sure, if the start of the *simcha* is delayed, no one will be offended if one goes off to the side and is *tzanua* and

makes a *kiddush Hashem*. Also, if there is no company at the table, by all means, do not waste your time. But if there is, they certainly come first. How many stories of *gedolim* do we need to recall that show us how much they worked on *kevod haberios*!

I think the *ma'aseh* of Rav Bengis, זצ"ל, may have been misquoted. I heard that soon after he arrived from Europe, he was dismayed (aren't we all) at the so-called *minhag Eretz Yisroel* to suffer enormous delays in the commencement of a *simcha*. So he embarked on a new *machzor* (cycle) of *Shas*, and that second *siyum* was the result. That fits in with delays experienced while waiting for a train or a bus. It is certainly not any *makor* (source) whatsoever for the conclusion reached by Mr. Mayer.

One can spend a highly rewarding *Torahdik* evening at a *simcha* with almost anyone. Just come prepared with one or two discussion points in mind on Torah subjects and a good *vort* or two. You will be amazed at how most other people can match or even surpass your offering, even unprepared!

SHIMON WINEGARTEN
London, England

ELIYAHU MAYER RESPONDS

I very much appreciate Mr. Winegarten's thoughtful letter. It is only through the feedback of readers and the subsequent responses of authors that the JO can fully achieve its vital mission of *lehagdil Torah ulehadira*.

Mr. Winegarten suggests that if I am

deeply engrossed with my *chavrusa* at a *simcha*, as we are engaged in *redden in lernen*, then we are not ignoring the other guests at the table. If, however, we also refer to photocopies of a *daf* of Gemara during our discussion, then, according to Mr. Winegarten, we have totally abandoned all *menschlichkeit*.

As far as the other *bnei Avraham*, Yitzchak and Yaakov at the table are concerned, I believe that they are *more likely* to join us once we have pulled out our photocopies than they would if we were speaking in learning without the aid of a printed text. Whenever I see two guests speaking with each other at my table, I do not feel slighted. I also do not feel free to enter their conversation, however, as they could be discussing something private or personal.

Were they to open *sefarim*, however, I might feel more inclined to join them. But I certainly would not feel ignored because they were learning from *sefarim*.

Mr. Winegarten cited the example of rabbanim who may carry a *sefer* in their pocket but are never seen at *simchos* learning *bechavrusa* from *sefarim*. Were my *chavrusa* and I on their level, we would be able to learn *be'al peh* as they do. It is well known, for example, that Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, זצ"ל, was capable of reviewing Mishnayos *be'al peh*, even while having a conversation.

Until we see a *kol korei* banning the practice, my *chavrusa* and I plan to continue taking advantage of those *simchos* where we are both in attendance to maintain our *sefer*. And if Mr. Winegarten is there as well, and is seated at our table, he is more than welcome to join us.

GOLDA VS. ZAHAVA... WHAT'S IN A NAME?

To the Editor:

I read with interest the "debate" on the issue of naming children after grandmothers with unpopular Yiddish names (*JO*, Nov. '08). Dr. Fryshman is critical of those who avoid naming their children after *Bobbehs* with names like "Bryna" or "Zlata" or those who translate the Yiddish names into Hebrew, while Rabbi Weinbach feels that: "The veneration we have for the *Bobbehs* ... is expressed in raising our children in their image, even if we don't call them by their names."

This issue was addressed by the Chazon Ish, זצ"ל, and this is what he said (*Ma'asei Ish*, Vol. 2, pg. 122): "One shouldn't give children names that might embarrass them when they grow up, like the names of women in previous generations: *Basha*, *Bryndel*, *Golda*, and the like. To one father, he suggested using the translated version of these names, for example, *Zahava* instead of *Golda*, in order that the child shouldn't be embarrassed when with her friends."

Apparently, the Chazon Ish felt that avoiding the possibility of the child feeling embarrassed takes precedence over our desire to honor our *Bobbehs*. (Perhaps we can assume that our *cho-sheve Bobbehs* in the *Olam Ha'emes* feel the same.)

BENZION SOROTZKIN
Brooklyn, NY

DR. FRYSHMAN RESPONDS

The Chazon Ish did not publish a teshuva relating to the naming of children, but rather, he enunciated a general statement to the effect that "parents shouldn't give children names that might embarrass them when they grow up." Rabbi Sorotzkin concluded that the Chazon Ish was telling us to be restrictive. I choose to conclude that we were being told to use good judgment.

Would the Chazon Ish tell the Yiddish-speaking, Chassidic community

whose daughters bear the names of their *Alteh Bobehs* to avoid using "Yiddish" names? Or suggest that yeshivish families in America avoid names like *Golda* or *Faige*? These may embarrass the bearers of those names in Israel – but certainly not in Lakewood.

I believe that we were being given guidelines that encourage us to use good sense, and that's the spirit in which my article was written. We can both collectively and on a small scale choose to bring ourselves further back to an earlier

self-image, as we have done in so many other areas in Jewish life.

In 1962, I was one of the first people to wear a yarmulke while teaching at a university. Now, baruch Hashem, Torah Jews wearing yarmulkes at universities and in corporate America alike are a norm.

Every step taken to a more open expression of our Torah way of life involved a challenge. I would hope that young Jewish parents will be encouraged – and reassured – in addressing this challenge, as well. □

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- Reiter, Dr. Levi The Music Is Too Loud!, Nov. '08
- Rockove, Rabbi Moshe Reb Zeidel's Inner Life (Rabbi Zeidel Epstein, זצ"ל), Jan.-Feb. '08
- Rosenblum, Yonoson Beyond *Yerushalayim*, Jan.-Feb. '08; Growing Pains, March '08; A Tragedy Close to Home, Apr. '08; Israel at 60, May '08; Can the Chareidim Save Israel?, June '08; Unity Is Not on the Horizon, Sept. '08; Separate Swimming at Harvard and Us, Oct. '08; Demoralizing Obstacity: Prime Minister Olmert's Refusal to Go Quietly Into the Night, Nov. '08; Some Less Obvious Lessons from the Mayoral Election, Dec. '08
- Rutman, Rabbi Yisrael A Lesson from Global Warming, Jan.-Feb. '08
- Salomon, Rabbi Matisyahu The Challenge of *Kol Yisroel Areivim Zeh Lazeh*, Jan.-Feb. '08
- Scheinberg, Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Purim: The Fine Line of Wine (written by Rabbi Shlomo Furst), March '08; The One Who Is in Charge Here (written by Rabbi Shlomo Furst), Nov. '08
- Scherman, Rabbi Nosson Remembering Rabbi Moshe Sherer, זצ"ל, May '08
- Schmidt Mrs. Shira *A Quiet Voice in the Thunder* (review of Mrs. Esther Farbstein's *Hidden in Thunder: Perspective of Faith, Halacha, and Leadership During the Holocaust*), Nov. '08
- Schonfeld, Mrs. Rifka What Do I Say? What Should I Do?, March '08; Motivating Our Children: Whose Job Is It Anyway?, Nov. '08
- Schonfeld, Rabbi Yoel Dialogue in Harmony, Oct. '08
- Schron, Ruben My Relationship with Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, זצ"ל (as told to Avrohom Birnbaum), June '08
- Shafra, Avi Neither Hekhsheer, nor Tzedek, Sept. '08; Time to Reconnect and Disconnect, Nov. '08
- Smagley, Mrs. Marsha The Cluttered Nest, Dec. '08
- Smith, Rabbi Sholom Please Keep the Shades Down!, Dec. '08
- Twerski, Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. *Chinuch* at its Best, Jan.-Feb. '08
- Verschleisser, Naftoli Never Again ... Again, Sept. '08
- Wasserman, Rabbi Elchanan Bunim, זצ"ל The Current Crisis and its Causes (based on an essay), Nov. '08
- Weinbach, Rabbi Mendel Second Thoughts on Naming for the *Bobbeh*, Nov. '08
- Weinberg, Rabbi Yaakov *Vesein Belibeinu*, May '08
- Wikler, Dr. Meir The Financial Market Meltdown: An Opportunity and a Challenge to be *Nosei Be'ol Im Chaveiro*, Nov. '08
- Wolpin, Rabbi Nissan "Zechor Yemos Olam ...", Apr. '08
- Zivotofsky, Rabbi Ari Z. When Do We Bake the Matzah This Year?, Apr. '08; *Shofaros*: Are They All the Same?, Sept. '08; The Story Behind the *Esrog*, Oct. '08
- Zwiebel, Rabbi Chaim Dovid No Ordinary Tuesday, March '08; Changing the Landscape of Torah Jewry in the United States (Rabbi Moshe Sherer, זצ"ל), May '08

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- Agudath Israel "Zechor Yemos Olam ..."/Rabbi Nissan Wolpin, Apr. '08; A "Forgotten" Event With Historic Consequences/Joseph Friedenson (translated by Elozor Halpert), Apr. '08; In the Aura of the Kopycznitzer Rebbe/Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz (translated by Mrs. D. Breines), Apr. '08; Rabbi Moshe Sherer, זצ"ל: His Tenth *Yahrzeit*/Rabbi Nissan Wolpin, May '08; Remembering Rabbi Moshe Sherer, זצ"ל/Rabbi Nosson Scherman, May '08; Changing the Landscape of Torah Jewry in the United States/Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, May '08; Remembering Rabbi Boruch Borchardt, זצ"ל / Rabbi Nissan Wolpin, June '08; Of Responsibility and Goodness/Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, June '08; Inspired by Rabbi Boruch Borchardt, זצ"ל/Rabbi Yitzchok Borchardt (prepared for publication by Reuvain Borchardt), Sept. '08
- Berenbaum, Rabbi Shmuel, זצ"ל Noted in Sorrow: Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum, זצ"ל/Rabbi Nissan Wolpin, Jan.-Feb. '08; Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum, זצ"ל/Rabbi Yaaakov Bender, June '08; *Ein Tov Ella Torah* – There Is No "Good" Other Than Torah/Rabbi Eliezer Ginzberg, June '08; Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, זצ"ל/Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lief, June '08; My Relationship With Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, זצ"ל/Ruben Schron (as told to Avrohom Birnbaum), June '08
- Books in Review *Traveling With the Maggid: A Journey to Great Torah Centers of Yesteryear* (by Rabbi Paysach Krohn)/reviewed by Rabbi Labish Becker, May '08; *A Quiet Voice in the Thunder*

Mrs. Shira Schmidt (review of Mrs. Esther Farbstein's *Hidden in Thunder: Perspective of Faith, Halacha, and Leadership During the Holocaust*), Nov. '08; *Beloved By All* (by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman)/reviewed by Rabbi Yosef C. Golding, Nov. '08; East Meets West: *Ish Yehudi: The Life and the Legacy of a Torah Great, Rav Joseph Tzvi Carlebach*/Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer, Dec. '08

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Business World Reaching for *Tzedek Umishpat*/Yisroel Lazerson, May '08; Sub-Prime Mortgages – Sub-Prime Halacha/Rabbi Ari Marburger, May '08; From Bear Stearns to *Bava Metzia*/Andrew Neff, Sept. '08; From Kollel to the Workplace/Yosi Heber, Sept. '08

Calendar The *Arba Parashiyos*, The Four Stages of Renewal/Rabbi Yonason Goldson, March '08

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Chareidim Israel at 60/Yonoson Rosenblum, May '08; Can the Chareidim Save Israel?/Yonoson Rosenblum, June '08; Unity Is Not on the Horizon/Yonoson Rosenblum, Sept. '08

Chassidus In the Aura of the Kopycznitzer Rebbe/Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz (translated by Mrs. D. Breines), Apr. '08

Children Readers' Forum, Jan.-Feb. '08; Motivating Our Children/Mrs. Rifka Schonfeld, Nov. '08; We

Loved Our *Alteh Bobbeh*, But Her Name Will Never Do/Dr. Bernard Fryshman, Nov. '08; Second Thoughts on Naming for the *Bobbeh*/Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Nov. '08

Chinuch Readers' Forum, Jan.-Feb. '08; Interview with Rabbi Moshe Goldstein/translated by Libby Lazewnik Pheterson, Jan.-Feb. '08; Chinuch at Its Best/Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski, Jan.-Feb. '08; *Vesein Belibeinu*/Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, May '08; Dialogue in Harmony/Mrs. Amilee Jakobovits, Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld, Oct. '08

Churban Europa A Quiet Voice in the Thunder/Mrs. Shira Schmidt (review of Mrs. Esther Farbstein's *Hidden in Thunder: Perspective of Faith, Halacha, and Leadership During the Holocaust*), Nov. '08

Dialogue Dialogue in Harmony/Mrs. Amilee Jakobovits, Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld, Oct. '08

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Ethical Conduct A Lesson From Global Warming/Yisrael Rutman, Jan.-Feb. '08

Ethics Neither Heksher, Nor Tzedek/Rabbi Avi Shafran, Sept. '08

Family The Cluttered Nest/Marsha Smagley, Dec. '08

Festivals and Fast Days The Fourth Redemption/Simcha

Leib Grossbard, Apr. '08; *Zos Chanukah*/Liba Lieberman, Dec. '08; Really Missing It/Bracha Goetz, Dec. '08

Food Food for Thought/Rabbi Eli Glaser, Oct. '08; "Why Aren't All Religious Jews Vegetarians?"/Mrs. Miriam Kosman, Oct. '08

Guidance Interview with Rabbi Moshe Goldstein/translated by Libby Lazewnik Pheterson, Jan.-Feb. '08

Halacha When Do We Bake the Matzah This Year?/Ari Z. Zivotofsky and Ari Y. Greenspan, Apr. '08; Reaching for *Tzedek Umishpat*/Yisroel Lazerson, May '08; Sub-Prime Mortgages – Sub-Prime Halacha/Rabbi Ari Marburger, May '08

Hasbara Keepers of the Faith?/Rabbi Naphtali Hoff, Nov. '08

Hashkafa Eternal Source of Strength/Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, שליט"א, Jan.-Feb. '08; A Lesson From Global Warming/Yisrael Rutman, Jan.-Feb. '08; Purim: The Fine Line of Wine/Rabbi Shlomo Furst (based on lectures of Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, שליט"א), March '08; No Ordinary Tuesday/Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, March '08; The Fourth Redemption/Simcha Leib Grossbard, Apr. '08; *Vesein Belibeinu*/Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, May '08; Feeling Easy in the Harness/Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz, Bostoner Rebbe, שליט"א, June '08; Dance with Joy/Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Reinman, Oct. '08; The Sukkah of the World/Rabbi Yonason Goldson, Oct. '08; They Neither Wither Nor Fade: The Mitzvos of Sukkos/Yossi Huttler, Oct. '08; "Why Aren't All Religious Jews Vegetarians?"/Mrs. Miriam Kosman, Oct. '08; The Current Crisis and Its Causes/ based on an essay by Rabbi Elchanan Bunim Wasserman, הר"ד, Nov. '08; The One Who Is in Charge Here/Rabbi Shlomo Furst (based on lectures of Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg), Nov. '08; A Letter From Rabbi Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz, שליט"א, Nov. '08; Saving

- Klal Yisroel With Chessed*/Rabbi Aryeh Z. Ginzberg, Dec. '08; *The Candles and the Stars*/Rabbi Yonason Goldson, Dec. '08; *Wake Up and Fight*/Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Reinman, Dec. '08
- Health Care Where Is the *Mashgiach?*/Barbara A. Olevitch, Ph.D., Jan.-Feb. '08; *The Need for Legal Action to Save Patients' Lives*/Rabbi Mordechai Biser, Jan.-Feb. '08
- Health Readers' Forum, Jan.-Feb. '08; *Food for Thought*/Rabbi Eli Glaser, Oct. '08
- Hearing Damage Tone it Down!/Rabbi Pinchos Jung, Nov. '08; *Enjoy the Music, While You Can*/Rabbi Joseph Elias, Nov. '08; *The Music Is Too Loud!*/Dr. Levi Reiter, Nov. '08
- Heschel, Rabbi (Kopycznitzer) In the Aura of the Kopycznitzer Rebbe/Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz (translated by Mrs. D. Breines), Apr. '08
- History "*Zechor Yemos Olam ...*"/Rabbi Nisson Wolpin, Apr. '08; A "Forgotten" Event With Historic Consequences/Joseph Friedenson (translated by Elozor Halpert), Apr. '08; *Agudas Yisroel and the Poalei Agudah*/Rabbi Joseph Elias, Apr. '08; *In the Aura of the Kopycznitzer Rebbe*/Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz (translated by Mrs. D. Breines), Apr. '08; *Mirrer Image*/Yaacov Polskin, Apr. '08; *Remembering Rabbi Moshe Sherer, זצ"ל*/Rabbi Nosson Scherman, May '08; *Changing the Landscape of Torah Jewry in the United States*/Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, May '08; *Israel at 60*/Yonoson Rosenblum, May '08; *Traveling With the Maggid: A Journey to Great Torah Centers of Yesteryear* (by Rabbi Paysach Krohn)/reviewed by Rabbi Labish Becker, May '08; *The Life of Rabbi Shabbesai Hakohein*/Rabbi Hillel Goldberg, Oct. '08; *Wake Up and Fight*/Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Reinman, Dec. '08; *East Meets West: Ish Yehudi: The Life and the Legacy of a Torah Great*, Rav Joseph Tzvi Carlebach/Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer, Dec. '08
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- Introspection Lessons from Bypass Surgery/Rabbi Aaron Mordechai Brafman, May '08; *Staying On Track in Turbulent Times*/Rabbi Aaron M. Brafman, Sept. '08; *Never Again ... Again*/Naftoli Verschleisser, Sept. '08; *Readers' Forum*, Oct. '08
- Islam Aggression A Tragedy Close to Home/Yonoson Rosenblum, Apr. '08; *We Mourn the Kedoshim of Mumbai*/Rabbi Nosson Scherman, Dec. '08
- Israel Growing Pains/Yonoson Rosenblum, March '08
- Israel: Politics Israel at 60/Yonoson Rosenblum, May '08; *Demoralizing Obstinacy: Prime Minister Olmert's Refusal to Go Quietly Into the Night*/Yonoson Rosenblum, Nov. '08; *Some Less Obvious Lessons from the Mayoral Election*/Yonoson Rosenblum, Dec. '08
- Israel: Religion Can the Chareidim Save Israel?/Yonoson Rosenblum, June '08; *Unity Is Not on the Horizon*/Yonoson Rosenblum, Sept. '08; *Remembering the Ponovezher Rav, זצ"ל*/Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz (translated by Mrs. D. Breines), Nov. '08; *Remembering the Ponovezher Rav, זצ"ל*, Chapter II/Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz (translated by Mrs. D. Breines), Dec. '08
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- Kids at Risk A Big Man With an Even Bigger Heart/Mrs. Shari Glixman, May '08
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- Music Tone It Down!/Rabbi Pinchos Jung, Nov. '08; *Enjoy the Music, While You Can*/Rabbi Joseph Elias, Nov. '08; *The Music Is Too Loud!*/Dr. Levi Reiter, Nov. '08

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 Yerushalayim Eternal Source of Strength/Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, שליט"א, Jan.-Feb. '08; The Challenge of *Kol Yisroel Areivim Zeh Lazeh*/Rabbi Matisyahu Salomon, שליט"א, Jan.-Feb. '08; Greetings From the Holy City/ Uri Lopoliansky, Jan.-Feb. '08; Beyond Yerushalayim/Yonoson

Rosenblum, Jan.-Feb. '08; A Tragedy Close to Home/Yonoson Rosenblum, Apr. '08; A Big Man With an Even Bigger Heart/Mrs. Shari Glixman, May '08
 Yeshiva World Meeting Rabbi Yerucham Levovits/Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz (translated by Mrs. Malky Heimowitz), Jan.-Feb. '08; Mirror Image/Yaacov Polskin, Apr. '08; Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum, זצ"ל/Rabbi Yaaakov Bender, June '08; Memories of the Mir's Early Years in America/ Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, שליט"א, June '08; Ein Tov Ella Torah – There Is No "Good" Other Than Torah/ Rabbi Eliezer Ginzberg, June '08; Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, זצ"ל/ Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff, June '08; My Relationship With Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, זצ"ל/Ruben Schron (as told to Avrohom Birnbaum), June '08; 70 Years of *Kiddush Sheim Shamayim*/Rabbi Aryeh Zev Ginzberg, June '08; *Moreinu Harav* Alter Chanoch Henach Leibowitz, זצ"ל/Yitzchok Brandriss, June '08; Remembering the Ponovezher Rav, זצ"ל/Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz (translated by Mrs. D. Breines), Nov. '08; Remembering the Ponovezher Rav, זצ"ל, Chapter II/Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz (translated by Mrs. D. Breines), Dec. '08

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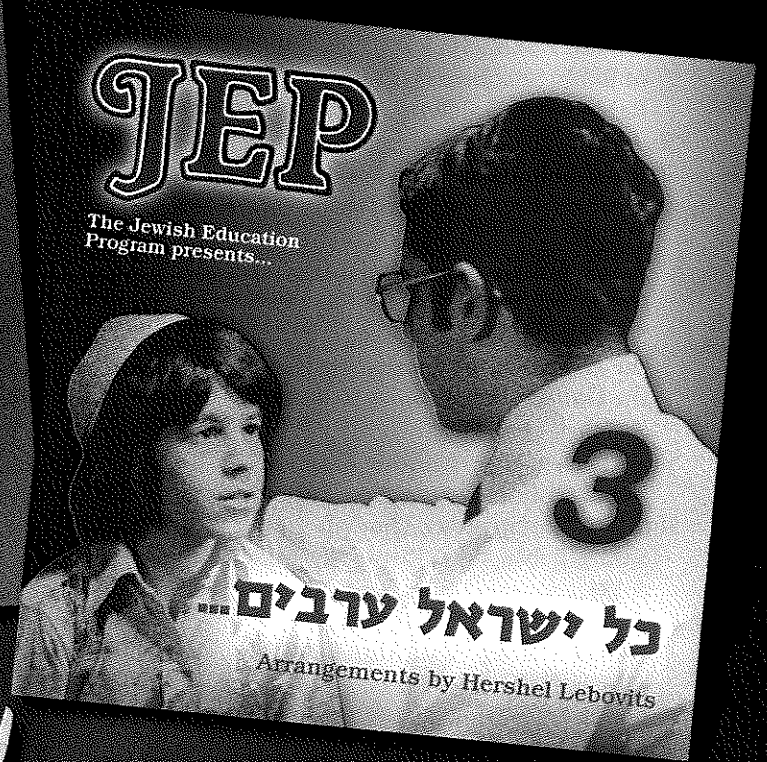
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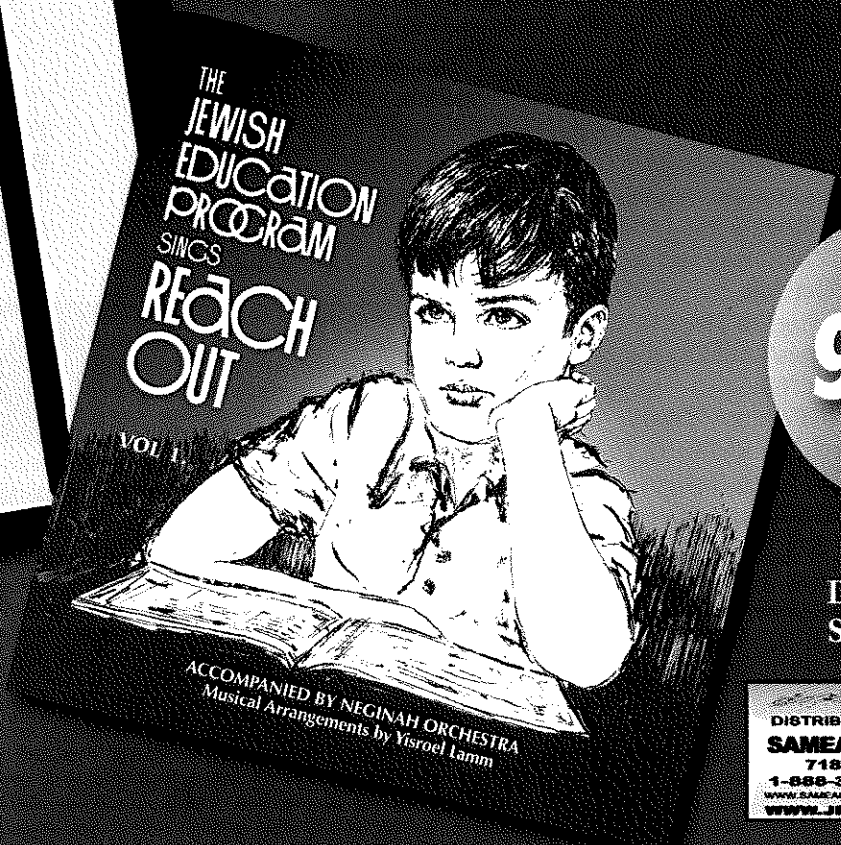
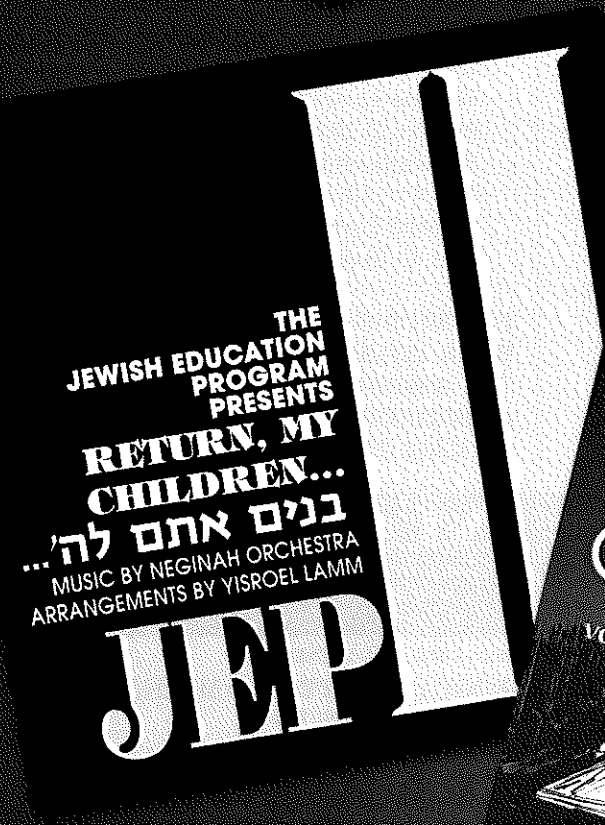
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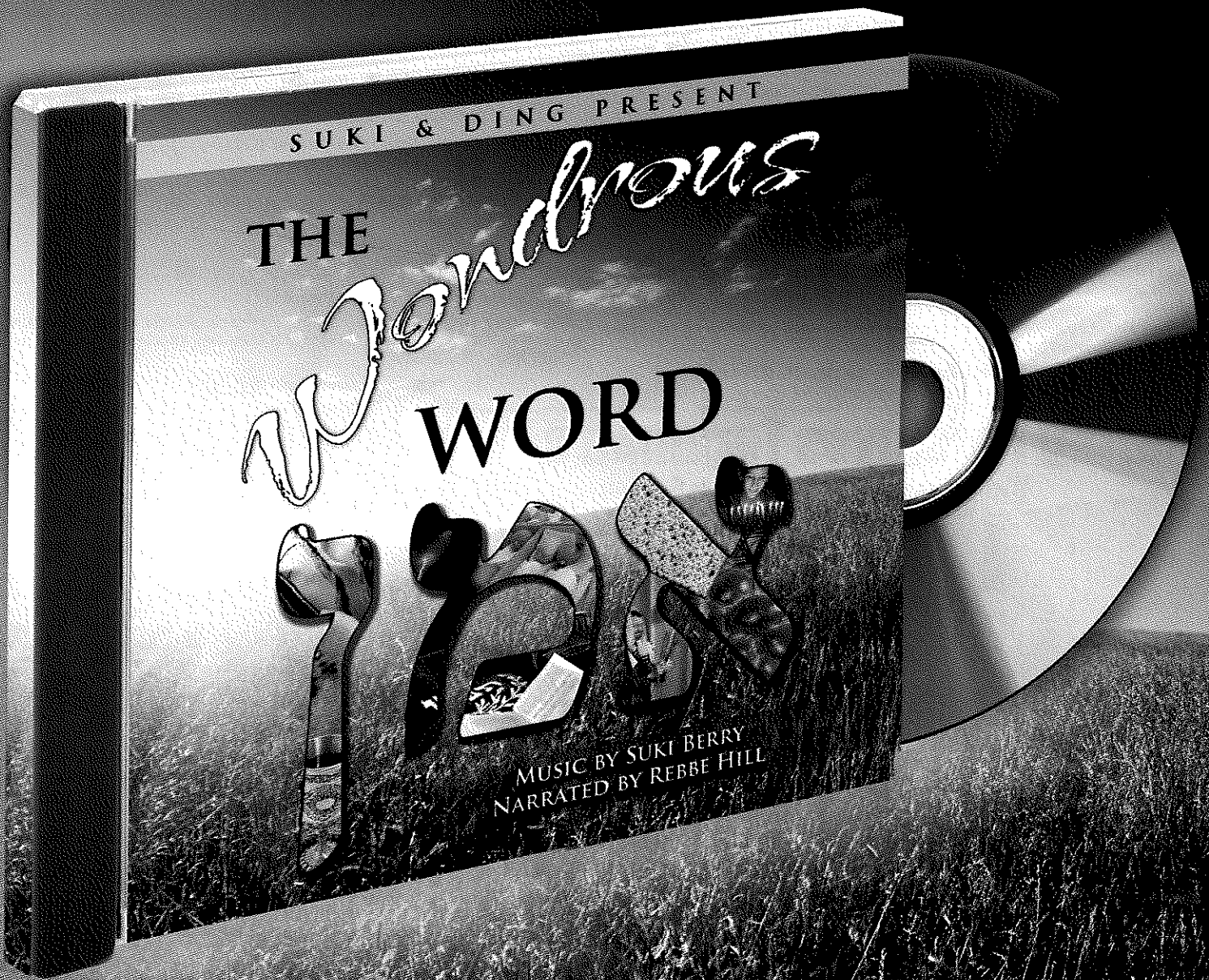


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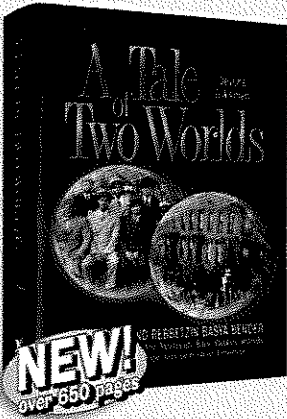
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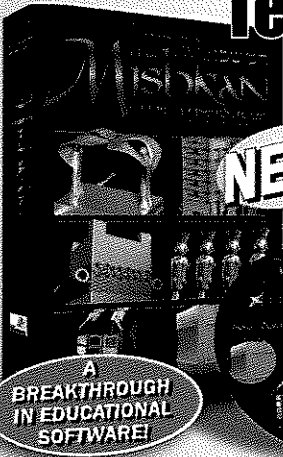
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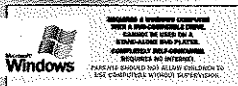
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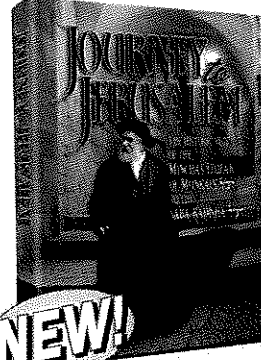


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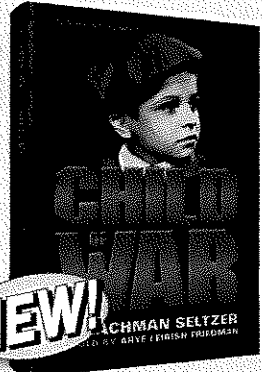
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