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THE **Jewish**
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STRIVING FOR THE BAYIS NE'EMAN BEYISROEL

OF REALITY & FANTASY IN *SHIDDUCHIM*
RABBI SHMUEL DISHON

ENHANCING THE *KEDUSHA* OF THE JEWISH HOME
RABBI YERUCHAM PITTER

WHEN CHILDREN STRAY
RABBI MATSYAHU SALOMON, שליט"א

ALSO:

KIDDUSH HACHAMA

RABBI JOSEPH BREUER, זצ"ל

REMEMBERING THE WARSAW GHETTO
JOSEPH FRIEDENSON

THE PRICE OF DECEPTION
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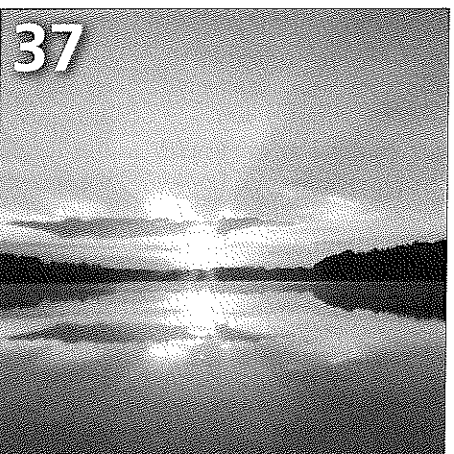
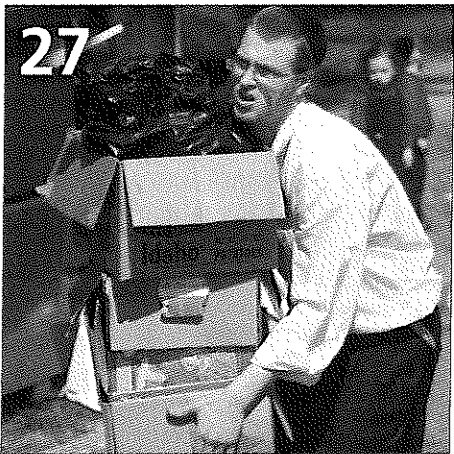
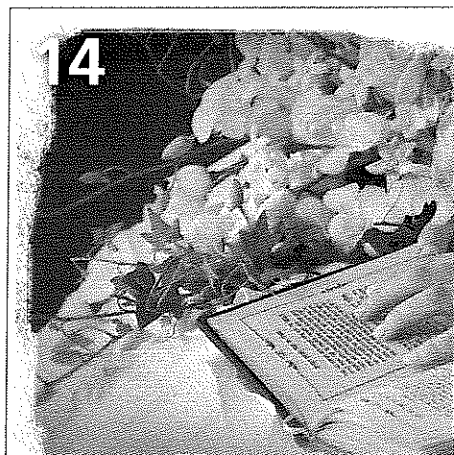
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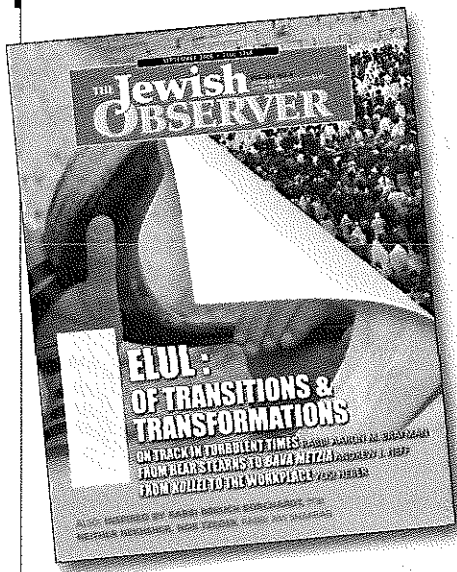
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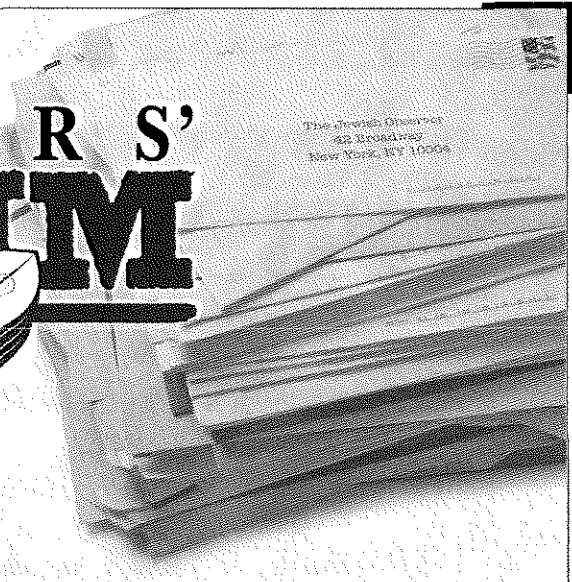
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READERS' FORUM



The Jewish Observer
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COMING FULL CIRCLE WITH JO

To the Editor:

I would like to share some very personal history with the readers of *The Jewish Observer*, because the magazine literally changed and became a major piece of the foundation of my family (which now amounts to 21 – including children, children-in-law, and grandchildren, *bli ayin hara!*)

My wife and I met in university. We both had been *frum* since high school, although neither of us actually knew what that meant, other than looking for kosher symbols and abstaining from “work” on Shabbos. Through social high school youth groups, we had adopted a way of life we knew little about.

With His help, we found each other. We were both thirsty for understanding more. As a young couple just starting out, we only had a secular foundation to draw upon. We landed up in a fairly modern, *frum* community, and I entered the professional world. We could have

chas veshalom continued on our “merry way,” trying to grab as much *gashmiyus* (material gains) as we could, while still keeping Shabbos and *kashrus* in a warm, modern Orthodox community.

In 1979, after a year of marriage, we came across a publication called *The Jewish Observer* at a friend’s home (not from our community). This was our first exposure to a *yeshivishe hashkafa*. Other than the rabbi’s Shabbos *shiur* (which was way over my head), we had no Torah learning at all. All of a sudden, we were exposed to a whole new world of Orthodoxy which we had never really known existed. *The Jewish Observer* became the “breath of fresh air” and “reality” in our home from that point onward. We anxiously awaited its monthly arrival, and were frustrated during the summer months when it wasn’t published. At the time, we would immediately open to the Second Looks column and the letters to the editor, as both of them opened our eyes to issues currently affecting the Torah world, which we were first becoming aware even existed.

Then came the articles about *gedolim*. We were hearing their names for the first time. *The Jewish Observer* portrayed their lives so vividly to us that we really saw the *emes* of a Torah way of life.

I could go on for pages about the many articles that left a *roshem* (impact) on me. Even until this day, I can look back 25 years and link a *hashkafa* in

myself to a particular article that I read in your publication.

After ten years of married life and nine years of *The Jewish Observer*, we finally realized that we needed to leave the more modern community we were residing in and that way of life. We sold our home, gave up my accounting practice, and took our (then) four children to a brand new Torah environment in *Eretz Yisroel*. Once here (now over twenty years ago), we merited to have our next child born in *Eretz Yisroel*. She only experienced a true Torah environment, one which externally was formed by our community and internally formed by the values that her parents were first exposed to in *The Jewish Observer*. In raising her, and all our other children, we had no family to turn to for Torah guidance. Thanks to the introduction to the Torah world that you provided us, we found many sources of *da’as Torah* to assist us.

Now this child is a *kalla* with someone in the Torah community. While we have been *zocheh*, all along the way, to align ourselves with many wonderful sources of *da’as Torah*, our foundation is built upon the *hashkafa* we received from *The Jewish Observer!* To this day, we still have the original publications we have been subscribing to since the late 70s, and refer to them from time to time. Thus, we might well say that we have come full circle.

CHAIM BEN ARI
Jerusalem

CORRECTION

The caption of the picture on page 39 of *JO* Jan.-Feb.’09 misidentified the *keiver* where Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky was davening. It was that of his father, the Steipler Gaon, זצ”ל.

YONOSON ROSENBLUM

The Price of Deception

in Both Spiritual and Pragmatic Realms

Three young men from an extremely insular society, with no knowledge of the outside world, suddenly find themselves under arrest in a strange country, where they know no one, do not speak the language and no one speaks theirs. They are informed that they may spend the rest of their lives in jail. And added to their pain is the knowledge that the one who callously sent them to their fate was someone they trusted, a former student in their own yeshiva, a member of their own closely knit community.

DISTORTION OF A NIGHTMARE

IT IS ALMOST A YEAR since three yeshiva *bachurim* from a Chassidic yeshiva in Bnei Brak were arrested in Japan when drugs were found hidden in the Judaica that they had been told they were transporting. From the moment of their arrest, heart-rending stories have widely circulated of the horrendous conditions in which they are being held. Just recently, new rumors started flying of how one of the boys is being held in solitary confinement and forced to spend most of the day bent over, unable to even stand up straight.

Fortunately, these rumors are very far from the truth; unfortunately, they do great harm. That is not to say that the situation of the boys is not tragic or that they do not need and deserve

our most fervent prayers. Even under the best terms of confinement, they are in the throes of a nightmare from which there is no waking. Three young men from an extremely insular society, with no knowledge of the outside world, suddenly find themselves under arrest in a strange country, where they know no one, do not speak the language and no one speaks theirs. They are informed that they may spend the rest of their lives in jail. And added to their pain is the knowledge that the one who callously sent them to their fate was someone they trusted, a former student in their own yeshiva, a member of their own closely knit community.

In addition, the Japanese authorities have no familiarity with the needs of Torah Jews, much less experience accommodating those needs. Undoubtedly, the situation of the boys was very difficult

RABBI ROSENBLUM, WHO LIVES IN JERUSALEM, IS A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR TO *THE JEWISH OBSERVER*. HE IS ALSO DIRECTOR OF THE ISRAELI DIVISION OF AM ECHAD, THE AGUDATH ISRAEL-INSPIRED EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH EFFORT AND MEDIA RESOURCE.

at the beginning. But due to the tireless efforts of highly dedicated and professional *askanim* (activists), working under the direction of leading *dayanim* in Antwerp and Bnei Brak, and the willingness of the Japanese authorities to make every effort to take into account the special needs of the three *bachurim*, and to even bend their own prison rules to do so, the situation has improved dramatically. (It was never nearly so dire as widely described.)

One of those *askanim* wrote recently that “improvements to their kosher dietary allowances have recently been made, regular medical check-ups are carried out upon the request of our lawyers, [and] the boys are visited regularly by rabbis and *askanim*, both local and those who fly in especially to maintain their spirits and good morale.”

Those who made up the false stories about the nature of the imprisonment of the three *bachurim* presumably had only the best of intentions (and that is even more true of those who were quick to believe those stories and circulate them further). Likely, their intention was to arouse all our *tefillos* for Yaakov Yoseif *ben* Raizel, Yoel Ze’ev *ben* Mirrel Risa Chava, and Yoseif *ben* Yitta Rivka.

**BEST OF INTENTIONS,
ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES**
.....

But the best of intentions do not justify every action, and especially not when they result in adverse consequences and those consequences were foreseeable from the beginning. The *askan* quoted above writes that such wild rumors about the circumstances of their imprisonment “destabilizes working relationships with the Japanese legal authorities, and are detrimental to the legal proceedings.” It does not take much to figure out why. If prison officials bend their rules or interpret them with great latitude to help make the situation of the *bachurim* more bearable, it obviously does not help matters if they subsequently learn that all their efforts have been ignored and they have been falsely portrayed like sadistic prisoner of war guards in World War II propa-

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ganda films. Part of the boys’ defense, no doubt, centers on a portrayal of the community from which they come and the high moral standards that prevail there. The publication of false rumors undermines that argument.

In the case of the three *bachurim*, it is relatively easy to discern the tangible damage done by well-intentioned lies and distortions. Sometimes, however, the damage is far less clear, at least at the time of the exaggeration. Every American Bais Yaakov student of a certain age grew up learning the story of 96 Bais Yaakov students who committed suicide during the Holocaust rather than fall into the hands of the Nazis, שׁוׁ. The story is not inherently unbelievable. But there is no evidence that the tragic incident described ever occurred.

I have no idea as to the origins of the story or how it achieved such wide dissemination. But, again, I assume the motivations of all concerned were the very best. Perhaps the story was used to raise funds for the fledgling Bais Yaakov movement in America.

It might have been difficult to discern any negative consequences from disseminating the story in the 1950s,

when it first gained popularity. But with the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to point to damage. In the 1950s, who could believe that there would one day be those who deny the Holocaust, or that whole books would be written claiming that the Jews exaggerated everything, whether in order to gain reparations for themselves or to shield Israel from criticism?

But in today’s climate of widespread Holocaust denial, much of it in the West, it is clear how dangerous even one isolated example of an uncorroborated atrocity story can be.

**RAMIFICATIONS OF
FALSIFICATIONS**
.....

Our society depends for its functioning on the ability of *gedolim* to convey their opinions in the clearest possible fashion, and on the certain knowledge that that which a *gadol* has signed his name to in fact represents his considered opinion. But if someone takes around proclamations from one *gadol* to another, and falsely provides the names of peers who have already signed, he does two things. First, he distorts the decision-making process of the *gadol* in question. And second, if the matter is found out, he makes it possible for anyone who does not agree with a certain edict to claim, both to himself and others, that the opinion expressed is not really that of everyone who has affixed his signature.

In the course of researching the forthcoming biography of Rabbi Moshe Sherer, I came across precisely such an instance of a series of false representations to various *gedolim* about what their peers had said. At one point, in a long memorandum on those events, Rabbi Sherer reports how Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was “almost in tears” at the way his name had been falsely used. No doubt, those misrepresenting the opinion of Rabbi Feinstein and others were convinced that they were acting *lesheim Shamayim*.

Temptations to distort or exaggerate always abound. A biographer, for instance, faces such temptations to

Even where it is impossible to point to any clear cut damage, something precious is lost every time we lie or distort the truth: the level of trust between people, which is one of the best measures of the health of a particular society.

liven up the story frequently. We are not talking about making up stories, but rather, about occasionally filling in certain blanks beyond what the evidence will bear or a slight shift in nuance. Sometimes, the filling in might involve an educated guess based on everything the biographer knows about the subject.

But here, too, the potential damage is far greater than any possible benefit. If one person reads the book and has personal knowledge that one of those educated guesses is inaccurate, he will conclude that everything in the book is similarly exaggerated or distorted. And he will likely share his opinion with others. Not only will the subject of the book be diminished unfairly, but the whole genre of biographies of great figures will be discredited. And if that happens, the ability to inspire future generations with the stories of the lives of the great figures of the past is diminished.

In the above examples, it is possible to point to certain negative consequences from distortions and exaggerations, though the damage in each case is increasingly less certain or tangible. But even where it is impossible to point to any clear cut damage, something precious is lost every time we lie or distort the truth: the level of trust between people, which is one of the best measures of the health of a particular society.

Trust is the glue that binds us to one another – whether as a family, a community, or even a nation. And anything that erodes trust weakens the bonds between us, at whatever level. Every act of deceit has consequences far beyond its immediate impact; it devalues the basic social

currency – the words that we speak to one another. Perhaps in recognition of the far-reaching consequences of every lie, the Gemara entertains the possibility that knowingly signing a fraudulent contract also falls under the rule “allow oneself to be killed rather than transgress” – along with murder, idolatry, and immorality (*Kesubos* 19a).

A visitor from abroad recently brought his son to Rabbi Aharon Leib Steinman, and asked him what the focus

of his *chinuch* should be. Rabbi Steinman replied simply: *Emes*. “Distance yourself from every false thing” (*Shemos* 23,7), Rabbi Steinman was saying, must be the centerpiece of our education of our children, until uttering a falsehood or engaging in deception becomes unthinkable for them, a *davar ma’us* (something disgusting). And that will only happen for our children when it becomes unthinkable for us as well.

In a famous essay written during the Great Depression (and recently translated in these pages), Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, ד"ה, describes the breakdown of the world economy of his time as a function of the loss of trust. He attributes that loss of trust, *midda keneged midda*, to a loss of *emuna* in *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Perhaps it is also true that when we fail to act as the children of the One Whose seal is Truth, that we trigger, *midda keneged midda*, a more generalized loss of trust and the chaos that follows. □

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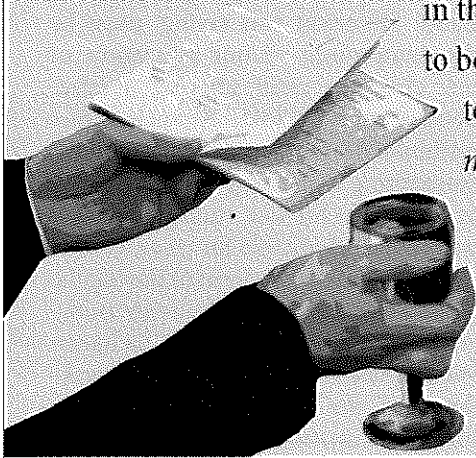
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DURING THESE WEEKS, we read the *parashiyos* that convey the commands to build the *Mishkan* and its *keilim* (the Sanctuary and its vessels), record its completion in the *Midbar*, and then prescribe the *karbanos* (offerings) that were to be brought in its sacred confines. This, then, is an appropriate time to reflect on the function of the miniature sanctuary – the *mikdash me'at* – that is the ideal Jewish home. The articles that follow explore some of the spiritual dimensions of the *shidduch* process, offer guidance in regard to enhancing *shalom bayis*, and highlight the obstacles and joys experienced in raising children in today's challenging society.



OF REALITY & FANTASY IN SHIDDUCHIM



Based on a presentation at a workshop on “More Perfect Unions” at the recent National Convention of Agudath Israel of America, by Rabbi Shmuel Dishon, *Menaheil* of Mosdos Yad Yisroel d’Karlin-Stolin

UNITING IN PURSUIT OF *Tov*

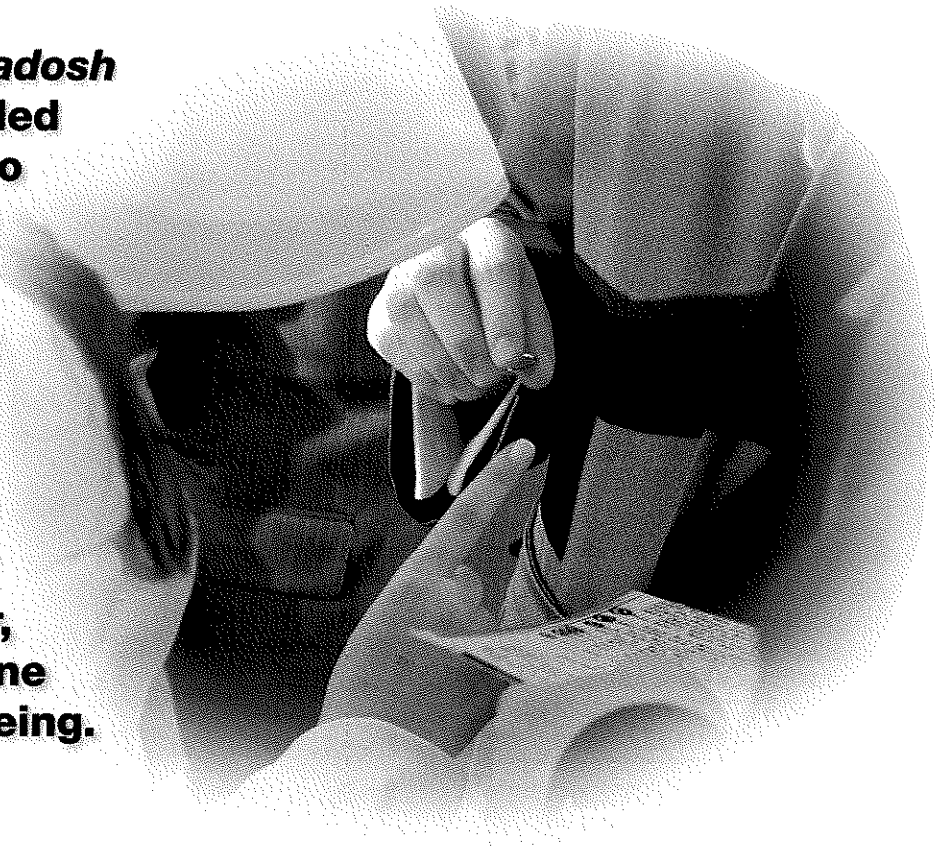
RABBI MOSHE CHAIM LUZATTO, one of the greatest Jewish thinkers, says that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* created the world as a means for giving expression to His goodness. We are expected to go in His ways. Let us see how this operates.

What constitutes a good person? A common response is that a particular individual is phenomenal because he wouldn't hurt a fly. A Torah perspective qualifies someone as a good individual if he is involved in performing good deeds. For an instructive source we look to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, Who is the ultimate good, possesses infinite good, and continues to recreate this world in order to share His *tov* with others.

“*Ki amarti olam chessed yibaneh* – the foundation of this world is kindness and *cheded*.” This means that the entire universe – trillions of stars, billions of human beings – was created in order for *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* to share His good with us!

Rashi, in his commentary on *Chumash*, quotes the Midrash that states that Adam was originally created as a combination of male and female – on opposite sides – possessing an ability to procreate, so humanity could continue into the future. But then *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* said: “*Lo tov heyos ha’adam levado* – It is not good for the man to be alone” (*Bereishis* 2,18). *Hashem* could have said that it was *ra* – bad – for man to be alone. Why “*lo tov*”? Because every *ra* has a miniscule amount of *tov*

In His wisdom, Hakadosh Baruch Hu divided Adam into two entities, each with different attributes. Chazal underscored these differences as being meant to complement each other and, together, to form one joint being.



in it. But *levado* – being permanently alone – is *lo tov*; it possesses no element of good whatsoever.

If someone is always *levado*, he becomes a self-centered individual with no ability to share his *tov* with others – no capability of loving, no capacity to give, no compassion to care. This would be in complete contradiction with the purpose of Creation.

In His wisdom, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* divided Adam into two entities, each with different characteristics, different attributes. *Chazal* underscored these differences as being meant to complement each other and, together, to form one joint being.

OF HAPPINESS AND CHALLENGES

We seek *simchas hachayim*, to experience joy and happiness in life. What does “being happy” entail?

The *Maharal* says that *simcha* results from *sheleimus*, a sense of feeling whole, complete. *Chazal* tell us: “*Ein lecha*

sheleimus kishleimus chassan vekalla. There is no sense of wholeness like that experienced by a *chassan* and *kalla*.” There are differences, yes, and different character traits, indeed, but with the understanding that the *chassan* and *kalla* are meant to complement one another, and together overcome difficulties and challenges. Thus, under the *chuppa* we say a *beracha*, “Blessed are You ... [Who] creates the man.” This is “the man” that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* designed: *zachar unekeiva*, male and female, with the understanding that each needs the other. With this mutual appreciation, there is no holier concept than the love that each has for the other. There is no “I” and there is no “you”; there is only “we.”

This is the ultimate wish of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* – that from such a union, a child be created who has the attributes of both mother and father. Combining the two is a challenge, but then, isn’t meeting challenges what life is all about?

“*Kol hasharui belo isha sharui be’lo shalom* – He who lives without a wife lives without peace” (Talmud). *Just the opposite*, some may argue. *I – by myself –*

am at the epitome of peace. But that is not *shalom*. That is selfishness. *Shalom* prevails when one overcomes difficulties and unites with someone else, creating one harmonious entity.

I once met a professional – a very fine individual, but not *frum* – who confronted me: “I just learned of the demands of family purity young couples are expected to honor right after their wedding.” He looked me straight in my eyes, and asked, “Do you believe that they honor these restrictions?”

I asked him, “And what do you say?”

His answer. “No way!”

I told him, “I really understand you. From where you come from, *No way*.”

I then added, “There’s a big disagreement if President Bush sent enough arms and ammunition with the first group of soldiers in Iraq. After all, a president can make a mistake. If *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* sends us to war, however, He equips us with the necessary arms and ammunition

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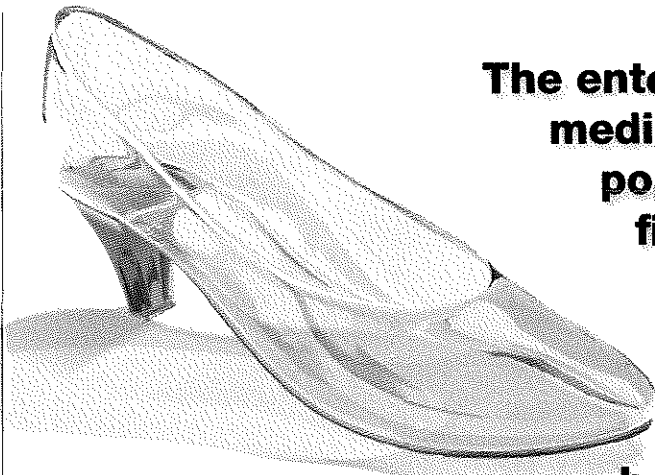
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The entertainment
 media and
 popular
 fiction have
 created a
 world of
 fantasy
 of what
 happiness
 is composed of -

a dream world that does not exist.
 What they call happiness and joy is
 instant gratification, a world of fairy
 tales, which is totally unreal.

to fight and overcome all difficulties.
 That's why I believe that the great
 majority live by His guidelines."
 He responded, "Well, if you bring
 in the G-d element, I'm out."

**FOCUSING ON DIVORCE -
 OR ON SUCCESS?**

A professional at a conference
 asked me: "Why are you mak-
 ing noises about children that
 fall away? You know your success ratio
 is phenomenal."

I told him, "Ratio? To us, every
 one is one too many. We don't go by a
 majority."

Yes, every divorce is a horrifying,
 terrible thing. But at the same time, we
 must remember that there are thousands
 and thousands of *ehrlische* families that
 live keeping Torah and mitzvos in a
 beautiful way, despite all the difficul-
 ties. Young men and women should be
 told that, too.

But there *are* difficulties and chal-
 lenges.

FANTASIES & REALITY

One of my great rebbei'im,
 Rabbi Gedaliah Schorr, זצ"ל,
 told us: "If you have fantasies,
 and dream that you own apartment
 house - it's not too bad. They make
 you feel good, that you're rich. But if
 you expect to go there to collect rent,
 you're in trouble. Fantasy tenants don't
 pay rent."

The entertainment media and popu-
 lar fiction have created a world of
 fantasy of what happiness is composed
 of - a dream world that does not exist.
 What they call happiness and joy is
 instant gratification, a world of fairy
 tales, which is totally unreal.

Do you know how many marriages
 break apart because people expect to
 "collect rent" in those fantasy worlds?
 The media and their feast of advertise-
 ments create a world of glitter, of fan-
 tasy. *You have to have everything. And if
 you don't, you are deprived And now,
 everything is collapsing!*

In 1956, Rav Hutner, זצ"ל, wrote an insightful letter saying that there was a time when we told a young couple to build a home and make it a *mishkan* – a sanctuary. Today, it has to be a *teiva* – a storm-proof ark – to shield us from the *mabul* (destructive deluge).

At the same time, we have to be cognizant of the fact that when *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* sends a *machala* (an ailment), He sends the *refua* (cure), as well.

What can we do to help all the young men and women? We must tell them to refocus. *Let's sit down together and discuss what you are really looking for.* It may be our responsibility to tell them that they are focusing on something that does not exist.

The public is unaware of how many problematic marriages are solved – without anyone knowing of it – by *ehrlische askanim* (dedicated activists) and rabbanim who devote time, day and night, to helping struggling couples.

There are also *madrichim* (guidance counselors) who prepare *chassanim* and *kallos* prior to their marriage. Besides teaching them the *halachos* in *Shulchan Aruch* that are required for a successful marriage, they open up their minds to absorb the understanding and sensitivities of how to set up life with their partner.

Let us, then, be cognizant of the positive things that go on in our community – the large number of homes that are restored in an effective way, without enlisting the media or writing headlines.

THE AHAVA FACTOR

As stated earlier, a key to successful marriage is *ahava*.

A Chassid once asked his rebbe, "Why do we wear a *kittel* at the Seder?"

The rebbe replied, "We acquire a new *begged* (garment) in honor of Pesach, and have to make certain that the *begged* doesn't get stained."

The rebbe realized that the Chassid thought that his response was lighthearted, so he went on to explain.



As long as our lives are based on the *Shulchan Aruch* and as long as everybody involved in trying to help *chassanim* and *kallos* are men and women who live scrupulously by the *halacha* and *hashkafos haTorah*, much good can result. Perhaps that is the reason that we put a *kittel* on a *chassan* before the *chuppa*.

"On Pesach, we get a *begged* from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* called *ahava* (love). Love is the most positive force in this world, but if it is diverted to an inappropriate object, its impact can leave the most destructive stain imaginable. The *kittel* protects us from the stains of misapplied love."

Perhaps that is also the reason that we put a *kittel* on a *chassan* before the *chuppa*. As long as our lives are based on the *Shulchan Aruch*, as long as the guidance that we receive is based on the *Shulchan Aruch*, as long as everybody involved in trying to help *chassanim*

and *kallos* are men and women who live scrupulously by the *halacha* and *hashkafos haTorah*, much good can result.

We should open our eyes and be ever more grateful to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* for what we do have, rather than dwell on what we do not have. As I said, we have much to be proud of. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will continue to help us serve, to the best of our ability, as friends and guides to those who need our help, to focus on reality and not fantasy. With proper guidance, with proper *siyatta diShemaya*, may we continue to build *doros yesharim bederech Yisroel sabba*. □

Our agenda in regard to marriage is to see how we can enhance *kedushas habayis*. We must bear in mind that a key factor in *kedushas habayis* is an element that permeates all of our lives – our *bitachon Hashem*. With that in mind, we operate on a different level.



ENHANCING THE *Keduscha* OF THE JEWISH HOME



Based on a presentation at a workshop on “More Perfect Unions” at the recent National Convention of Agudath Israel of America, by Rabbi Yeruchom Pitter, *Mashgiach* of the Mesivta of Long Beach.

WHEN SEARCHING IS THE GOAL

ARE THERE WAYS in which we can enhance our efforts in making *shidduchim*?

We Jews have a different approach to life than the rest of the world. We continuously search for *Hashem's* presence and guidance in all that we do. And indeed, we see His *Hashgacha Prattis* (detailed control), and we ask for *siyatta diShmaya* in all our undertakings. “*Dirshu Hashem ve’uzo, bakshu panav tamid*. Seek *Hashem* and His power, and search unceasingly for His Presence” (*Divrei Hayamim* I, 16,11).

In regard to the key word *bakshu*/search, the *Malbim* explains that there

is a difference between a *bikush* (seeking) in *ruchniyus* (the spiritual realm) and a *bikush* in *gashmiyus* (the material domain). When somebody is looking for something in *gashmiyus*, he’s seeking to find his way out of poverty, or he’s striving for good health, or he’s searching for ways to gain freedom from his enemies. Not only does he hope to find salvation, but he hopes to put an end to the *bikush*.

When it comes to *ruchniyus* and one is *mevakeish Hashem*, the *bikush* is not merely a means to an end, it is an end in and of itself. One strives to be *zocheh* (merit) to constantly be *mevakeish Hashem*, for that is a Jew’s purpose throughout his life.

Our agenda in regard to marriage is to see how we can enhance *kedushas habayis*, the sanctity of the Jewish home. We must bear in mind that a key factor in *kedushas habayis* is an element that permeates all of our lives – our *bitachon Hashem*, our trust in Hashem. With that in mind, we operate on a different level.

Some twenty years ago, I had occasion to visit Eretz Yisroel. I took the opportunity to consult Harav Shach on a personal matter. My oldest two children are girls. One was 13, the other, 12 years old. My oldest daughter was born with a birth defect, and her life was a little different. (She is here in this room now, and she will be presenting her experiences and insights tomorrow in a session for women.) The younger sister was born a regular child, having natural development. Anticipating the forthcoming years, when we would be involved in *shidduchim*, I described the situation to the Rosh Yeshiva and asked him what we should do.

He replied: "You should start with the older one, and have your sights on a situation that would complement hers – perhaps with some kind of a disability. If, in fact, it doesn't happen, and the second child comes of age, explain to your daughter that it would be a great *zechus* for her to allow her younger sister to get involved in *shidduchim*. And this attitude of accommodation should prevail further."

Rav Shach then added something of profundity. "Tell your daughters that a *shidduch* is never a body with a body. It's always a *neshama* with a *neshama*. So whether the *guf* (body) is *shaleim* (perfect) or not, the *shidduch* is still on exactly the same level – a *neshama* with a *neshama*."

And then he quipped, "If Rabbi Akiva Eiger's *rebbeztin* would not have wanted to marry a hunchback, imagine what she would have forfeited!"

When we are engaged in *shidduchim*, we are involved in *kedusha* similar to the *kohein gadol* who goes in to the *kodesh hakadashim* – the Temple's innermost sanctum – on *Yom Hakippurim*, and puts on *bigdei lavan* – the white ritual garments – in reverence. We must con-

duct ourselves in a similar vein. It is not a matter of *gashmiyus*, as in the worldly perspective. We have our own *mehalech*, our own protocol.

In some ways, seeking a *shidduch* is similar to how one views earning a livelihood.

We learned that when Adam Harishon was expelled from *Gan Eiden*, he was told, "With the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread." The free ride is over. It is now time for *hishtadlus* (personal effort) in *parnassa*. If you do not exert effort, you will not receive anything. But at the same time, one must believe that *hishtadlus* is only a game. The results are determined by Hashem, just as they were before Adam was sent out of *Gan Eiden*. Only they are not so obvious now as they were then.

We demonstrate our belief and trust in Hashem by refraining from work on Shabbos. We will earn whatever has been determined by Hashem. This balance between effort and firm belief is equally active when it comes to *shidduchim*.

NOT ON OUR OWN

.....
We are not left on our own. We are not lost in this maze of: *What shall I do? With whom shall I start? What shall I ask? What is important?* We are not lost. In all such situations, we have a rule: "*She'al avicha veyageidcha zekeinecha veyomeru lach* – Ask your father, and he will inform you; your elders, and they will tell you." We have *rebbe'im* and *madrachim* (mentors) who guide us.

The following comments are not meant as a *mussar shmuess*, sharing abstract concepts. My experience has shown me, time and time again, that when we follow our *madrachim* and we listen to what they have to say, we can only gain. With their guidance in *shidduchim*, the results are truly beautiful. They last. They endure.

Someone posed a rather unusual *she'eila* to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, which he included in his published *She'eilos Uteshuvos*. "In our quest for *shidduchim*, could we devise some way that a young man and young

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woman could spend time together in which they comport themselves as though they were a married couple, in a manner that would not violate *yichud* restrictions nor halacha? Wouldn't that be a good idea?"

Reb Moshe rejects the plan, saying that this is not *derech Yisroel Sabba* – it goes against our established, sacred traditions. At the end of the letter, he says: "My dear friend, when you look for a *shidduch*, make certain that she is pleasing in her appearance, in her family, and in her reputation. Then have trust in *Hashem* that she is the one who has been designated for you in Heaven. Once these elements are in order, employ the *midda* of *bitachon*."

Just as in regard to *Shabbas Kodesh*, you do not go to work on that day, and you take a risk, saying, "I'll have whatever I need, because that is what *Hashem* in His wisdom has decreed," we approach a *shidduch* with the very same reverence and trust. "Pleasing in appearance, family, reputation"

Of course, one must have a system for exploring, investigating, fact-finding in these areas. Hopefully, parents can do that for the principals. They should be convinced that this individual is a very good prospect for their child. But they should assign priorities to each area. When one shoots arrows at a target, the bull's eye is worth 500 points. As one moves outward, the shot is valued at 450, 400, 350, 300 ... until the end. The periphery of the target is the least valuable.

When looking for a *shidduch*, the most important elements are in the bull's eye. Other items are on the periphery. It is very important to be discriminatory, to understand what is vital, what is important, and what is on the periphery.

I could relate many stories where things did not move ahead because people held everything in the same line. *His hat has such a kneitch in it, so forget about him* – as if it were the equivalent of lacking in *middos* (positive character traits).



"Tell your daughters that a *shidduch* is never a body with a body. It's always a *neshama* with a *neshama*. So whether the *guf* is *shaleim* or not, the *shidduch* is still on exactly the same level – a *neshama* with a *neshama*."

-RAV SHACH

From hands-on experience, I want to stress: Look for evidence of *yiras Shamayim*, appreciation of the supreme importance of Torah, as well as *middos tovos*. Other elements should be put on reserve.

WHEN *KEDUSHA* PREVAILS

Ideally, the courtship relationship during a *shidduch*, followed by the engagement period, should result in marriage in which *kedusha* prevails in the life of this man and woman.

In his classic *sefer*, *Tomer Devora*, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, the rebbi of the *Arizal*, says at the end: "*Hasharui belo isha kime'at she'ein lehaShechina shaichus imo* – Someone who does not have a wife is almost totally removed from having a connection with the *Shechina*." How could that be?

The *sefer* describes in great detail the 13 *middos* (principal traits) of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. This was not meant as an esoteric mystical study. It was intended to serve as a basis for a Jew to fulfill the mitzvah of "*Vehalachta bidrachav* – And you shall go in His ways," which requires us to emulate *Hashem Yisbarach* in our conduct.

A Jew is expected to pattern himself after the *middos* of *Hashem*. When he is giving, when he is caring, when he is tolerant, when he concedes his own rights because he loves others, he is acting in this magnanimous manner because he is going in *Hashem's* ways. After all, He is *malei rachamim* (full of mercy and compassion). In fact, when someone is violating one of *Hashem's* commands – for instance, the person is eating a cheeseburger – the *Ribbono shel Olam* actually gives him the ability to chew it and swallow it without suffering any harm. The person is acting in defiance of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, but His hope is that this individual may one day do *teshuva*. *Mi Keil kamocho* – who is like You, *Ribbono shel Olam*, possessing such benevolence, such kindness.

Tomer Devora points out that when we pattern ourselves after the *middos* of *Hashem*, our conduct activates that very same type of treatment from *Hashem*, *min haShamayim*, and we are the recipients of that same kindness, that very same love from its Divine Source.

The association that one has with one's spouse is different from any association that one has ever had or ever will have. It is not the same as that of parents and children; it is not the

When Reb Shlomo Zalman approached his apartment in the morning, after davening, he paused before a pane of glass that was in the door, and straightened out his beard. He tidied himself up, and remarked that he was going to be *mekabeil p'nei haShechina*.

same as that of siblings, *chavrusos* or roommates. That is because all of the aforementioned do not violate one's *reshus hayachid* (private domain) the way a spouse does. Living together as man and wife compromises each one's privacy – and that is putting it mildly.

MARRIAGE – THE MEASURE OF MIDDOS TOVOS

When the Torah requires a Jew to develop *middos tovos*, the Torah is not simply instructing you to help the lady cross the street; or when you see that someone has a flat, to help him change his tire; or to give *tzeddaka* or be *mevakeir choleh* (visit the sick). In demanding of someone to have proper *middos*, the Torah is asking: *What is your automatic reflexive response to every situation?* This is evident in a situation where nobody knows what that inner response is except you and the *Ribbono shel Olam*.

Zalman has an appointment at 7:15 on a specific night; it is very important. He tells his wife two months in advance: "On this night, on this date, supper has to be ready at 6:30 because if I'm late, who knows what's going to happen?" They talk about it every week, the week before, and the day before. On the crucial day ... he comes in from work at 6:30 p.m. He enters the house – the kitchen table has nursing bottles on it, the baby is screaming in the back, and she's on the telephone with her

mother. He knows that the evening will not proceed as planned.

"I'm sorry," she says. "My mother had to go to the drugstore to pick up medicine."

He grits his teeth and thinks to himself, "Why couldn't your sister take her to the drugstore?" He squelches it.

Is that *middos tovos*?

There's yet another level. Zalman comes in and sees the situation as is. "If it is this way, I guess it's gotta be this way." No anger. No irritation. Real *middos tovos*.

These kind of interactions are every day, every hour, every minute, between wives and husbands. As others have explained so eloquently, the purpose of Creation is for each of us to be a *nosein*, a giver – to emulate the *Borei Olam*, the Ultimate Giver. The crucial testing ground for this kind of conduct is the relationship between man and wife.

At a *bris*, we express to the parents the wish that just as they ushered him into his *bris*, so may he attain Torah, *chuppa*, and *ma'asim tovim* (good deeds). At a recent *bris*, my young bar mitzvah *bachur* son asked me, "Tatty, there's a mistake. It should say *leTorah, lema'asim tovim*, and then *chuppa*, because a bar mitzvah boy is *chayav* (obligated) in *ma'asim tov*. *Chuppa* comes later."

He is correct – the obligation starts then. But the real test comes afterwards. In the marriage setting, when he is no longer living without a wife, they each will have ample opportunity to develop

as an understanding, tolerant, generous, wonderful, beautiful soul, with the *Shechina* gracing their home.

When Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, זצ"ל, was *maspid* (eulogized) his wife, he did not ask her for *mechila* (forgiveness), as is customary. Afterwards, people asked him why he did not mention *mechila*. He said that he had thought about it, but he couldn't think of anything that he had to ask her forgiveness for.

Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetsky told me that when Reb Shlomo Zalman approached his apartment in the morning, after davening, he paused before a pane of glass that was in the door, and straightened out his beard. He tidied himself up, and remarked that he was going to be *mekabeil p'nei haShechina* – receive the Presence of the *Shechina*.

Why did he not say "*p'nei Elokim*" or "*p'nei Hashem*"? He was expressing himself with the words of the *Tomer Devora*: "He who lacks a wife will be distant from the *Shechina*."

In marriage, we must pass the test of *middos tovos*. To be *domeh Leilokim*. *Ma Hu rachum af attah rachum ...* As He is merciful so should you be merciful

Marriage is the testing ground. It is the place to grow, to endure. It calls for loyalty, for a sense of well-being. It requires self-respect and self-esteem, and it needs *siyatta diShmaya*. Not on the mundane level, but from the highest realms. In this way, we will all be *matzliach*. □



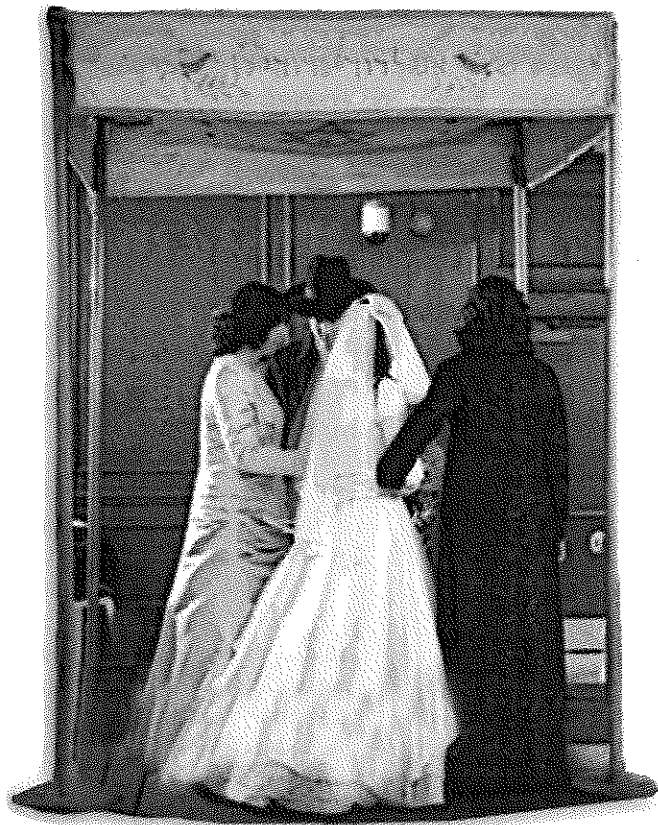
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RABBI DOVID ELIAS



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The *kalla* makes circuits around the *chassan* when she reaches the *chuppa* to graphically symbolize her preparedness to create those walls of security around the home that they are jointly erecting.

RABBI ELIAS IS ROSH KOLLEL AT MONTREAL'S KOLLEL KESSER TORAH - RADOMSK. HE RECENTLY ADDRESSED A GATHERING OF SEMINARY STUDENTS VISITING THE CITY. THE ABOVE ARTICLE IS BASED ON HIS REMARKS.

THE WIFE AND THE HOUSE

THE TALMUD in *Masechta Shabbos* quotes a puzzling statement in the name of Rav Yosi: "In all my days, I never referred to my wife as my wife; rather, I referred to her as my *bayis* - my home." What is the significance of this change in nomenclature? Does it truly compliment a woman when she is called a home?

I once heard my *rosh yeshiva*, Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetsky, שליט"א, comment on this in relation to the well-known custom of the *kalla* making circuits around her *chassan* when she reaches the *chuppa*.

But let us digress for a moment.

In *Parashas Vayeira*, our matriarch Sarah asks Avraham Avinu to send away his son, Yishmael. Although Avraham has serious misgivings on the matter, he is nevertheless told by *Hashem* to listen to whatever Sarah has to say.

Fast-forward to *Parashas Toldos*, where, once again, we find a difference of opinion between a patriarch and matriarch, this time, Yitzchak and Rivka.

Understood by many of the commentaries as a dispute over whether or not their son Yaakov should be dependent upon Eisav for his physical needs, here again it is the matriarch's vision that Providence favors; the *berachos* were to go to Yaakov, with no involvement by Eisav.

And so it was in the next generation. In *Parashas Vayeitzei*, Yaakov is explicitly told by a *malach* in a dream that the time has come to leave the house of Lavan, and Yaakov goes out to the field to consult in detail with Rachel and Leah, apparently leaving the ultimate decision in their hands.

It has been said in the name of Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner, זצ"ל, that whereas the positive values of Torah, *avoda*, and *gemillas chassadim* were ingrained into *Klal Yisroel* by the patriarchs, the protection of the integrity of our People and its insulation from the alien influences of the society without remained the domain of the matriarchs. Thus, when it came to protecting Yitzchak from the influence of Yishmael, it was Sarah's concern that was preeminent; when it

came to guarding the future of Yaakov from the input of Eisav, it was the opinion of Rivka that carried the day; and when the time came to free the house of Yaakov from the influence of Lavan, the final decision was in the hands of Rachel and Leah.

Returning to the Gemara in *Masechta Shabbos*, let us bear in mind that the term "bayis" implies an entity enclosed by walls, as we find in *Hilchos Tefilla*: "One should always pray in a place enclosed by walls, not like Avraham who referred to his place of prayer as *har* – a mountain – and not like Yitzchak, who referred to his place of prayer as a *sadeh* – a field – but like Yaakov, who referred to his place of prayer as a *bayis*.

This, explained Rabbi Kamenetsky, is the meaning of referring to one's wife as her husband's *bayis*. For indeed, it is the wife who is charged and entrusted with the crucial responsibility of erecting and maintaining those figurative walls that protect the tranquil and sanctified oasis of the home, separating the atmosphere within from the tumultuous, foreign spirit of the outside world.

Perhaps, he suggested, this may be the reason for the widespread custom of the *kalla* making circuits around the *chassan* as when she reaches the *chuppa* – to graphically symbolize her preparedness to create those walls of security around the home that they are jointly erecting.

THE CANDLE LIGHTING IMAGE

We are all familiar with the image of the woman of the house lighting the Shabbos candles, and we are familiar as well with the picture of the man in the house kindling the Chanukah lights. Yet, it is clear that the obligation of lighting Shabbos candles as well as the obligation to light the Chanukah menorah are binding upon both men and women. When there is no woman in the home, the man will light Shabbos candles, and when there is no man in the home, the woman will kindle the Chanukah menorah, so why

then is it so clearly customary to divide these responsibilities in this manner?

Rabbi Shimon Schwab, זצ"ל, explained that the purpose of the Chanukah lights is *pirsumei nissa*, publicizing the miracle of the one-day supply of oil that lasted eight days, which involved illumination in the outside world. Although both men and women are obligated in this endeavor, the primary obligation lies upon the man, with the woman in a secondary role. Thus, it is he who lights, while she fulfills her obligation through him. When, however, it comes to the Shabbos candles, whose function is *shalom bayis*, illuminating the home within, and once again, a responsibility shared by both man and woman, here it is the woman who occupies the primary role, and the man fulfills his obligation with her lighting.

The erection of figurative walls and the spiritual illumination of the home within expresses itself in the norms acceptable within the home, the standards of literature and forms of entertainments that enter the home – indeed, even the unspoken value system that creates and fashions the very atmosphere of the home.

WHERE BERACHOS PREVAIL

Rashi in *Parashas Chayei Sarah* teaches us that upon the arrival of Rivka *Imeinu* to the tent of

Sarah, three miracles returned that had been absent since her passing. There was a *beracha* in the bread dough, the candles remained lit from *Erev Shabbos* to *Erev Shabbos*, and a cloud cover appeared upon the tent. It has been noted that these three miracles parallel the qualities evident in three vessels of the *Mishkan*. The *lechem hapanim* placed upon the *shulchan* would stay fresh for a full week, the *neir ma'aravi* (western-most lamp) of the menorah would remain constantly kindled, and the *annan haketores* (incense cloud) would be visible upon the *mizbei'ach*.

The message is not lost on us. The nature of the home of the matriarchs was that of a *mikdash me'at*, a miniature sanctuary reflecting the radiant glory of the *Mikdash* itself. Additionally, it would appear that this accomplishment is attributed to the matriarchs in particular – despite the presence of *Avraham Avinu*, the miracles were absent; they needed a Sarah or a Rivka to bring them about.

This, then, is the awesome privilege and responsibility that falls primarily upon the woman of the house. May all who aspire to that mandate of building *mishkanos* be granted the fulfillment of the prayer of *Moshe Rabbeinu* at the consecration of the *Mishkan*: "May the sweetness of *Hashem* be upon us, and may He allow the work of our hands to become firmly established." ✠

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DOV FINKELSTEIN, LMSW



What is *Shalom Bayis*?

WHY CAN'T WE EVER JUST TALK?

Baruch is sitting by himself after having a conversation with his wife Chava. *I feel like I can never have a discussion with Chava. Every time we start to talk about an area of disagreement, it ends up in a fight. I've tried all the communication techniques taught in marriage books, and they aren't helping! I feel so frustrated. I wish there were a way for us to talk that didn't end in a fight or silence.*

Baruch needs help. He can't discuss anything with Chava without her getting defensive. What can Baruch do to have a more successful conversation? To answer Baruch's question, we have to understand the definition of *shalom bayis*.

SHALOM BAYIS

RABBI ISAAC SHER writes that there is a common misconception regarding peace:

"People think peace is applicable only when there's a fight; however, in *Chazal*, the concept of peace has a broader definition."

He then quotes the Gemara: "What does 'He redeemed my soul with peace (*pada veshalom nafshi*)' mean? *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* said, 'Whoever engages in Torah study and in acts of kindness, and davens with the congregation, I deem it as if that person redeemed Me and My children from amongst the nations of the world.'" That is, through peace, Torah and acts of kindness, it is as if one has redeemed *Hashem* and *Klal Yisroel* from exile. (*Berachos* 8a)

DOV FINKELSTEIN IS A SOCIAL WORKER AT THE SEPHARDIC BIKUR HOLIM AND MAINTAINS A PRIVATE PRACTICE. HE SPECIALIZES IN MARITAL THERAPY AND ANXIETY DISORDERS. HE HAS POST-GRADUATE TRAINING IN WORKING WITH COUPLES FROM THE ACKERMAN INSTITUTE OF THE FAMILY. HE LEARNED IN THE MIR YERUSHALAYIM, AND GIVES *SHIURIM* IN RABBI RUTNER'S SHUL IN BROOKLYN.

Shalom bayis does not mean making peace with your spouse when there has been a fight. Rather, shalom bayis means creating an atmosphere where there is a general feeling of respect, consideration and appreciation.

“Rashi is bothered by a question. How does the word ‘shalom’ (peace) allude to engaging in Torah study and acts of kindness? Rashi explains that Torah is called peace, as the *passuk* says, ‘Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.’ (*Mishlei* 3, 17). Acts of kindness are also acts of peace because [Rashi explains]: ‘When a person does physical acts of kindness for his friend, his friend realizes that he is loved, and this promotes friendship and peace.’

“This Gemara teaches us that peace not only is applicable after a fight. Rather, peace refers to a way of life. This way of life is a life of pleasantness that does not leave any room for an argument to begin in the first place. Thus, a person who follows the pleasant path of the Torah and its ways of peace is planting pleasantness and spreading peace. Similarly, a person who acts kindly toward his friend evokes in his friend feelings of friendship, and causes there to be more peace in the

world. We see from here that a life of peace is incomparably better than making peace, and stopping fights before they start is better than putting fights out.” (*Likut Sichos Mussar*, vol I, pg. 68)

From these beautiful words of Rabbi Isaac Sher, a new understanding of *shalom bayis* emerges. *Shalom bayis* does not mean making peace with your spouse when there has been a fight. Rather, *shalom bayis* means creating an atmosphere where there is a general feeling of respect, consideration and appreciation.

MEET DR. GOTTMAN

One of the leading experts in marriage counseling today is Dr. John Mordechai Gottman Ph.D., an Orthodox Jew who appears at conferences around the world wearing a yarmulke.

Dr. Gottman developed a novel way to research marriages. He created an apartment at the University of Washington and invited couples

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The couples that were able to remain calm during disagreements were those that talked to each other regularly about their days, extended compliments, and would pay attention when their spouses spoke.

to spend a day there. He had a video camera filming the couple throughout the day. The couple received a questionnaire before they came to the apartment, which pinpointed their strengths and weaknesses as a couple. He then followed these couples for the next 10 years to study the traits of the couples who remained happily married. Based on his observations, he developed a theory on marriage that replicates the marriages of people who were able to stay happily

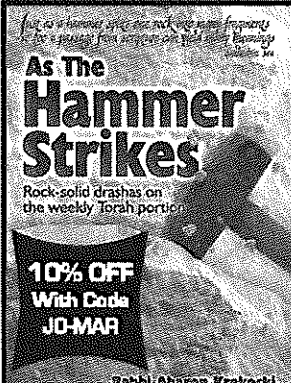
married over the long haul. As he says it, "I'm just plagiarizing what happily married couples do."

Dr. Gottman noticed an interesting phenomenon. Some couples were able to discuss their differences and areas of disagreements without the conversation becoming an argument. It was not as if the discussion was pleasant, but somehow those couples were able to continue on with their day. Other couples with the same conversation would end up

not speaking for the rest of the day or get into an argument. What was the difference between these couples?

Dr. Gottman found that both sets of couples struggled with the same issues (money, parenting styles, in-laws, etc.). He could not understand why some couples could keep their conversations cool during disagreements, while others could not.

This continued until he examined the couple's marital friendship. The couples that were able to remain calm during disagreements were those that talked to each other regularly about their days, extended compliments, and would pay attention when their spouses spoke. In general, they had twenty positive interactions for every negative interaction, and in times of disagreement, a five-to-one ratio. The couples whose disagreements turned into arguments, however, had not spent adequate time developing their marital friendship. Their positive-to-negative ratio was considerably lower. (*The Marriage Clinic* by J. M. Gottman, pp. 59-61)



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ADVICE FOR BARUCH

The advice for Baruch is now clear. The reason why he is having trouble is because he has not been spending enough time developing his friendship with his wife. He has to start asking about her day, be more complimentary, and pay more attention to what she finds important. After Baruch deepens their *shalom bayis* (marital friendship), then and only then can they discuss areas of disagreement.

Let us conclude with a Gemara: "Regarding the husband who loves his wife like himself and respects her more than himself, the *passuk* says 'And it will be known that there is peace in his tent!'"

Based on an address by Rabbi Matisyahu Salomon, *Mashgiach* of Bais Medrash Govoha, Lakewood, NJ, delivered at the recent National Convention of Agudath Israel of America

When Children Stray

SHARING HASHEM'S PAIN

CHILDREN GOING ASTRAY is a painful phenomenon. In fact, it is the essence of the suffering associated with the current phase of our long *galus*.

Every *galus* has its unique assortment of anguish. They are *Hashem's* ways of dealing with us, for these painful experiences are designed to bring us closer to the *Ribbono shel Olam*. And if the *Ribbono shel Olam* has chosen, in these last steps of *ikvesa deMeshicha*, to give us this particular pain, then we must determine what the message is and how it can draw each and every one of us closer to Him.

Chazal tell us that ever since the *Churban Habayis*, all through this terrible *galus*, the *Ribbono shel Olam* Himself has been in great pain, *kivyachol*, and therefore every one of us, in his *tefillos*, should endeavor to be *mishtateif*—to identify—with the *tza'ar haShechina* in *galus*. Thus, when the *Ribbono shel Olam* cried out in anguish at the beginning of our *galus*, “*Banim gidalti veromamti ... I raised and uplifted [My] (see Metzudas Dovid) children and they betrayed Me,*” *Klal Yisroel* should have felt that pain and should have responded immediately, “*Tatteh, we are sorry and we want to return and be loyal to You.*”

Unfortunately, *Klal Yisroel* did not hear the message. So *Hashem* decided that the only way was to let them personally feel the pain that, *kivyachol*, He is going through.

What does it mean that when children rebel, and how does it feel when all our efforts to reconcile are in vain? In our generation, *Hashem* is acting out the message of “*Banim gidalti veromamti, veheim pashe'u bi,*” so that we can feel *Hashem Yisbarach's* pain on our own backs.

And, while we're at it, we should ask ourselves: Are we, perhaps, in the *Ribbono shel Olam's* Eyes, not also at risk? Are we doing all that we should to fulfill the *Ribbono shel Olam's* objectives? Are we responding to *Hashem*

When parents are begging *Hashem Yisbarach* and seeking *siyatta diShemaya*, they bear in mind: This is my future, and this is what we're here for. Nothing else matters. If one puts his heart in such *tefillos*, then the rest will come.



PHOTO: YEHUDA BOLTSHAUSER

If you focus on sechar mitzvos, you may end up being well off, but your children will only thrive when they see the geshmak, the relish and the aspiration for growth reflected in how you perform mitzvos Hashem with dedication.

Yisbarach's goodness and kindness? Are we saying, "The Ribbono shel Olam loves me"? Or are we complaining because there are certain comforts that we lack? Do we begin to understand what the Ribbono shel Olam wants from us?

Every period in galus has its own trials and tribulations, and has been labeled accordingly. There were eras of pogroms, of the Inquisition, of persecution, of exile. To classify our tekufa of galus, we need only note that the navi Yirmeyahu describes a galus situation that has given it a name: the street corner. "Tishtapeichna avnei kodesh berosh kol chutzos – Holy stones are poured out on the street corners." Our children's precious, holy neshamos are there, exposed to the street corners (Eicha 4,1).

So, also, the Navi summons us: "Kumi roni balaila – Rise up, pray to the Ribbono shel Olam in the middle of the night ... shifchi kamayim libeich – pour out your hearts towards Hashem Yisbarach." Cry to Hashem, because our children are swooning from spiritual hunger, falling away "berosh kol chutzos – at every street corner" (Eicha 2,19).

Some people blame the parents for not understanding their children. Some feel that the chadarim are to blame. But the truth is that we must not underestimate the influence of the street corner, for that is where the yeitzer hara is to be found. That is where leitzanus – mockery of all that is holy and precious – begins. That is where the children take up the challenges, asking themselves: Are we going to listen to our parents? That is where they get the impudence to be different from the model projected for them: berosh kol chutzos.

**OUR RESPONSE:
TEFILLA AND TEARS**

Thus, the Ribbono shel Olam is talking to us, for the Navi's prophecy has come true. And our recourse is: "Rise up, pray in the middle of the night ... and pour out your hearts to Hashem." We must be mispalleil for our children and include their names in our private requests in Shemoneh Esrei ... "for the sake of your children, wrapped in hunger on the street corners," where, Chazal tell us,

they are suffering a spiritual starvation. This, then, is, how we meet their needs. With tefilla, which is the underpinning of our chinuch.

Everybody is aware that when a chassan and kalla stand under the chuppa, their goal is, be'eizer Hashem Yisbarach, to have children, to build a family, to assume a role in the continuity of Klal Yisroel. It is not an easy job and calls for preparation.

If somebody wants to be a shocheit (ritual slaughterer), lehavdil ellef havdalos, he must learn all the relevant halachos, undergo an extensive bechina (test), and receive kabbala (certification) that he is a mumcheh (expert): He understands how to check the chalif (knife), and how to make bedikos (examine the organs of the animal). Nobody would trust a shocheit and eat his meat if he had not received kabbala from a respectable source.

How, then, do we allow a chassan and kalla, totally lacking experience in chinuch, to march to the chuppa, expecting to have children, and to be trusted not to fail their children? Yet, they are not required to have a certificate for that.

From the time of mattan Torah, as well as before, people got married and brought children into the world. Whoever had children was expected to know how to educate them and bring them up, and understand each individual member of the family. The first step was to engage in tefilla. The Ribbono shel Olam simplified the process: When you beseech Hashem for your needs, you spell it out: "Vesakneinu be'etza tova milfanecha – set us right with good counsel from before You" (from Hashkiveinu in Maariv). One will encounter effective sources of counsel

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and guidance, and come to understand his children, and to perceive that each child is an individual in character and needs. And parents, too, are individuals. When parents are begging *Hashem Yisbarach* and seeking *siyatta diShemaya*, they bear in mind: *This is my future, and this is what we're here for. Nothing else matters.* If one puts his heart in such *tefillos*, then the rest will come. The *Ribbono shel Olam* set up this world so that parents are capable of understanding their children and how to educate them, as long as they are sincere – and one davens, and davens, and davens.

Rabbi Yechezkeil Abramsky, זצ"ל, who was recognized as a *gaon* and *tzaddik*, even in his pre-War Russia years, once walked into the apartment of the Brisker Rav in Yerushalayim. The Rav and his children were sitting around the table, and he was giving a *shiur*. They were all immersed in his words, their faces shining.

Rabbi Abramsky later asked the Brisker Rav, "Tell me, what is the *sod* (secret) of your *chinuch*, that you were *zocheh* that every single child walks faithfully in your footsteps?"

He said, "Sod? *Chinuch? Tehillim mit trerren.*"

Tehillim with tears. That is the way to bring up children. From this potent combination, one gains an awareness of how to protect them from harmful influences. From this, one gains the sensitivity to understand how to speak to them – when to rebuke and when not to rebuke. From this, one gains the *siyatta diShemaya* to inspire them to want to go in their parents' footsteps. And from this, the *Ribbono shel Olam* directly inspires them with *yiras Shamayim*.

THE POWER OF PURITY OF MOTIVE

There is another condition. And this must go hand in hand with the first. It is built on the *passuk* "Ashrei ish yerei Hashem – Happy is the man who fears Hashem – *bemitzvosav chafeitz me'od* – who greatly desires His commandments" (*Tehillim* 112,6). The Midrash comments: "Bemitzvosav' velo

When you welcome Shabbos with Kiddush in a joyous niggun, the children come to appreciate the Shabbos. If you start off on the wrong note, however, before you get started, you're lost.

bisechar mitzvosav." He seeks to do mitzvos with all his heart, but he does not yearn for the reward of the mitzvah.

A question: What is wrong if a seeker has *sechar mitzvah* in mind? It may not be the highest *madreiga* of *lishma* – the purest of motives – but he will be performing the act of the mitzvah most faithfully. After all, there is ample reward for doing *mitzvos shelo lishma*, without purest intentions, as well.

My late rebbi, Rabbi Elya Lopian, זצ"ל, said that the answer lies in the next *passuk*: "Gibor ba'aretz yihyeh zaro – His offspring will be mighty in the land – *dor yesharim yevorach* – [he will merit] an upright generation who shall be blessed" (*ibid.* 112,2).

If you focus on *sechar mitzvos*, you may end up being well off, but your children will only thrive when they see the *geshmak*, the relish and the aspiration for growth reflected in how you perform *mitzvos Hashem* with dedication.

As the Chazon Ish says in *Emuna UBitachon*: "Talmidim ubannim lomdim mima'asav harbei yoseir midvarav. Children and disciples learn much more from how one conducts himself than from whatever lectures he delivers."

We plead with *Hashem Yisbarach* to grant us *ahavas Torah veyiras Shamayim*, that we should have a love for Torah and fear of Heaven.

Possessing such *ahava* finds expression in the way one davens, and that in turn is transmitted to one's children. That is the effective catalyst for *chinuch*.

Of course, *ma'asim*, actions are crucial, especially when they resonate with *geshmak*, but they do not need to be underscored with frequent lectures. With *tefilla*, one will be *zocheh* to raise a *dor yesharim yevorach*.

APPROACHING THE END OF GALUS

The *Ribbono shel Olam* is talking to us, telling us that we're coming to the end of the *galus*. And the *tza'ar haShechina* has not yet been addressed. "Banim gidalti ... I raised [My] children ... and they have rebelled against Me." We have failed to understand it. Had we realized it, we would have redirected a lot of the valuable time that has been invested in pursuing this-world pleasures and distractions. If one would truly comprehend this, one would have an added *geshmak* in mitzvos. One would be a different person, and as such, would serve as an example for his children, causing them to want to go in their parents' footsteps. And then the street corner *kelalla* would disappear.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn tells a story: *

A playgroup in Antwerp has a "Shabbos *se'uda*" every *Erev Shabbos* with a Shabbos Mommy, a Shabbos Tatty, and a beautifully set table. The Mommy lights candles and the Tatty makes Kiddush. A "play" event, it generates a *ruach* of Shabbos.

Every week, the children take turns in the leading roles. One week it was Yankele's turn to be Tatty. Everything was ready and everyone was standing. The Mommy lit the candles, and the time came for Yankele to make Kiddush. They poured grape juice in the *kos*. "Nu, now say Kiddush."

"Oy, hub ich gehat a shvere voch – What a hard week I had." And then he began, "Yom Hashishi"

If that introduction is the weekly *krechtz* of Kiddush, then what's going to happen to *ahavas haShabbos*?

When you welcome Shabbos with Kiddush in a joyous *niggun*, the children come to appreciate the Shabbos. If you start off on the wrong note, however, before you get started, you're lost.

There's a *Chazal* on the aforementioned *passuk* in *Tehillim*: " 'Ashrei ish yerei Hashem' – *Ashrei mi she'oseh teshuva keshehu ish*. Fortunate is the one who does *teshuva* when he's young."

The *Beis Halevi* asks: When a person is a *rasha kol yamav* (wicked all his life) and does *teshuva* in his last minutes, we do not mention any of his *aveiros*. He is "clean." So what is the special fortune of one who does *teshuva* when young?

He gives an answer similar to the one proffered earlier. Whenever a person does *teshuva* it will be accepted. But what happens to his children if he only does *teshuva* at the end of his life?

If one is striving for perfection, the earlier in his life that he achieves the *sheleimus* (perfection) that he is capable

of reaching, the more will he realize the fulfillment of "*Gibor ba'aretz yihyeh zaro* – His offspring will be mighty in the land – *dor yesharim yevorach* – [he will merit] upright generations who shall be blessed."

The *Ribbono shel Olam* is asking one thing from us – *tefilla*. And we have not yet fulfilled our assignment. Children are still swooning at the street corners. We must go to those street corners, every one of us. We know where to look and what we'll see And then daven. Especially parents

Rabbi Chaim Brim once told me that he was together with the *Chazon Ish* when a *yungerman* came and asked the *Chazon Ish*, "Rebbi, I've been trying so hard for so many years to learn, and I can't get a *geshmak* in learning. Every time, it's an ordeal for me just to sit by the *Gemara*."

The *Chazon Ish* sent him away with a *beracha* and told him, "Learn more and it will be good."

When the young man went out of the room, he turned to Rabbi Chaim Brim and said, "This *yungerman* is missing the tears of his mother by *licht bentschen*."

When I was *Mashgiach* in Gateshead, there was a certain *bachur* who was a less than average student, yet he always managed to get one of the best *bachurim* in yeshiva to learn with him *bechavrusa*. They never lasted more than one *z'man*, and then they separated. The next *z'man*, he would succeed in gaining another *bachur* from the best. We all marveled at his success, even if it was short lived.

One day, the senior *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Moshe Schwab, came bursting into the rebbe'im's room and said, "*Ich hob der sod* – I've learned the secret! I was walking up the stairs to the *beis midrash* in the yeshiva. [There were open telephones underneath the stairs.] I heard this *bachur* speaking to his mother: 'Mama, you can stop saying *Tehillim*. I found my *chavrusa* for next *z'man*.'"

Let us not blame the schools or the rebbe'im for all of our children's shortcomings. It is *galus* – *galus* with a message.

"Rise up, pray in the middle of the nights ... and pour out your hearts to *Hashem*."

Let us feel the *tza'ar haShechina*. We are not too small for that. Let us raise our standards. Let us feel the pain of the *Ribbono shel Olam* over the years, from the first time that He sent the *Navi* to say, "I raised and uplifted [My] children and they betrayed Me."

Let us say to the *Ribbono shel Olam*: "We heard the message. You mean us. Yes, we won't betray You anymore. And we're coming closer." And then the *Ribbono shel Olam* will say to us, "As you come back to Me, so will your children come back to you." *Veheishiv leiv avos al banim veleiv banim al avosam*. He will return the hearts of fathers to the children, and the hearts of children to their fathers.

* I verified this story, as I generally do with anecdotes that I repeat.



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MRS. RIFKA SCHONFELD

Winning the Blame Game, Losing the War

Teaching Responsibility to Our Children

Schools have long been grading students for responsibility. But in recent years, teachers report, marks in responsibility have been plummeting across the board. This is an alarming phenomenon – but it is no coincidence. Responsibility is becoming a rare virtue.

THE "SHIRKING" PLAGUE

WE LIVE IN A WORLD where politicians, executives, and professionals fail to act responsibly – and fail to take responsibility for their actions. Parents, teachers, and students often follow suit. Instead of behaving with responsibility, people often are reckless, and shift the blame for their mistakes onto others.

A senior politician who "forgot" to report income blames the Turbo Tax software he used. Homeowners who bought houses with risky mortgages blame the banks for taking them away. CEOs asking for handouts for their companies travel in exorbitant private jets. Democrats and Republicans, presidents and simple folk, and teachers and students refuse to act responsibly and take responsibility for their

actions. And slowly, the very fabric of society withers into a total mess, as the culture of irresponsibility infiltrates our homes and lives.

According to expert *mechanchim*, this plague of irresponsibility lies at the crux of many of our *chinuch* problems. As the years go by, children and adults are becoming less accountable and less responsible. They are blaming everyone but themselves.

"My child isn't doing well because he doesn't have a good rebbi."

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"I didn't behave because the girl next to me made me be chutzpadik."

"I'm late because the bus came early."

Maybe your child does not have a good rebbi, but that doesn't preclude your halachic obligation to teach your child Torah. Maybe the girl sitting next to your daughter is disruptive, but that does not grant your daughter a license to misbehave. Maybe the bus came thirty seconds too soon, but you could have caught it, if you had been at the stop a minute early.

This culture of irresponsibility is extremely damaging, both on an individual level, and to society as a whole.

At the recent Agudah Convention, Rabbi Matisyahu Salomon, שליט"א, addressed the painful issue of "When Children Stray." He said that the phenomenon of children rebelling is a reflection of *Klal Yisroel's* rebellion. When the *Ribbono shel Olam* cried out in anguish at the beginning of our *galus*, "*Banim gadalti veromamti* – I grew and raised children, and they betrayed me," *Klal Yisroel* should have felt that pain

and should have responded immediately, "*Tatteh*, we are sorry, and we want to return and be loyal to You."

Unfortunately, *Klal Yisroel* did not hear the message. So *Hashem* decided that the only way to bring them back is to let them personally feel the pain that *kivvyachol* He is going through.

This refusal to apologize is a blatant act of irresponsibility. A responsible person not only behaves a certain way, but also admits errors, accepts blame, and does whatever he can to repair the damage.

As *Yidden*, the ability to take responsibility lies at the heart of our existence. In *Parashas Mikeitz*, *Yaakov Avinu* refused to allow Binyamin to travel with his brothers to *Mitzrayim*. Although the family's food supply was dwindling, and the Egyptian viceroy had said that Binyamin's presence was a condition for purchasing more food, *Yaakov* feared for his son's life. Until *Yehuda* arose. "*Anochi e'ervenu* – I will guarantee him," he said. "I will take responsibility." And so, the history of *Klal Yisroel* unfolded.

This was not the first time that *Yehuda* had accepted responsibility. When *Tamar* presented the staff, cloak and ring of her unborn child's father, *Yehuda* said, "*Tzadka mimeni*" – she is expecting my child. He did this at great personal sacrifice. Yet, it is of this union that *Malchus Beis Dovid* was born, and it is this sense of responsibility that characterized it. *Dovid* behaved similarly after the episode with *Bas Sheva*.

In contrast, when *Shmuel Hanavi* asked *Shaul* why he had not killed the animals of *Amaleik* as *Hashem* had commanded, he said, "*Chamal ha'am* – the nation had mercy on the animals, so that they could sacrifice them to *Hashem*." He blamed his mistake on the people. This was a twofold lapse of *achrayus*. First, *Shaul* did not act responsibly by not eradicating *Amaleik* in its entirety as he had been commanded. Second, he refused to accept responsibility for his mistake, and instead blamed the people. This twofold mistake brought untold suffering upon the Jewish people, and cost *Shaul* his kingdom.

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.

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WHAT IS RESPONSIBILITY?

In regard to *chinuch*, there are two main aspects of responsibility. The first is the ability to fulfill responsibilities. A person who fulfills responsibilities is answerable to himself, to others, and to the *Ribbono shel Olam*. His behavior is disciplined, and he follows rules and regulations. He understands that as a member of a family, class, and society, there are roles he must play, and things he must and must not do.

For example, a responsible person won't come late to *Shacharis*, because he believes that doing so would be wrong to a) himself, because he will miss out on the beginning of the *tefilla*; b) his teacher and classmates, whom he will disrupt with his entrance; and c) the *Ribbono shel Olam*, because his *tefilla* will not be proper, and he may miss out on several *Ameins*, *Amein yehei shemei rabbas*, and other *chiyuvim*.

The second aspect of responsibility is the ability to acknowledge the effects of an action or decision, and to accept its consequences. A child who does poorly on a test should be able to assess his behavior and come to responsible conclusions. Responsible students will tell themselves, "I should have studied harder," "I need to learn how to take better notes," or "I'm going to have to listen better in class." This, as opposed to the tendency of students to blame the teacher, the test, or the class for their poor performance.

TEACHING RESPONSIBILITY:
ROLE MODELING, DUTIES,
AND CONSEQUENCES

There are many things parents can do to inculcate responsibility in their children. The first is to be good role models. That means that we need to parent responsibly. A child who lives in a disciplined, structured home will grow up to be disciplined and structured – essential *middos* for responsible living. A child whose parents exhibit a responsibility to the world that we live in will grow up with the same sense of responsibility.

I often see parents throw litter into the streets and ignore laws and regulations. Such actions teach children to disregard authority, and do what is easiest and most convenient, regardless of the effect their actions might have on society at large.

The Torah teaches us to be responsible for each other. *Kol Yisroel areivim zeh lazeh*. When parents actively pursue *chesed*, are involved in their children's schools, and contribute to *tzeddaka*, they model to their children that we do not live for ourselves alone. This is a hallmark of responsibility.

I often see parents throw litter into the streets and ignore laws and regulations. Such actions teach children to disregard authority, and do what is easiest and most convenient, regardless of the effect their actions might have on society at large.

Another way to teach responsibility is to give children age-appropriate chores. Here, parents must tread a fine line between overburdening children and challenging them. If all choices and decisions are made by adults, and children have no expectations and responsibilities, they will be dependent and incompetent. If there is too much expected of them, they will feel overburdened and, again, incompetent, because they won't be able to fulfill expectations. So parents need to carefully consider the duties that they give to their children. Parents can also teach responsibility by creating household rules and enforcing them.

Children must be taught not only to act responsibly, but also to accept responsibility for their actions. Parents can teach this by allowing children to experience the natural consequences of their actions and behavior. Children should not be getting "bailouts" from their parents.

A chronic latecomer should not be given late notes. He should be made to "face the music," and suffer whatever consequences the school deems appropriate. In many cases, a couple of doses of detention is all the child needs to propel him out of bed in the morning.

One mother told me that she tells her children to prepare their clothing for school in the evening so that she can see if anyone is missing an article of clothing while there is still time to throw a load into the washing machine. On one occasion, her teenage daughter forgot to prepare her clothes – and found that there was no clean blouse in the closet. She had no choice but to pull one out of the hamper. The experience was unpleasant for a day – but it taught responsibility for a lifetime.

WHY ARE PEOPLE
IRRESPONSIBLE?

People behave irresponsibly because shifting the blame is so easy and convenient. It is much easier to blame a person or a situation than to acknowledge wrongdoing and change behavior and habits. It is much easier for a parent to gripe about the rebbi than to learn with his child or hire a private rebbi. Sadly, in our pleasure-seeking, easy-way-out society, the easy way usually wins.

This easy-way-out lifestyle stems largely from the plenty our community enjoyed in the past decades. Luxury

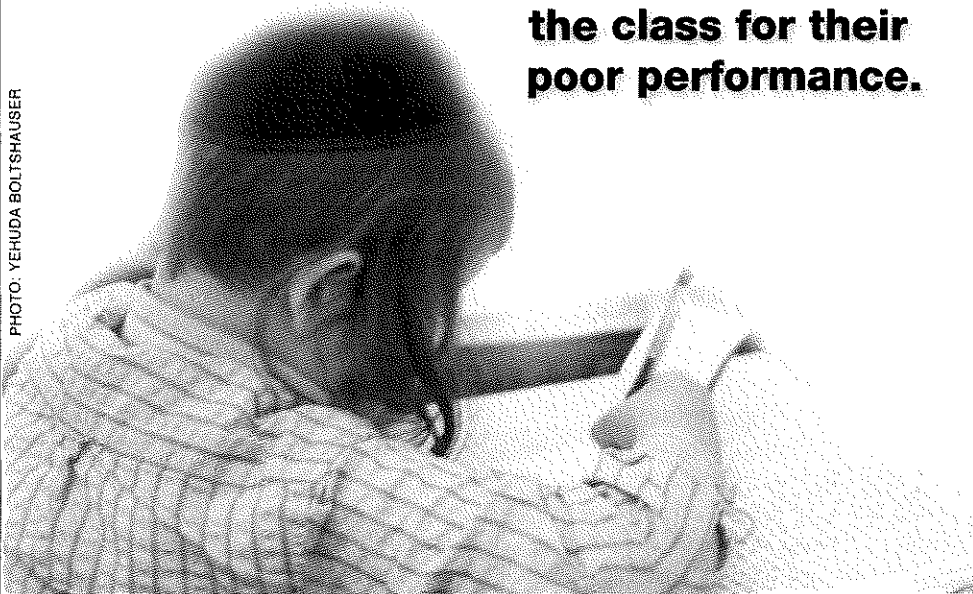


PHOTO: YEHUDA BOLISHAUSER

Responsible students will tell themselves, “I should have studied harder,” “I need to learn how to take better notes,” or “I’m going to have to listen better in class.”

This, as opposed to the tendency of students to blame the teacher, the test, or the class for their poor performance.

PHOTO: YEHUDA BOLTSHAUSER



homes, expensive vacations, designer clothing, even \$85 Kipling briefcases for little children, have become the norm. Ours is the “*es kumt mir*” generation, the era of instant gratification. “I deserve to get this briefcase or buy this dress or take this break.” Even now, with so many amongst us struggling for *parnassa*, the trend continues. All of this luxury comes with a very big price tag.

In *Shiras Ha’azinu*, the *passuk* says, “*Vayishman Yeshurun vayivat* – Yeshurun grew fat and kicked [in rebellion].”

Their rebellion was a direct result of the abundance that caused them to “grow fat.” Instead of thanking *Hashem* for His plenty, they attributed their blessings to their talents and hard work. They said “*Kochi ve’otzem yadi assa li es hachayil hazeh* – My power and the strength of my hand attained these assets for me.”

There is a certain sense of entitlement and power that comes from living on “easy street.” Children who grow up in the lap of luxury and have every wish

and whim fulfilled may have a hard time telling themselves “no.” Incidentally, the phenomenon of irresponsibility is not correlated to income level. The availability of cheap snacks and toys, bargain stores, and inexpensive clothing has created a society of low-income spend-thrifts. Low-income children are being just as easily spoiled as their wealthy counterparts.

Whatever their income level, all parents must insist on withholding pleasures, and on giving children responsibilities, if only for the sake of *chinuch*. If children are not taught to deny themselves pleasure, and to fulfill their responsibilities, there is a very real danger that they will not develop the ability to do so – even when the pleasures that they seek go against rules or societal norms, or may be harmful to themselves or to others. Such children also find it hard to acclimate to the demands of adulthood, because everything has always been handed to them on the proverbial silver platter.

When a seventh grade teacher announced that there was going to be no homework so that the girls could help their mothers clean for Pesach, one student from a wealthy home proudly said that she didn’t have to help her mother clean for Pesach, because the cleaning lady did everything in her house. The girl exuded an air of superiority, as if she felt that she would not stoop to cleaning nooks and crannies for Pesach.

Such a girl is missing out on an integral piece of the *chinuch* puzzle. She is missing out on the joy of cleaning for Pesach, and on the sense of responsibility of knowing that her family’s *zehirus* in getting rid of *chameitz* depends on her. In addition, there is a very real concern about this girl’s future. How will she deal with the pressures and responsibilities that come with raising a family, even if her husband will be blessed with the means to provide her with abundant cleaning help?

Parents who overly shield and protect their children may do so in the name of love. But they are doing their children a great disservice.

When one high school girl felt pressured by her schoolwork, her father called the principal to complain. The menaheil explained that it was important for students to learn to cope with stress and pressure, because school is a training ground for life, and life is full of tension. The father answered – “My daughter will not have any stress or pressure in her life. I will protect her.”

One can only marvel at the “*kochi ve’otzem yadi*” mindset that brings a father to make such a statement. And one can only hope that his daughter is able to overcome her bewilderment when life hands her a challenge that is beyond her father’s protective reach.

RESPONSIBILITY VS. HAPPINESS

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Not so long ago, all children had household chores. It was a given that everyone who lived in a home had to play a role in maintaining it and helping it function. Today, many parents believe that childhood

should be carefree and fun. They feel that by burdening their children with responsibilities, they are robbing them of the joys of carefree childhood. This attitude is also a reflection of the society we live in. It is a world where pursuit of happiness is a goal in life. It is also a world where unhappiness and depression abound.

This is largely because of the lack of responsibility so prevalent around us. Marketers would have us believe that we can purchase joy in a chocolate bar. But nothing could be more fleeting. Did anyone ever rejoice because he had really good chocolate two days ago? On the contrary, responsibility equals satisfaction. And satisfaction equals happiness. There are few greater joys than the satisfaction of a job well done. People experience inner happiness when they are productive and responsible.

The pursuit of happiness leaves one with a feeling of emptiness. Dr. Nathaniel Branden, Ph.D., author of *Taking Responsibility*, says that responsibility is tied to self-esteem, and that people who can't take responsibility feel helpless.

He writes that a child grows by wanting responsibility. The child wants to

talk, to walk, to be independent. His greatest joy is accomplishment – “I can tie my shoes”; “I can make my own lunch”; “I can study and do well.” In contrast, when a child's choices and decisions are made by adults, with no expectations of the child by the adults or responsibilities on the part of the child, he becomes stifled, dependent, and incompetent.

So parents who wish to shield their children from responsibilities because they want them to enjoy life in freedom and happiness are doing their children a tremendous disservice. They are withholding the keys to the very happiness they want to bestow.

Interestingly, every Jewish *simcha* is a celebration of added responsibility. At a *bris*, we celebrate the entrance of a Jewish male into the Covenant of Avraham – a pact that brings with it all the responsibilities of being a Jew. At a bar or bas mitzvah, we celebrate the entrance of a child into the responsibilities of adulthood. And at a wedding, we celebrate marriage – a union that again brings with it myriad responsibilities.

As a veteran teacher, I am in a unique position to track societal trends. Thirty years ago, when I would tell a parent that

a child had a problem, the parent would become attentive and apologetic. He would ask for advice and guidance, and work to improve the situation. Today, parents can not accept any criticism about their children. Complaints are met with disbelief or blame.

“But my Yanky can't be misbehaving. It must be a problem in the class.”

“Menachem is not keeping up? He's so bright. The material is way too hard for this grade level.”

“Of course he didn't do his homework. You give them so much work, it's impossible.”

So Yanky and Menachem and all the other sweet innocent little boys are never given the help or the direction they need for proper *chinuch* and growth. Is it any wonder, then, that so many people in our generation are buckling under the responsibilities of adulthood? It is time for us all to take responsibility for the way we live, spend money, and parent our children. Perhaps the current economic meltdown is meant to cure us from the societal ills that led to *Vayishman Yeshurun vayivat* – and perhaps our response to it will bring us to an era of *achrayus*, with the rebuilding of *Malchus Beis Dovid*. □

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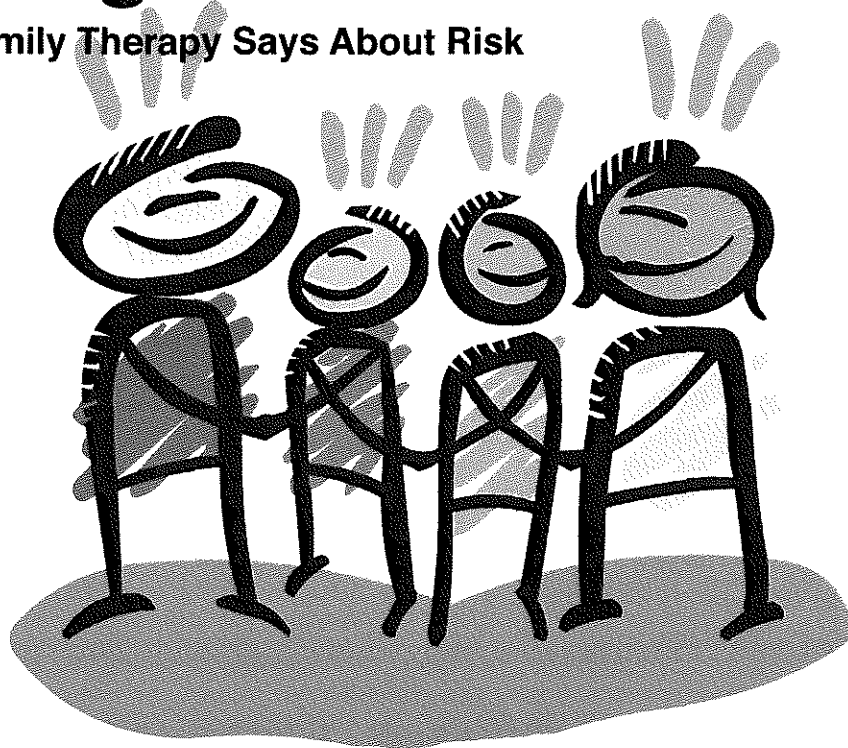
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MENDEL HOROWITZ

STOP Calling Me Names

What Family Therapy Says About Risk

**It is time
to discard
the label.
The causes
and effects of
disillusion
are seldom
anguished
individuals.
Calling kids
names will
not make
their troubles
go away.**



IN THE SUMMER OF 1998, *Jewish Action* published an article that began, “The problem of at-risk and rebellious Orthodox youth is finally receiving deserved attention.” In 1999, *The Jewish Observer* devoted its November issue to the topic “Children on the Fringe and Beyond.” The introductory essay stressed how rarely entire issues are dedicated to one subject, and made clear that the current phenomenon “can no longer be ignored.” On those pages, rabbis, teachers and psychologists openly described what many suspected – that children were turning to drug abuse and promiscuity, and shunning religion in intolerable numbers.

Since then, society has become mindful of such young people. The term “at risk” commonly refers to youths who experience a cluster of difficulties in meeting with the expectations of home, school and community. These individuals present both observable and non-observable symptoms. At once part of the system and apart from it, these personalities comprise a listless strain of youth. More indifferent than aggressive, more apathetic than mean, the children we call “at risk” are frightened, vulnerable and hurting.

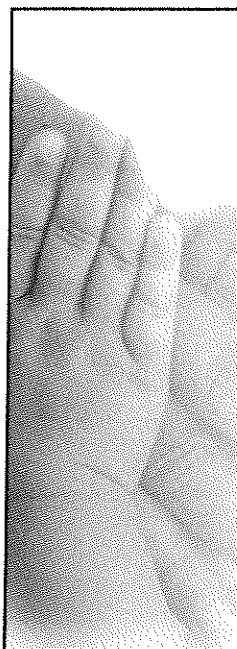
MENDEL HOROWITZ, MS, A FAMILY THERAPIST IN PRIVATE PRACTICE, IS A STAFF THERAPIST AT THE FAMILY INSTITUTE OF NEVE YERUSHALAYIM AND AT KAV L'NOAR, A JERUSALEM ORGANIZATION HELPING ENGLISH-SPEAKING FAMILIES. HE IS ALSO A REBBE AT DERECH ETZ CHAIM OF HAR NOF, AND CAN BE REACHED AT MENDELHOROWITZ@GMAIL.COM.

The motto "kids at risk" was employed with good intent. As a result of that invention, opportunities became available to those previously deprived, and a number of youths were reformed. Flexibility was introduced to rigid systems, and society appeared more accommodating. Alternative curriculums were created to substitute for conventional ones, mentor programs were designed to succeed where classrooms failed, and psychologists were sought for counsel. Some rehabilitated youths have become counselors who champion the cause of those who have become disillusioned. While the categorization brought dread, it also begot hope.

The problems, however, have not vanished. In 2005, Yeshiva University's S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program held a seminar on identifying mental health issues in young adults. According to a press release, "Further sessions throughout the year will focus on topics including drugs, alcohol, smoking, eating disorders, death and divorce in families, and coping with problems arising from Internet pornography, gambling, and male/female relationships." In 2006, *The Jewish Observer* published "Kids at Risk Revisited." In that special double issue, an article that began: "Why are there still children at risk?" affirmed, "The problems confronting us have not gone away – if anything, they are increasing."

Disappointingly, while suggesting that the phrase "kids at risk" is overused, this magazine offered no substitute means of describing the phenomenon. Two simple syllables cannot ever describe the variety of youth so labeled. Moreover, by concentrating on one family member, all others are overlooked. No article focused on the family unit as a possible source of intercession. No author addressed the family system. Each "kid at risk" is part of a threatened system whose collective suffering is too often ignored.

The limitations of popular conceptions of youth are becoming evident. Branding all nonconformists "at risk" may be convenient, but it is also risky. Some individuals are from bro-



*It is time
to share the burden.
Risk is not limited to kids.*

Unlike traditional psychology, **family therapy** regards the entire household as one emotional unit. Instead of past conflicts, this approach considers the ongoing impact of relationships; each family member plays a role in the developing symptoms of others.

Kids who exhibit uncommon behaviors do not belong to a group of similarly classified children. Each child has a particular surname and those who share it are liable for each other.

As youth is sliding to peril and beyond, families are suffering, too. It is time to share the burden. Risk is not limited to kids.

ken homes while others are learning disabled. Some children ride a wave of peer pressure and media influence that is fleeting and non-toxic. Some children are too hastily marked and go all-out to live up to their labels.

In place of labeling, the turn to family therapy can avoid ostracizing individual family members. Family therapists emphasize the effect of relationships on psychological health and seek solutions within the family system. Through such a process, families can learn to identify their own resources and activate their own potentials for healing.

WHAT IS FAMILY THERAPY?

In place of tending to individuals, family therapy maintains that any positive change in the emotional functioning of one member can benefit the entire family system. Consequently, treatment need not be directed at the symptomatic person.

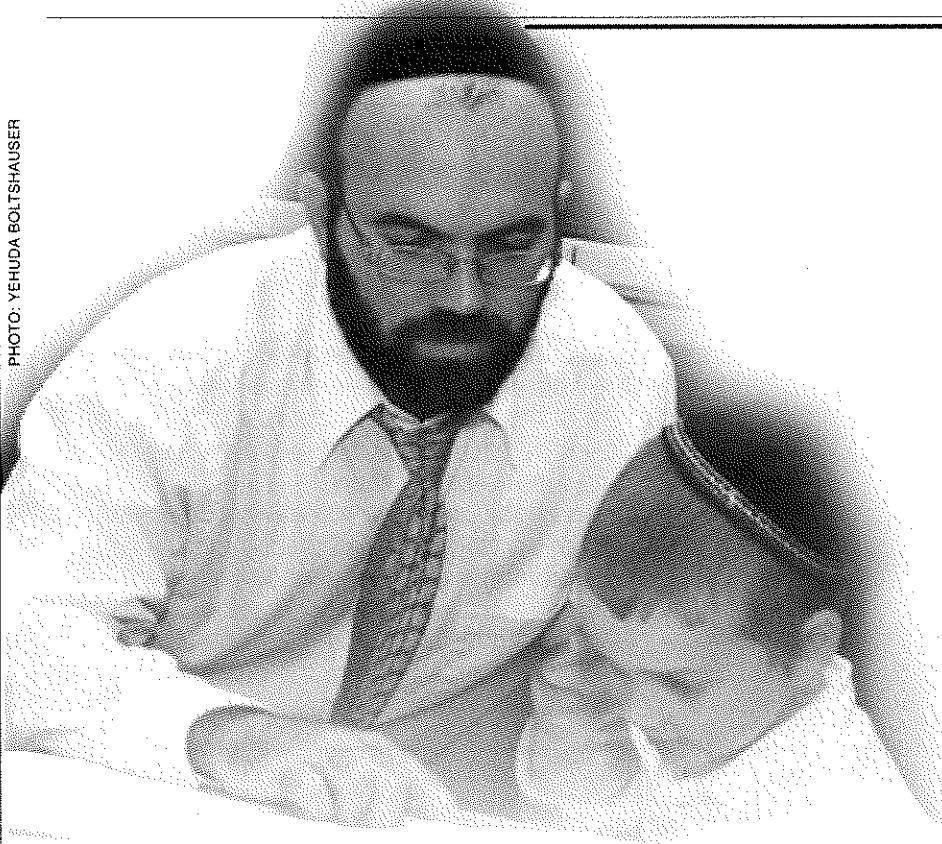
A principle of family therapy is that when one member of a family improves his or her emotional functioning, the whole family will improve in response to that person's ability to change. Where the symptomatic person refuses therapy, family members can still receive assistance and positively influence the dis-

tressed individual. This approach does more than discover each member's part. Family therapy makes room for each member's pain.

Family therapy sees symptoms as adaptive behavior. Rather than assuming it is unreasonable, a symptom is viewed as an adjustment to a current social situation. It follows that therapy should focus on altering the social situation if a symptom is to recede. Family therapy addresses the context of symptom development in an effort to facilitate lasting change. Sometimes, a straightforward adjustment is enough to make a difference.

Ari, a fifteen-year-old boy living with his parents and four sisters was referred for therapy when he became anxious about attending school and aggressive towards his mother when she insisted that he go to school. At the same time, Ari began to hang out with a "bad crowd" and let his hair grow long.

During the initial session, mom's energy kept the mood fairly light while dad seemed to have attended reluctantly. Eventually, it emerged that Ari's father was often away from home and that the burden of child rearing rested mostly on his mother. Himself an only child, Ari's father felt threatened by the intensity of his son's emotions. Ari's mother com-



In family therapy, parents can receive support and learn to cope in more productive ways. When joining their child in therapy, parents can discover their dynamic roles and begin to foster more nurturing relationships.

pensated for her husband's limitation by becoming overly involved. Ari, in turn, yearned for his father's attention and resented the lack of male companionship. Ari was able to reveal his desire only after his father's apprehension was uncovered. Ari's symptoms diminished as his father became more involved in his life.

AVOIDING UNHELPFUL MANEUVERS

Families often have a repetitive account of their condition that identifies one member as the patient. Such stories are seldom helpful. The pressure of being a lone offender is awful. By retelling the tale to include

parents and siblings, family therapists can help to inspire more useful ways of thinking. Family therapy does not necessarily mean sessions with the entire family present. Instead, the therapy is based on thinking that considers family members. By assuming that all members are strained and addressing their specific concerns, each member is valued. Blame is not the goal. The aim is to excite change by introducing a creative perspective.

It is not uncommon for parents to identify a child as the patient when seeking help. Burdened by the "at risk" label, such youths are often unwilling to accept that diagnosis and be stifled by its weight, with recurring family styles

commonly maintaining the status quo. In family therapy, parents can receive support and learn to cope in more productive ways. When joining their child in therapy, parents can discover their dynamic roles and begin to foster more nurturing relationships.

Shira, a nineteen-year-old with a history of addictions, entered therapy after her arrest for possession of marijuana. The oldest of nine siblings, Shira had begun to rebel at age fourteen. Fearful that her rebellion would be contagious in the family and embarrassed by her "unusual" appearance, Shira's parents had sent her to an "out-of-town" high school from which she had been promptly expelled. Shira has been in more than six schools since age fourteen, and has been in and out of trouble, in her words, "for as long as I can remember."

In family sessions, there was much exploration of Shira's social relationships and potential reasons for her challenges. From collaboration with Shira's parents, it became possible to tell a new clinical story about their difficulties: Over time, Shira had begun to feel that she was not important to her mother, who had eight "regular" children; the father had partly sensed this, but had not wanted to acknowledge it openly since that might destabilize the relationship between him and his wife. These unexpressed fears of the father meant that, despite feeling close to his daughter, he had had to maintain a distance from her to preserve his marital relationship.

Through communication and acceptance of conflict, family members developed a better understanding of themselves in relationship to each other. As the complexities of their relationships were identified, parents and child learned to articulate their individual needs and to take steps toward fulfilling them.

Regrettably, the Orthodox community has not appreciated the optimistic message of family therapy. Common attempts at treating kids have focused on observable symptoms and on modes of therapy that address individuals. When families are involved, members are fearful of being blamed for symptom development, and neglect to exam-

ine the compassionate message of the method. This is unfortunate, because family therapy is interested in solutions. The same home that rears weakness breeds strength, and family therapy aims to find it.

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN AND CANNOT OFFER
.....

Instead of therapy, parents often seek aid in the school system. Society's concern is reflected in new pedagogical methods, and interventions often occur in educational forums. While some programs are indeed special, they cannot replace therapy when it is needed. Fresh teaching styles have been successful at reaching some, but other youths do not respond to such techniques. My experience in both arenas suggests the inescapable influence of family dynamics and the limitations of interventions that do not involve family members.

The familiar trend is for "at risk" youths to spend time in Israel programs designed for social and religious rehabilitation. Such courses are academic in spirit, but are combined with various modes of informal counseling. Some teachers function in dual roles: one aimed at the relevancy of Torah, the other at the required maturity to embrace its ideals.

Time abroad has its benefits. Students often use their time away from home as a forum for self-discovery. Geographic isolation from parents enables some youths to make strides in their emotional individuation. Capable educators can inspire noteworthy change by facilitating introspection. At the same time, the distance of schools from the social structures in which symptoms develop may impede their effectiveness. Without exposure to their wider lives, educators have only partial access to students' commanding family dynamics. Some students bear emotional burdens from domestic styles and expectations. Some students are defied by dramatic household concerns, and others by modest but potent ones.

A psychologically informed curriculum is progressive and creditable. It may also not be enough. Treating students as individuals, addressing their doubts, and hearing their misgivings, can sometimes nurse distressed youth toward health. Some students shed their "at risk" label in Israel and return home refreshed. For others, rebellion is more social than religious, and more determined by domestic forces. Among those who need more than edification and encouragement, the sensitive ear of


a non-judgmental, non-intrusive and non-threatening teacher falls short of their essential needs.

Moshe, a seventeen-year-old dropout with a history of behavior problems, was sent to Israel as "a last resort." The youngest of five children, three of Moshe's older siblings were married and a fourth had recently divorced. Moshe described himself as an "underachiever" who would never be "good enough" for his family.

In yeshiva, Moshe bonded with a teacher and gradually increased his

ד"ר

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functioning. While making significant academic progress throughout the year, Moshe's two trips home were marked by high anxiety and diminished functioning. After one such trip, Moshe began sporadic drinking binges.

During a second year in Israel, Moshe continued to progress scholastically, but appeared socially and emotionally detached. He continued to drink and confided that his father "is probably an alcoholic." After two years, Moshe was undecided about his future plans and insisted that his drinking was not a problem.

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP

In today's climate, the line between teachers and counselors is at best vague and often nonexistent. Various institutions provide students with teacher-counselors who function in expanded roles. Much is expected of teachers, and the lessons of psychology can enhance their effectiveness. By respecting students and being curious about their needs, teachers can foster relationships that go a long way to ward off danger. But teachers are not superheroes. The success of all educa-

tors – especially those who engage challenging youth – is limited. Some youth may be better served in the context of family therapy.

While current trends of delinquency may be no more significant than ever, the mood seems desperate. Educators are constantly sought for relief as parents bemoan their misfortune. This cycle is lamentable and is often counter-productive. It may be that youth is being viewed out of context and is bypassing nearby resources. Perhaps parents and siblings can provide more lasting support than teachers. Perhaps the theme can change from "we are a normal family with a symptomatic child" to "you are a family that got stuck in your progress and must adjust to the development of your adolescent children."

Family therapists insist that symptoms are developed and maintained in the social context of families. Accordingly, those contexts also contain antidotes for the anguish that symptoms arouse. Adjusting family interactions can help to alleviate that pain. Family crises affect all family members, and each deserves to be part of the solution.

As a result of the influence of Freud, the individual became of primary concern while the system that shaped him has been left unexplored. This is a shame. All individuals exist in contexts that continuously affect them. Every person has a family, and every family has patterns of interaction in which members influence each other. According to the family therapist Salvador Minuchin, "Life consists of growing, mixing, cooperating, sharing and competing with others. Surely, most of us have had our most significant experiences within some form of the social unit we call a family." Families are powerful units that can be persuasive, supportive and loving.

It is time to discard the label. The causes and effects of disillusion are seldom anguished individuals. Calling kids names will not make their troubles go away.

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RABBI JOSEPH BREUER, זצ"ל

"Those that love Him will be like the sun when it rises in its might." *Shoftim 5,31*

Kiddush Hachama

PHOTO: MANNY MEYER



Birchas Hachama gathering in 1981 in front of Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in Washington Heights.



The following essay by Rabbi Breuer, the late Rav of K'hal Adath Jeshurun, appeared in German in the *Juedische Monatshefte* (Frankfurt) in 1925, and in the *Mitteilungen* vol. 14 (publication of KAJ) in March 1953. It was translated into English by Meta Bechhofer.

PUNCTUATING AN ONGOING REVELATION

ON WEDNESDAY, the 23rd of Nissan [in 1925],¹ we will observe *Kiddush Hachama*, and when the sun becomes visible, the following *beracha* will be said: "*Oseh ma'asei vereishis*." It is best to recite this *beracha* after *Tefillas Shacharis*, in the presence of the *Kehilla*, considering that the event is not a daily occurrence, for the opportunity to recite this *beracha* presents itself only every 28 years.

The sun was created by G-d on the fourth day of Creation, to be the strongest carrier of light among the others. Every 28 years, the *Nissan tekufa* (spring season) of the sun comes in at nightfall of the fourth day – as at the time of Creation (see *Berachos* 59b); this, according to the calculation of Mar Shmuel² (*Eruvin* 56a). It will be well to contemplate what motivated our *chachamim* – the great teachers of our people – to see in this event a cause for reciting a *beracha*. If, with this *bera-*

RAV DR. JOSEPH BREUER, זצ"ל, (1882-1980), WAS ROSH YESHIVA OF THE TORAH LEHRANSTALT (YESHIVA) IN FRANKFURT, AND FOUNDER AND RAV OF K'HAL ADATH JESHURUN IN NEW YORK IN 1939. AMONG HIS PUBLICATIONS ARE: COMMENTARIES TO YIRMEYAHU, YEchezkeil, THE PIYUTIM FOR ROSH HASHANA AND YOM KIPPUR, THE JEWISH MARRIAGE, TIME TO BUILD AND SEFER DIVREI YOSEF.

1 This year, 5769/2009, the *Birkas Hachama* will be recited on Wednesday morning, 14 Nissan/ April 8.

2 The sun year has four *tekufos* (seasons). According to Mar Shmuel, the length of every *tekufa* is 91 days (or 13 weeks) and 7 1/2 hours. The beginning of the next *tekufa* is only 7 1/2 hours later (the full 13 weeks need not be counted). Since at Creation, the beginning of the *Nissan tekufa* was at the start of the 4th day, the beginning of the *Tamuz tekufa* was 7 1/2 hours later. After 28 years, the beginning of the *Nissan tekufa* coincides again with the beginning of the 4th day.)

We are to wage the battle against a godless, Amaleik-like world and come out victorious when some day, Moshiach will light the way for an erring mankind.

cha, we are to praise G-d as the Master of the World and Creation, we should not have to wait 28 years to do so. The fact that G-d is Creator and Master of the World is a non-disputable reality for the Jew.

It may well be – as published recently in a popular magazine – that there are always attempts made to give people a beautiful set of pictures, describing a nebular theory of cosmic gases that circle around the universe, shedding “worlds” which “eventually” will develop organic life. But those theorists owe us an answer as to how these gases came about, how they circle around, and how organic life developed; how these theories are tenable without a Lawgiver; and how one can accept the idea of life if such a life harks back to a senseless primeval cloud.

Without such answers, these overwhelming facets of nature will always be for us a reason to offer homage to G-d, “the Creator of light and darkness,

Who renews His work of Creation with every new day” (from daily *tefillos*). The continued presence of the world with its innate laws is for us an ongoing revelation of the wonders of Creation.

The foremost bearer of light is only a “servant” (*shammes*) of G-d’s creative sanctuary. We would not indulge in worshipping the sun, even though it is indeed essential for life.

In our prayers every morning, and in the Psalms that precede our prayers, we declare a daily homage to G-d. But if this homage is said daily, what led our *chachamim* to enact a rule to say a *beracha* every 28 years, in order to strengthen our awareness of the fourth day of Creation?

A TIME FOR RESANCTIFICATION

In our daily morning *tefilla*, we greet the sunlight as, by the will of G-d, it replaces night to bring us a new

morning. Then we recite the *kedusha* of all G-d-serving elements, and our *tefilla* speaks of the light that G-d has brought us from Zion. A terrestrial sun could never overshadow the darkness of night if He had not given us, with His mercy, the light of Torah to guide us through life. We owe Him thanks that our lives are not dimmed and desolate – for He “enlightens our eyes through His Torah.” It is well to acknowledge G-d for His Creation, but we must be ready to seek the light of His Torah, and thereby fulfill the ultimate intentions of G-d’s Creation.

And as we acknowledge daily the realization of the ongoing presence of G-d in His Creation, so the event after 28 years is a further, modest – but impressive – manifestation of this knowledge. When the sun is in the same place that G-d had originally assigned it, our thoughts are also to go back to the days of Creation. We are to bring to mind: “*Oseh ma’asei vereishis*” – G-d continues His Creation and calls us to His service to perfect His Creation. As the Prophet *Yeshayahu* (60,19) declares: “We are not to see light only from the sun, but also the *Ohr olam*, the eternal Light for our lives, which – according to our *chachamim* – G-d placed into His Creation “five times” (see *Bereishis Rabba* 3:5).

We are to wage the battle against a godless, Amaleik-like world and come out victorious “*ad ba hashem-esh*” (*Shemos* 17,12), when some day, *Moshiach* will light the way for an erring mankind. The life of the observant is served by the sun, as it says in *Shoftim* 5,31: “Those that love Him will be like the sun when it rises in its might.”

“*Baruch ... oseh ma’asei vereishis* – Blessed be You, *Hashem* our G-d, King of the world – we want to serve Your holy will with our lives and further Your Creation which You continue to maintain.” Indeed, we recite a daily *beracha* which has special significance at this hour. It is called “*Kiddush Hachama*” similar to “*Kiddush Levana*” at the sight of the new moon, as this occasion, too, calls us to renewed “sanctification” of our lives.

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GERALD DEUTSCHER

Marking
the Passage of
Time Through

Birkas Hachama

A Veteran's Recollections

AN INTRODUCTION BY MRS. N. APPELBAUM

AS THE MONTH OF NISSAN approaches, we are eagerly awaiting the chance to say *Birkas Hachama*, an opportunity that occurs only once in the *machzor hagadol*, as the twenty-eight-year cycle is called. Depending on your age, this might be a first time experience for you. If you're a teenager or a young adult this April, you'll be tempted to "fast forward" and wonder about your future. What plans does *Hashem* have in store for you for the next twenty-eight years? What and where will you be the next time that you will recite this *beracha*?

For others who already said the *beracha* in 5741 (1981), there is a pull to look back with a true sense of gratitude for the unceasing abundant *chassadim* that *Hashem* has showered upon us in the years that have passed. With 20-20 hindsight, we see how *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* has guided our footsteps across the decades since the last time we declared "*Oseh ma'asei vereishis*" on the rising sun.

In a larger sense, the *machzor hagadol* affords us a wider panorama to see the Hand of *Hashem* in the passage of history. As one *machzor* ends and another begins, we might see more clearly chains of events that changed our society and *Klal Yisroel* as a whole.

What follows is a true recounting by my father, Mr. Gerald Deutscher, עמרי"ש, an Agudas Yisroel member who participated in the 5685 (1925) *Birkas Hachama*, and his own views on the slice of history that he lived through until he repeated the *beracha* in 5713 (1953). What follows is his account of his recollections. —N.A.



**THE THREE MACHZORIM:
84 YEARS AGO**

ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, April 8, 1925, *Erev Pesach* 5685, on a wooded hill outside the German medieval-built town of Nuremberg, ten teenagers, including me, excitedly recited *Birkas Hachama*. This was the beginning of the 204th *machzor hagadol*, as the twenty-eight-year earth-sun cycle is referred to in halachic literature.

On the previous Shabbos, at the close of his hour-long *Shabbos Hagadol derasha*, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Klein, our *mara de'asra*, had discussed the importance of the forthcoming event. He had announced that on *Erev Pesach*, *tefillas Shacharis* in the Adas Yisrael Shul would start even earlier than in other years so that the *beracha* could be recited at sunrise and followed immediately by *Shacharis*.

With the Rav's approval, an "advance party" of our group had met on Sunday morning to select a suitable site where we could best observe this memorable

MR. DEUTSCHER LIVES IN THE BORO PARK SECTION OF BROOKLYN.

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I wondered what pages of history
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years of this new 204th *machzor*.**

event. In the afternoon, they had traveled to the end of the Number 8 trolley line and hiked about another mile to Schmausenbuck Hill, a favorite picnic ground, to survey the area. Based on their enthusiastic report, when Wednesday

morning arrived, we assembled at 5:00 a.m. at a centrally located trolley station, and, indeed, we reached our destination at exactly sunrise. Even though the sky was cloudy, visibility was still good, and we were able to recite the *beracha*. We

sang *Keil Adon* and several *mizmorim*, and davened *tefillas Shacharis*.

On the way back to town, we might have overheard some heated discussions among the trolley passengers about the forthcoming German presidential election. Field Marshall von Hindenburg, the World War I Commander-in-Chief, had been nominated by the nationalist groups, and fears of another “*putsch*” against the Weimar Republic were openly expressed. But the *bechorim* in our little group were more concerned that they reach the *Achiezer minyan* before the end of the *siyum*,¹ as it was definitely too late for the *siyum* in the *Adas Shul*. (There, the *beracha* had been recited in the courtyard, and visibility had been excellent at sunrise.)

Early in the afternoon, a few of us met again for a trolley ride – this time to go to the Matzah Bakery in neighboring Fuerth. There, we were overjoyed when we each received several matzos, which we could bring home to our parents for the *sedarim*.

Now I was eager to “compare notes” with my father. Where had he been at the start of the previous *machzor*? At the beginning of the 203rd *machzor*, my father had been living in Paris, France, and there, on Wednesday, 5 Nissan 5657 (April 7, 1897), he had made the *beracha*. My father recapped his personal saga of the last twenty-eight years. His zigzag journeys had taken him from Paris, France, across the Atlantic to New York City, and then back again to his native Germany – all the while searching for *Shomeir Shabbos* positions and a Torah-true *chinuch* for his young family.

My father commented how much the world had changed in the relatively short span of twenty-eight years. The rise of nationalism had brought the disastrous World War. Nationalism had caused secular, assimilated Jews to set a *treifa* national goal for the Jewish People. *Haskala* had attacked the fiber of Jewish European life. The *Chofetz Chaim* had warned about the danger of

¹ As *bechorim* – first-born males – they would be required to fast unless they had been at a *siyum*.

YOSSI HUTTLER

BEDIKA

in his darkness
he trains a light
on those places
he'd been ignoring
not wanting to know
or be reminded of
what lurks inside those
nooks and cracks
what or where
he may have been
hiding from himself

going from
compartment to compartment
peering ever deeply
he collects those things
which he hopes never to own
again

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

emigration to America, as my parents had themselves experienced.

I treasured my father's description of the past. I wondered what pages of history would be written in the ensuing years of this new 204th *machzor*.



THE NEXT MACHZOR: COUNTING TO 1953

A few weeks after the *Birkas Hachama* that I had participated in, von Hindenburg was indeed elected as president of the German Reich, the country where I lived. However, for a few years afterwards, all fears about his election seemed unjustified. Huge American loans and other factors brought temporary prosperity to Western Europe, and Jewish life also benefited. Torah education was reaching wider circles. A few of my contemporaries traveled to Eastern European yeshivos. In Nuremberg itself, a small *yeshiva gedola* was established, and in 1928, the *dayan*, Rabbi Bergman, joined the *rav* as a *maggid shiur* for the dozens of *bachurim* who attended it.

In those pre-Hitler, ש"מ, years, German Jews enjoyed complete equality. There was no official discrimination, and even Torah loyal Jews achieved relatively prominent government and banking positions. Jewish education had substantially improved, and the *Torah im derech erez* lifestyle was widely admired.

Now, with 20-20 hindsight, I can clearly see the *Hashgacha Prattis* in my life. Although I was succeeding in my studies in 1932, a chain of events led me to set sail for America on January 5, 1933. At this very time, von Hindenburg

I could now look ahead to this new *machzor* and pray for Hashem to light our way with continued *chessed verachamim* from which the new *doros* here in America could benefit, until *bi'as goeil tzeddek*.

betrayed his constitutional oath and conferred dictatorial powers on Hitler, ש"מ. I had just arrived in America when I heard that Hitler had become chancellor on January 30, 1933.

When I came to the United States, I saw the battles that were being fought against the decline of *Yiddishkeit*. There was a great generation gap between immigrant parents and their Americanized children who no longer spoke the same language. The great shuls built in the 1920s were becoming empty on Shabbosos and *Yamim Tovim* – young faces were missing. It's hard to believe today, but then, only a handful of the Jewish stores on Thirteenth Avenue remained closed on Shabbos! Boro Park had only one antiquated mikvah and there was barely any support to build a new one. Many sincerely observant Jews hesitated to put up *sukkos*, as some of their neighbors reported them to the police as fire hazards. The fight was great, but with enormous devotion and *mesiras nefesh*, yeshivos and Bais Yaakovs were founded.

On Shabbos, *Parashas Balak*, I was among the forty or fifty young men who met in a private home in Boro Park to establish a minyan of Zeirei Agudas Yisroel. These were young Americans who longed to be loyal in every way to our *mesora*. Finally, in 1946, our minyan of Zeirei Agudas Yisroel acquired its own building.

On *Acharon shel Pesach* 5713 (1953), it rained from early morning until late in the evening. In the Agudah minyan, Rabbi Dr. Michael Munk, who was then principal of Bais Yaakov, discussed

and explained the significance of the upcoming *Birkas Hachama*. The next morning, *Isru Chag*, Wednesday, April 8, 1953, Fourteenth Avenue was packed with Agudists and *mispallelim* from the Sephardishe Shul. On this cloudy morning, these crowds had convened for the inauguration of the 205th *machzor hagadol*. They had all come to witness and to praise the recurring glory of Hashem's Creation.

My wife remained home with the little ones, and, as I gazed at my fellow *Yidden*, I thought of the past. During the years of the 204th *machzor* just completed, we had witnessed the tragedy, the devastation of thousand-year old Jewish communities, the murder and suffering of millions of *Yidden*, the silencing of Russian Jewry behind a sealed barrier, and the growth of vicious Arab hatred as the Zionist State was founded in their midst.

Back on the hill on the outskirts of Nuremberg, twenty-eight years earlier, I could never have foreseen how we would be uprooted, scattered, and yet, guided and replanted, saved by Hashem's infinite mercy and given the *zechus* to declare once again the *beracha* on the rising sun.

Yes, Torah had definitely been transported to America. The *she'eiris happleita* was integrated into our communities. I could now look ahead to this new *machzor* and pray for Hashem to light our way with continued *chessed verachamim* from which the new *doros* here in America could benefit, until *bi'as goeil tzeddek bimheira beyameinu, amen*. ☐

JOSEPH FRIEDENSON

OF SPIRITUAL HEROES

& COMPASSIONATE LEADERS

Memories of Events
During World War II



Germans abduct Jews for forced labor
Starving Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto



MR. FRIEDENSON IS THE FOUNDING EDITOR OF *DOS YIDDISHE VORT*, AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA'S YIDDISH-LANGUAGE JOURNAL OF THOUGHT AND OPINION.

The following article was translated and adapted by Elozor Halpert from a more expansive memoir that was featured in *Dos Yiddishe Vort*, in April last year, marking the 65th Yahrzeit of the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, which had taken place during Pesach 5703/1943.

A UNIQUE PEOPLE

WHEN THE STORY OF THE WARSAW GHETTO is more fully recounted, an interesting and inspiring fact emerges – that we are indeed a unique people. Despite the brutal conditions, despite the overcrowding, starvation, dreaded disease, cruel beatings at the hands of the Nazis and the constant terror, there were many individuals in the Ghetto who displayed enormous courage and selflessness. Notwithstanding the great *nisyonos* that they faced on a daily basis, they not only clung to their *Yiddishkeit*, but put their own terrible suffering aside to help others.

Before the war, more than 350,000 *Yidden* lived in Warsaw. When the Germans crammed the Jews into the Ghetto, the total was greater. Tens of thousands of Jews had fled to Warsaw from other towns and cities where they were recognized as Jewish leaders, among them hundreds of rebbes, rabbanim, and prominent *askanim* from all over western Poland, because they felt more secure as part of a larger populace.

Who can forget these *Yidden*? They were the cream of Polish Jewry, but their influence extended far beyond the borders of Poland – indeed, it reached the entire Jewish world. Agudas Yisroel of Poland was headquartered in Warsaw, the

great daily newspaper of Torah Jewry in Poland appeared there, major educational organizations such as Chorev and Bais Yaakov were based there, the Warsaw Mesivta and Yeshiva Emek Halacha, as well as other yeshivos, were there, too. Around a hundred and fifty *Chassidische shtieblach*, and innumerable Torah scholars and notable individuals also made their home in the city. Most of Polish Jewry's leaders wound up in the Ghetto, and even there, despite the fact that they had lost their official status, tried, insofar as possible, to carry out their *klal* work on many fronts.

THE WARSAW GHETTO

According to reliable sources, it would appear that the Warsaw Ghetto was prepared almost immediately after the Germans occupied Poland. This can be seen from the directive sent by Reinhard Heydrich (who was then head of German national security, and later gained infamy as one of the chief architects of the Nazi mass murder machine) at the end of September 1939, which refers to the immediate establishment of "Jewish districts." With characteristic German efficiency, preparations moved ahead rapidly, and a mere six or seven months after the order establishing the Ghetto was officially signed, the streets designated for Jewish residence were cordoned off from the rest of the city by solid walls three meters high. With a number of exceptions, it was strictly forbidden for Jews to leave or for Gentiles to enter the area. The gates were guarded by Polish and German police on the outside, and by the Jewish Ghetto police on the inside.

WIDESPREAD HUNGER

For the 350,000 residents of the "Jewish Residential District," as the Germans referred to it, the first consequence of being confined within the Ghetto walls was hunger. As long as Warsaw was an open city, with access to the surrounding villages, one could always arrange to obtain at least

the basics necessary for survival. But once the Jews were in effect imprisoned, at times, even getting bread was a problem. For the most part, then, the Ghetto residents depended for their survival on the rations doled out by the Germans. Unfortunately, a week's rations were in actuality barely enough to satisfy a person for a day.

One of the miracles that occurred in the Warsaw Ghetto (as opposed to Lodz, for example) was that here and there, the authorities permitted certain individu-

als to make a trip outside the Ghetto walls. This meant that for a price, food could be brought in from the outside. As welcome as this life-sustaining help was, however, it was far, far from what was required to keep such a substantial population alive.

One of the tragic scenes that I recall was the large number of starving people, particularly children, walking around. In just a matter of weeks, there were masses of skeletal people, barely alive, thronging the streets. Not too long

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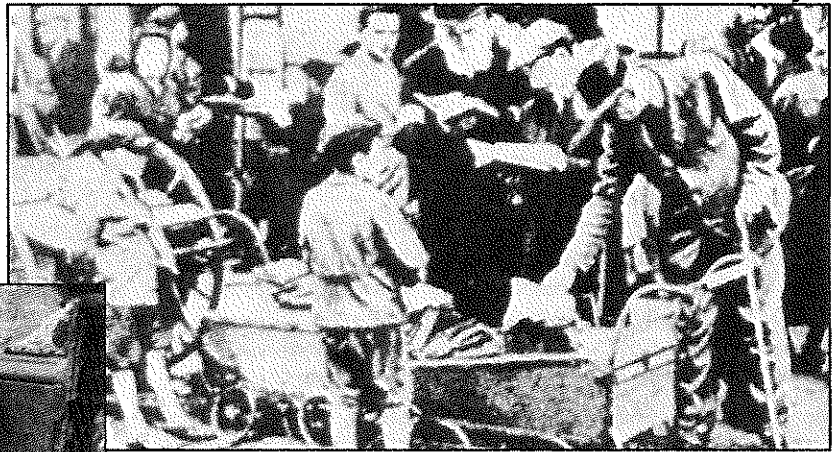
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Ghetto Wall



Starving children
in the Ghetto



after that, one could witness the tragic sight of people, young and old, literally expiring from starvation. There they lay, breathing their last, and shortly after that, they were covered with paper, until their corpses could be collected by the Chessed shel Emes wagons, and brought to the Warsaw *beis hachayim*.

ILLNESS AND FATIGUE

In the early months, there were some *Yidden* who managed to avoid going hungry. Most of these were individuals who had managed to smuggle some goods into the Ghetto, or who sold their personal clothing or household items. (Our own family managed to survive this way at first.) However, once these goods were sold off, the number of such “prosperous” individuals dwindled. Another limited number of people were able to receive parcels from the outside. The contents of these packages were bartered for such staples as flour, bread, or kasha. But most people in the Ghetto were not so fortunate, and had to struggle daily for their bread.

Aside from hunger, another deadly enemy that stalked the Ghetto was typhus. Because of the crowded conditions (an average of 7-8 people per room) and the lack of nourishment, the disease spread rapidly, and there were weeks when every household had at least one person lying in bed burning up with

a high fever, which was a hallmark of the terrible disease. Indeed, statistics show that even before the Nazis liquidated the Warsaw Ghetto, twenty percent of its inhabitants had already succumbed to hunger or disease.

Although the threat of typhus did keep some Germans from entering the Ghetto, they could not restrain themselves for long. Bands of SS and Gestapo men would “pay a visit” to the hapless Ghetto Jews, robbing them, terrorizing them, and beating them severely, sometimes fatally. In addition, trucks would cruise through the Ghetto to snatch away Jews for forced labor.

DESPITE THE TORMENT, RELIGIOUS LIFE WENT ON

The incredible thing about life in the Ghetto was that, despite the precarious and painful existence of its inhabitants, and despite the illness, hunger and deprivation that were rampant within its walls, Jews still clung to their *emuna* – they did not abandon their *bitachon* or their Torah way of life. Not only did the minyanim not cease (although they were officially forbidden), but at one time, there were 46 *chadarim* with 132 *melamdin* active in the Ghetto, along with 4 Bais Yaakov schools and approximately 20 Bais Yaakov teachers. To make them “legal,” these schools’ official function was to feed the children,

but along with the meager nourishment that they received, 3000 children were fed Torah and *Yiddishkeit*. There were also a number of yeshivos for boys in their teens, as well as *shtieblach* and *battei midrash* where *bachurim* and *yungeleit* would sit and learn, almost as they did in the pre-War years. There were also hundreds more who studied Torah at home on a regular basis. Moreover, when all commercial activity practically ceased, these men devoted themselves entirely to Torah.

There were even those who collected and bought *sefarim*. True, there weren’t any *sefarim* stores as such in the Ghetto, but there were stands on the street at which all sorts of goods were sold, and there one could find *sefarim*, as well. These usually attracted a large number of people, and even those who could not afford to purchase the holy books would stand and look through them, in order to quench their spiritual thirst.

UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE

Miraculously, I managed to escape from the Ghetto on the first of January, 1942. From what I subsequently heard and read, it’s clear that after that time, conditions in the Ghetto deteriorated. The “Final Solution” envisioned by the Nazis was picking up steam. For the residents of the Ghetto, this translated into a tidal

wave of beatings and executions. Despite the atmosphere of heightened terror, many still continued to display superhuman courage and moral strength, right up to, and even after, the deportations on Tisha Be'av, 1942.

When I think about the Ghetto (which I do quite often), I see in my mind's eye those brave souls, numbering in the thousands, who participated in secret minyanim morning and night. This carried with it a great risk, because those caught wearing tallis and tefillin received a severe beating. These courageous individuals earned their "kedoshim" status daily with such acts of heroism.

I am reminded of the hundreds of *bachurim* and *yungeleit* who sat and learned in clandestine *shtieblach*, sharing their meager meals with their friends and refusing to relinquish the clothing, and the beard and *payos*, that clearly identified them as Jews.

I also recall the hundreds and hundreds of Jews who distinguished themselves with their kindheartedness. They exhibited enormous *mesiras nefesh* for *bikur cholim*, courageously tending to the sick who were suffering from contagious illnesses, and performing countless other acts of *chesed*. I cannot forget the hundreds of *Yidden* who every day gave their bread away to hungry children, even though they barely had enough for themselves.

The Ghetto seemed to bring out the best also in those who were not so religious. On the street where I lived before the creation of the Ghetto, I had neighbors whom I would see in shul principally on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. In the Ghetto, despite the terrible conditions, these people did not succumb to the pressures, they did not lose their essential Jewish traits, and they were still *rachamanim*, *baishanim* and *gomlei chassadim*.

If even the "ordinary" people displayed extraordinary character traits in the Ghetto, one can imagine that the people who were "extraordinary" to begin with were in a class by themselves and truly distinguished themselves with their *ahavas habriyos*.

**REB MESHULEM
KAMINER AND REB
ZUSYA FRIEDMAN, זי"ד**

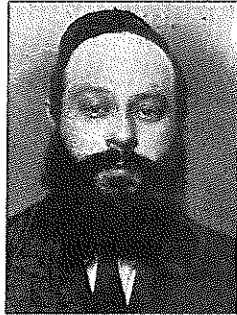
I recall, for example, Reb Meshulem Kaminer, ז"ל, *parnas* of the Warsaw *kehilla* and eminent Orthodox newspaper editor. After the Germans marched into Poland, he wrote a commentary on *Tehillim* in the Ghetto, which he had wanted to do earlier. He became a member of the *Judenrat* because he was promised that he would be put in charge of supervising the *beis hachayim*, a duty to which he devoted himself very conscientiously (and given the high death toll in the Ghetto, this was a very demanding job). He worked day and night to ensure that every *niftar* was given a decent burial (resisting German demands that everyone be buried together in mass *kevarim*).

Reb Meshulem also headed the so-called "Patronate," which was a committee devoted to supporting those in the Ghetto who devoted themselves to Torah learning, including rabbanim and *morei hora'a*. After the war, an interesting document came to light. It was a request from the Patronate to the clandestine "Joint" leaders for a continuation of support of the Patronate's activities after the *petira* of Reb Meshulem. The document noted that the Patronate distributed 700 lunches daily, and on

Shabbos dispensed over 1000 portions of cholent.

I also recall Reb Avrohom Mordechai Ragovy, זי"ד, the Warsaw *askan* and editor of the Orthodox *Yiddishe Tageblatt*, who, at great risk to himself, helped refugees and saw to it that hungry children were fed.

Who can forget Reb Alexander Zusya Friedman, author of *Die Torah Kvall*,¹ and for many years an admired leader of Polish Jewry! He was Secretary General of the Agudah, and the director of the Chorev organization. In the Ghetto, he was secretly designated by the Joint leaders to administer the support of the rabbanim, *rebbe'im* and other *klei kodesh* among the refugees. He was trusted implicitly by all parties to handle funds, and although he was a great scholar in his own right, he did not wait for his "clients" to come to him for their stipends, but would bring the funds to them. Dovid Guzick and Mr. Gitterman, the directors of the Joint in Warsaw, who greatly esteemed him, offered to help him acquire a larger apartment so



Rabbi Alexander Zusya Friedman, זי"ד

¹ Available in both Yiddish and English versions as *Mayana shel Torah*

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"IF HE CANNOT LEARN THE WAY WE TEACH, WE HAD BETTER TEACH THE WAY HE CAN LEARN"



(l-r) Rabbi Yechiel Weinberg, Rabbi Mendel Alter, and Rabbi Menachem Ziemia, ד"ר

These were among the many giants of spirit who sustained the Yidden in the Warsaw Ghetto materially as well as spiritually during a very difficult time.

that he could receive people properly. However, he politely declined. At a time when others had to sleep in cellars and the like, he felt that it would be improper to seek more comfortable accommodations for himself, even if his position warranted it.

REB ELIMELECH STEIER AND REB YITZCHAK RAVITCH, ד"ר

Among the personalities I can never forget are Reb Elimelech Steier and Reb Yitzchak Ravitch, ד"ר. R' Elimelech had been for many years an eminent journalist and editor. In the Ghetto, he headed a kitchen that fed impoverished children, and which quietly functioned as a *cheder*, as well.

Aside from being a talented writer and poet, Reb Elimelech was also an accomplished *talmid chacham*. We often studied *bechavrusa*, and during these sessions I was privileged to learn much from him. In his secret *cheder*, he devoted himself to teaching his young pupils *Alef Beis*, *kri'a*, and *Chumash*, a role which he took very seriously. He told me of one five-year-old child who was extremely bright, and who in the space of only two weeks learned how to

read. In no time, he was able to *daven* like an adult, and was learning *Chumash* and *Rashi*. "Such a child could become a *Ragatchover Gaon*," Reb Elimelech lamented bitterly, "but here we have this accursed war!"

His wife, a former Bais Yaakov teacher, told me that for the sake of teaching such budding geniuses, her husband would spend all day in the clandestine *cheder*, returning home only minutes before the curfew, drenched in perspiration. It was very dangerous to be caught on the street after curfew, but he felt that it was worth risking his life in order to teach young children Torah in the Ghetto!

Reb Yitzchak Ravitch was a leading *askan* in Zeirei Agudas Yisroel, and a highly skilled journalist, as well. In the Ghetto, he was assigned the role of *kashrus mashgiach* in a kitchen that distributed free lunches to writers and artists who had lost their jobs.

These people, who were all secularly oriented, were impressed by the fact that Reb Yitzchak, despite his unrestricted access to the kitchen, was extremely conscientious about not taking as much as an extra bite of food for himself, in order to avoid being *gozel es harabbim*.

(It should be noted that even after eating those meals, most people remained hungry.)

In addition, and though this was not part of his official duties, Reb Yitzchak would personally deliver meals to those who were prevented from coming to the kitchen by illness or by embarrassment. By his noble conduct, Reb Yitzchak was *mekadeish Sheim Shamayim* on a daily basis.

OTHER PEOPLE OF EMINENCE

One of the personalities who is especially vivid in my memory is Reb Yehuda Leib Orlean, director of the Bais Yaakov Seminary in Crakow and spiritual leader of the Bais Yaakov movement in Poland. From his cramped apartment, he sent letters of *chizuk* to the teachers in Bais Yaakov schools in various small towns, (even though there were times when he did not even have enough money for the postage stamps,) giving the teachers the encouragement they needed to continue their work, and imbuing them with hope for a better future. Even though he himself was impoverished, he took it upon himself to look after the needs

of the Bais Yaakov *moros* who wound up in Warsaw and had no relatives to care for them.²

There were a number of eminent rebbe'im in the Ghetto who also worked ceaselessly to lessen the effects of the harsh conditions that prevailed there.³ Despite their own poverty, and ignoring their own grief and pain after having lost close family members, they called upon their last reserves of strength in order to encourage others and bolster their crushed spirits. They led minyanim and even conducted *tischen* to keep alive the spirit of *Yiddishkeit*.

There were many others who deserve mention. Prominent among them was the Pobianitzer-Kalisher Rav, Reb Mendele Alter, רמ"ד, the youngest brother of the Gerer Rebbe, the Imrei Emes, רמ"ל. Before the war, he had been head of the Agudas Harabbanim, and during the war, he held himself responsible in particular for the welfare of the rabbanim among the refugees, and labored diligently day and night to ensure that they would not go hungry. (After the passing of Reb Meshulem Kaminer, he took over the leadership of the Patronate, which – as mentioned earlier – was the committee responsible for sustaining *lomdei Torah* in the Warsaw Ghetto.)

Of great help in this work was, among others, Harav Dr. Yechiel Weinberg, ר"ד, a *gadol baTorah* from Lithuania (known in the Torah world as the *Ba'al Seridei Eish*), who for many years had been head of the Hildesheimer Seminary in Berlin. Rabbi Weinberg was of particular value in the effort to sustain the rabbanim in the Ghetto. He was a citizen of Lithuania, with a little Lithuanian flag pinned on the lapel of his rabbinic frock. As such, he was allowed greater

freedom of movement by the Germans, and thus was able to act on behalf of Rav Mendel Alter, Rav Menachem Ziemba, ר"מ, and the other *gedolei harabbanim* who dedicated themselves to the support effort. He therefore volunteered to act as a liaison between the rabbanim who needed help and those who were mobilized to help them.

And of course, Rav Menachem Ziemba himself was revered among the *Yidden* in the Ghetto. Even there, he did not stop learning; at the same time, he was also great in *chessed*, and

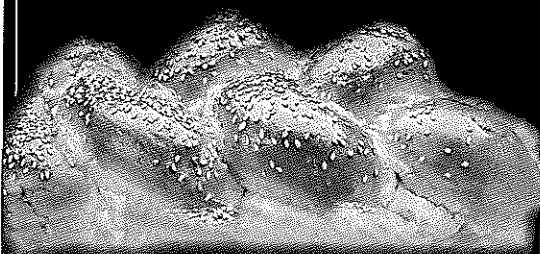
bolstered the spirits of the *Yidden* with his inspiring leadership.

These were among the many giants of spirit who sustained the *Yidden* in the Warsaw Ghetto materially as well as spiritually during a very difficult time. Some of them had already been recognized and revered as *gedolim* before the war. Others were just "ordinary folks" whose true inner greatness became apparent when they displayed super-human courage and selflessness under inhuman conditions. *Mi ke'amcha Yisroel!* □

2 I could mention many other great *askanim* who were active in the Ghetto: Harav Shimshon Stockhammer, Reb Eizik Ber Ackerman, Reb Avrohom Modechai Krongrad, Reb Yoel Ungar, and my late father, Reb Eliezer Gershon Friedenson, ר"ד. They and many others like them worked tirelessly for others, even though they did not have enough for their own families.


3 These included the Piaseczner Rebbe, the Alexander Rebbe, the Sochatchover Rebbe, the Radomsker Rebbe, the Krimlover Rebbe, the Strickover Rebbe, רמ"ל, and others.

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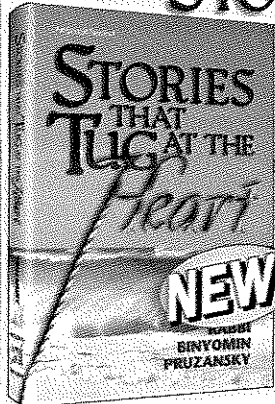
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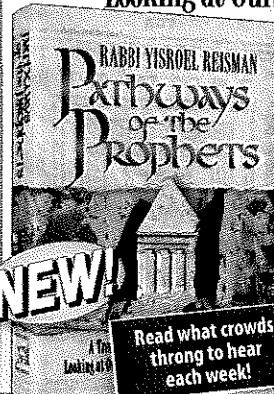
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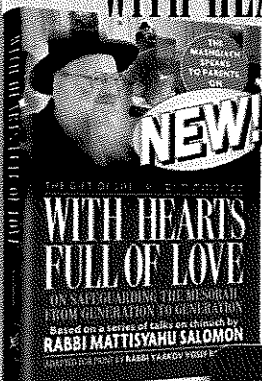


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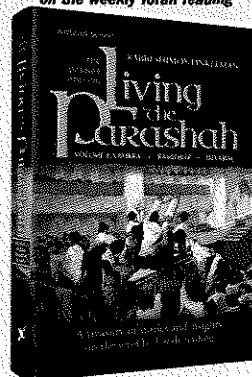
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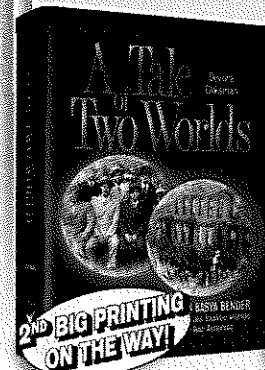
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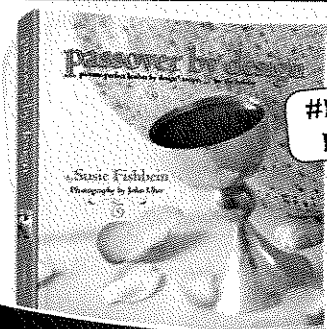
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