

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

FIFTY CENTS  
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**What Makes News 'Fit to Print'  
in The New York Times.**

**על הנסים ועל השנאה**

**Israel's New Coalition**

**second looks  
at the jewish scene**

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# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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Yaakov Jacobs

# What Makes News 'Fit to Print' in The New York Times.

AMERICA HAS ENDOWED ITS NEWSPAPERS WITH SUCH an aura of reverence that an attack on the press is considered to be a blow against the nation itself. Newspapers consider it their responsibility to maintain constant scrutiny of all public institutions, and jealously guard their right to snoop into the private lives of citizens who are in the public eye. Yet rarely is the newspaper itself subject to such careful scrutiny, unless they overstep their rights and stand accused of libel.

On top of this press structure sits *The New York Times*, wearing in its left "ear" the motto: "All the News That's Fit to Print." *The Times* is known as a "newspaper of record," and nothing really happens unless it is recorded in *The Times*. The historian who wants to establish a fact, or the debater who wishes to bolster his case, has only to produce a citation from *The New York Times*, and he has made his point. Who would dare question the accuracy of anything which appears in *The Times*, whose austere and sedate pages inspire utmost confidence.

And yet, the individual reader of *The Times* who is particularly close to a given area or subject will often find cracks in the solid wall of accuracy. Over the years, for example, those close to the center of Jewish communal life in America have had good reason to seriously doubt the accuracy of *Times* reporting of Jewish affairs in this country and in relation to the State of Israel. In view of the influence that *The Times* exerts on the thinking of so many Americans who are themselves in positions of influence, we recently spent some time studying coverage of Jewish affairs as listed in the *Annual Index of The New York Times*. Our study was hardly exhaustive, and yet certain patterns soon emerged.

Most of us think of a newspaper story as being the result of a reporter with a press-card tucked into his hat scurrying about, interviewing people, checking background material, digging into the newspaper morgue with its exhaustive files, and then banging out his story on a typewriter. A good deal of Jewish news in *The Times* originates in a much less dramatic fashion. An editor opens the morning mail and finds a batch of mimeographed sheets headed by the words: "For Immediate Release," and opening somewhat like this: "Max Ginsburg, president of the . . . declared today that American Jews, who have . . . for the past three hundred years . . . will not tolerate any . . ." By its

very nature, the press release is calculated to get coverage in *The Times*, and what Mr. Ginsburg "declared" must catch the fancy of a bored editor who has been assigned to fill a given amount of space. "And furthermore, Mr. Ginsburg emphasized, the record will bear out this contention."

The release may close by identifying Mr. Ginsburg as a prominent optometrist and the organization which he heads as representing hundreds of thousands of American Jews, but it leaves some questions unanswered. What sort of authority is this man? Are his facts correct? How many members does his group really have? And does Mr. Ginsburg really speak for them? More than likely the group's public relations man called Mr. Ginsburg at his office and the conversation went something like this:

"Max, the Supreme Court just ruled on the . . . case; I think we ought to react. . . ."

"Bob, I'm tied up with a pair of contact lenses—you whip up a statement and get it over to *The Times*."

The next day the statement appears in *The Times* and its readers are told what American Jewry has to say on the Supreme Court's latest decision. A copy of the newspaper goes to the New York Public Library where it is ultimately bound into a heavy volume to be studied by future Ph. D. candidates who are researching some aspect of American Jewish life. The unanswered questions remain unanswered, the facts in the statement are not checked, the public and future historians are misinformed. But Ginsburg is happy and the public relations man hums a tune as his secretary dutifully clips the statement from *The Times* and pastes it into a scrap-book. It will ultimately become part of a montage of clippings that the members will receive in their monthly bulletin, causing them to exclaim, "Those boys at national really are keeping busy."

Of course *The Times* doesn't print the entire statement; it is boiled down and appears at the tail-end of the reaction-to-the-Supreme-Court-decision story, or in a separate story headed JEWISH LEADERS HAIL . . . or JEWISH LEADERS HIT . . . They do not include every release, but for those who don't make *The Times* very often, there is the pre-holiday statement bonanza. Before every *Yom Tov*, almost without fail, *The Times* will report that the holiday is indeed arriving (JEWISH FETE SET), and that Jewish leaders have addressed themselves to the problems of the world in the light of

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Anybody with nothing to say can say it by mass communication if he has a knowing press agent, or a considerable reputation, or an active pressure group behind him, whereas, even with such advantages, anybody with something to say has a hard time getting it said by mass communication if it runs counter to the ideas of owners, editors, opposing pressure groups or popular prejudice.

The modern press . . . can spread lies faster and farther than our forefathers dreamed when they enshrined the freedom of the press in the First Amendment to our Constitution.

From: *A Free and Responsible Press*  
a report by the COMMISSION ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, University of Chicago Press.

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the forthcoming festival. To cite an example, the following is the *Times Index* listing for 1964 under the heading JEWS, Holy Days. (Each citation is followed by month, date, page and column in which the article appeared.)

HIGH HOLY DAYS . . . Rosh Ha-Shanah message by President Johnson, Jewish leaders, S 6, 32:1; . . . observance coincides with Labor day, S 8, 21:7; . . . Yom Kippur messages from US Jewish leaders, S 13, 123:1; S 15, 16:7; . . . PASSOVER: Passover messages from US Jewish leaders, Mr 26, 39:2; PURIM: fete set; messages by US Jewish leaders . . .

But even in this catch-all for Jewish public relations, not every statement makes it. Yet one detects a pattern in the continued appearance of statements by certain groups: They are groups who have a public relations director, or a free-lancer on a retainer, who has a working relationship with the religious desk at *The Times*.

Another source of Jewish news is the conference and the convention. When a Jewish group convenes its constituency, *The Times* will send their man to cover it—if, that is, there is a working relationship. Here the process is much the same except that the releases are handed directly to the reporter and there may also be one or two 'interviews' where the organization's officials supply both the questions and the answers. Again, everything is geared to being newsworthy and winning coverage but there is no attempt—and no apparent desire—for the kind of probing and reporting which is basic to journalism.

Journalists and critics of journalism, writing in trade magazines and professional journals, have noted that much of today's 'news' actually reports what they have described as 'pseudo-events.' A 'pseudo-event'—unlike the product of traditional reporting—is not a report of something that has happened; it might be a text of an address released for publication before its actual delivery, a text of an address or report, or the result of a press conference convened for the express purpose of getting some opinions into print where they can be seen by hundreds of thousands or millions of

readers. It is not surprising then, that Jewish news should be developed in this manner. Our objection is that while reports of 'pseudo-events' are often followed by questioning and probing by the press, in the case of Jewish news the 'pseudo-event' is the end of the line.

A further reading of the *Times Index* reveals another pattern in Jewish news. The rare instances where *The Times* follows traditional journalistic practice by sending out a reporter to get the story, are most often in covering what *The Times* quaintly describes as the "Hasidic sects." There is of course good reason for this. Chassidic groups in New York City have not become sufficiently Americanized to have adopted the press-release technique of bringing their sentiments to the public; only a reporter doing actual leg-work can bring in the facts. And, in almost every such instance, the reports are so distorted as to be amusing in an absurd way. In describing Williamsburg's Chassidic community, for example, *The Times* reporter correctly observes that most Chassidic Jews wear beards; but he adds, that those who do not wear beards SHAVE WITH A RAM'S HORN.\*

In another story, *The Times* reporter describes the Chassidic children with their black hats and side-curls, and then declares that each Chassidic child is considered a prince, "and therefore they are not permitted to play games."

In describing some of the problems of Williamsburg's Chassidic community *The Times* man writes: ". . . The leveling of the tenements and the coming of the high-rise apartment houses are causing concern among them. Among a score of Sabbath prohibitions, the members are not to ride elevators on Saturday." In this and other instances, *The Times* gives the impression that only Chassidic Jews abide by these restrictions.

In scanning the *Annual Index* we find that the listings open with the names of various national groups—American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, Union of Hebrew Congregations, etc.—indicating clearly that in the battle for coverage, the secular and non-Orthodox Jewish groups come out far ahead. But Orthodoxy is not totally skipped over; the Rabbinical Council of America has occasional coverage of presidential statements and declarations, and all its conferences and conventions are covered and reported by the Jewish reporter for *The Times* who enjoys an amiable relationship with top leaders and officials of the R. C. A. to the extent that they call each other by their first-names.

What happens then is this: The secular and non-Orthodox Jewish groups do quite well with *The Times*, with Zionist groups lagging somewhat behind—a reflec-

\* We suspect *The Times* man asked someone in the street how Chassidim shave and was told "with a shav(f)er," and when he asked someone else what a 'shav(f)er' is, he was told it is a ram's horn; and so, q.e.d., Chassidim shave with a ram's horn.

tion of *The Times'* old hostility to Zionism. The Rabbinical Council, and more recently the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, while still "poor cousins," get some share of the coverage. The Chassidic groups are the beneficiaries of actual reporting distorted though it may be, and . . . the bulk of the committed Orthodoxy in this country represented by the Agudas Harabbonim, Agudath Israel, Poalei Agudath Israel, and Young Israel, is almost non-existent as far as readers of *The Times* are aware. These groups are the hard-core of American Orthodoxy and consequently of American Jewry. Their constituents populate and staff the yeshivos and day-schools, and are generally the more observant Jews involved in Jewish life in all of its manifestations.

News from Israel which appears in *The Times* is not censored; they do have a correspondent and several freelancers in the country. But the stories always carry an official slant and it is quite obvious that *The Times* man has good contacts with the government. The classic case, which has already been documented\* but should be noted in this context, is *The Times* handling of the demonstrations against missionary establishments in Israel. A four-column headline (Sept. 11, 1963) screamed: ZEALOTS IN ISRAEL RAID A CHURCH OF SCOTLAND SCHOOL, and went on to report:

"Ultra-Orthodox Jews stormed into the Church of Scotland school in Jaffa today, beating the children and causing considerable damage. . . . Premier Levi Eshkol, in a statement declared that the Government takes a grave view of these incidents and condemns them as they contradict law and good order. He promised that those responsible would be brought to trial and that steps would be taken to prevent a recurrence. . . .

"The disturbance at the Church of Scotland school was the worst such episode since the Finnish mission school here was extensively damaged last January.

"As the zealots stormed in, they screamed in Hebrew and English, and blew the shofar, the sacred ram's horn.

"Miss Jean Rosie, headmistress, said the zealots beat up the smaller pupils and slapped and jostled the teachers. She said her glasses were knocked off.

"The ultra-Orthodox rioters spread through the classrooms, smashing tables and chairs, tearing up books and breaking windows. In Jaffa as in Jerusalem, the police sped to the scenes of trouble to arrest and disperse the zealots."

The facts were later proven to be false; there were no beatings, there was no destruction of property; mission officials themselves denied these charges in court.

*The Times* obviously felt the story was important; the *Annual Index* for 1963 shows the following:

"Jewish Zealots break into Church of Scotland school, Jaffa, beat children and damage property; try to enter other Christian schools and missions, Jaffa and Jerusalem; condemned by Premier Eshkol; Greek Cath Abp Hakim repts being molested, Jaffa, S 11, 11:1; raids protested by Brit and French officials; Israeli officials pledge to punish offenders, prevent recurrence; zealot leaders D. Lipshitz and A. Ravitch deny personal or

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*In all sections of the press, all sorts of semi-voluntary restrictions are being constantly applied. In type, they range from withholding such information as the preparations for the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion (for the best, or at least the most patriotic, reasons) to not reporting errors in reporting. (The press notoriously does not criticize itself.) In form, the restrictions range from simple omission (and simple lack of space may be the cause) to deliberately keying up some minor item thought to be, if keyed up, of "reader interest."*

From a book review in *The New York Times*  
February 18, 1966

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property damage, say aim was to highlight alleged (sic) missionary activities; 3 groups of Amer rabbis condemn raids, S 12, 11:1.  
Cabinet approves speedy trial for zealots responsible for demonstrations against Christian mission schools, S 16, 6:8.

"10 zealots fined, get suspended prison sentences for raids on Christian mission schools, O, 1, 7:2; . . . 104 zealots go on trial, Jerusalem, for Sept 10 demonstration against Christian school; 9 being tried Haifa, O 16, 19:1; . . . 8 zealots fined, get suspended jail terms for Sept demonstration against Christian mission school, Haifa; 15-year old student put on probation, N 5, 5:5.

But the *Index* shows no apology or retraction of the false charges of injuries and damages which were denied by the alleged victims on the witness stand, and which were a slander against the yeshiva students involved as well as all of Torah Jewry.

The constant use of the inflammatory word "zealots" by *The Times* and their constant repetition of the stone-throwing slander in reporting Shabbos demonstrations, give the reader the impression that religious Jews in Israel are primitive aborigines who are completely detached from the realities of modern life and are still living in the Dark Ages.

We have no morals to draw from what we have briefly noted; only a warning. *The New York Times* is one of the strongest influences in American life. Its reporting molds the thinking of many Jews, and of the non-Jew in relation to the Jew.

Much that appears in *The Times* ultimately finds its way into the dispatches of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency which supplies news to most every English-language Jewish newspaper in the United States and Canada. Appearing in print with a New York or Jerusalem dateline and the indication (JTA), it is accepted as the absolute truth.

The warning—let no Jew who wishes to be informed on Jewish life in America accept at face value the Jewish news which appear in *The New York Times*. A warning also to Orthodoxy: if we want the non-Orthodox community to understand our positions, we must do better than we have in the past in communicating our positions to our own people and to the American public.

\* THE JEWISH OBSERVER, March, 1964.

# על הנוסים ועל השנאה

*The following is a translation of an article which appeared in Maariv, Israel's most popular independent newspaper. It was written by Shmuel Shnitzer of Maariv's staff and appeared on Friday, December 24, 1965, while Jews in Israel and throughout the world were celebrating Chanukah.*

*The article was widely discussed among Israeli Jews and has been reprinted in a number of publications. We have retained the original Hebrew title, which would lose everything in translation.*

*Mr. Shnitzer takes a unique approach to the problem of the kulturkampf which divides Israeli Jewry. While he describes himself as a secular Jew, Mr. Shnitzer achieves an objectivity which one rarely finds in the secular camp.*

*It is this objectivity which prompts us to publish this article, in spite of Shnitzer's conclusions which are based on the premise that the Jewish people have the choice to accept or reject Torah, a premise which is totally unacceptable to Torah Jewry.*

*Perhaps his words are only a breath of fresh air which the winds will quickly dissipate; perhaps it foretells a turning point in the thinking of secular Jews in Israel. In any case, we offer this translation to our readers in the hope that it will shed light on a problem which must be of concern to every Jew whose heart beats in unison with the heart of Klal Yisroel.*

From the windows of every home the small flames of the Chanukah lights flicker, calling to mind deeds of days gone by. When we were young and more innocent, deeds of such wonder and surprise generated great enthusiasm in our hearts. But now that we have grown older and wiser, they stir within us a sense of uneasiness.

In the past everything about the miracle of Chanukah was quite simple; it was clear whose side we were on in the dramatic struggle of the "few" against the "many." Man, by his nature, supports the weak against the strong, even when the struggle is unrelated to him; and he extends his sympathies to the "Davids" against the "Goliaths." This was certainly the case in this war of the "good" against the "wicked," and the "pure" against the "un-pure," and there was never any doubt who were the pure and who the impure.

But today, in this advanced and

sophisticated generation, the division is not quite clear. In a time of a "Shabbos Law," disputes over the port of Ashdod, "religious coercion," and a stubborn rabbinate, we need re-think the entire *parsha* of the rebellion of the Maccabees. We must re-examine their objectives and philosophies to determine if they were really so right. It may become clear to us that in the light of the wisdom we have accumulated in recent years, their victory was not a victory for freedom, but rather for reaction. We may come to the conclusion that the ideas which motivated the battle against the Greeks were not so sublime as they first appear to be. It may prove to be the case that modern man living in the twentieth century would be embarrassed to be associated with such ideals.

Let us then attempt to translate the recounting of the war of the Maccabees into the idiom of the present to determine how it would

appear to the eyes of a citizen of the modern State of Israel.

First we must ask ourselves which side in that war represented progress, and which side represented reaction and a blind clutching at the values of the past.

IT IS CERTAINLY NOT SELF-EVIDENT that the zealous and provincial family, from the outskirts of a town in a small suburb of Judah, represented progress. Had Matisyohu and his sons read Plato? Were they familiar with the teachings of Aristotle? Was there a theater in Modin where one could see the works of Aristophanes, Sophocles or Euripedes? It is hardly likely. More likely, the Maccabees were essentially opposed to "culture," to the universal culture which had encompassed the civilized world and developed the aesthetic sense of all the nations. What justified these provincials in standing up against the glory of Greek civilization? Was

it the spiritual isolationism of a small tribe which rejected anything new and *any change*? Was it the petrified laws established a thousand years earlier? their "Shabbos Law"? their "religious coercion"? their violent opposition to raising pigs? Was it with these ideals that they hoped to defeat Greek culture?

And what chauvinism these Maccabees had! In a time when the nationhood of their people was a thing of the past—when the bell had tolled for the great empires, they sought to renew the independence of their tiny tribe and withdrew from a mighty empire that opened the door for them to the entire range of culture, to set up a small nationalistic enclave which would serve as a testing ground for ancient ideas and a hot-house for developing new strains of fanaticism.

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### *Who Was Right?*

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Without doubt, Antiochus Ephiphanes was right, and not Matisyohu Hakohen; particularly in light of the behavior of the Maccabees when success began to smile upon them. Having murdered a government official who was only doing his duty, Matisyohu fled to the hills and together with his sons organized a campaign of guerilla warfare against progress (without, of course, seeking a consensus from the other citizens of the land, and ignoring the official governing bodies which were opposed to the war).

When they conquered, they went up to Jerusalem, and—without conducting an election—they drove all of the hellenists from their positions, and established martial law with religious coercion—by all indications more severe than what exists today.

More so; within days these religious zealots converted their provincialism into a state; a state which was totally theocratic. Residents of the occupied areas were given a choice between conversion and death. Those who did not agree

with the violent and chauvinistic views of the new rulers were subject to capital punishment.

Ultimately the new rulers extended their domain to the port of Ashdod, and if we may draw conclusions from their general attitudes, they most likely forbade all work on Shabbos. We can also assume that tourists of those days did not find accommodations in the Maccabean hotels for bacchanalian celebrations.

They achieved national independence; but rather than using it to establish a progressive government open to the influences of the times; rather than adopting Greek expansiveness and opening their doors to the influences of civilization, they converted their land into a spiritual ghetto where all the wisdom of Greece was banned. . . .

Were they with us today, we would be forced to organize a "League" against them; to solicit progressive citizens to sign petitions, and to organize an information campaign against their narrow-mindedness, their fanaticism and their obscurantist views. It was their good fortune that they passed away many years ago, and so we are now able to proclaim them as national heroes.

*An interesting paradox isn't it?—but we are living this paradox today.*

WE DON'T EXTINGUISH THE CHANUKAH lights in protest against the "religious coercion" of the Maccabees. We kindle the lights, we fry the *latkes*, and we recite the *b'racha* "for the miracles" . . . and we wage an absurd war against the Jewish faith.

We may not realize—or we may have sublimated our realization—that we are one of the few nations in the world today which tolerates an organized campaign against the Jewish faith; one of the few nations wherein the treasures of Jewish culture are publicly denigrated from the roof-tops; one of the few nations wherein hatred is poured out against religious Jews—because they are religious Jews.

But, we will respond, these things

are done in Russia, not in Israel! We even make it our responsibility to demand freedom of religion for Jews—every *other* place in the world. We rise in the international tribunals of the world to protest the failure to permit Jews to pray, to observe Shabbos and Kashrus, to circumcise their sons, to bury their dead in keeping with Jewish law—in *other* countries.

And we fail to realize, that here in the land of the Jews a dangerous wall is being built between the irreligious Jew and the religious Jew; ugly strains of hatred are developing; an attitude of mockery grows toward the Jew who observes mitzvohs—an attitude which until today prevailed only in the most antisemitic countries.

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### *A Dangerous Wall*

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We fail to realize that for the Orthodox Jew it is becoming difficult to breathe here; he is suspect in the eyes of the secular Jew. Nasty libels which recall the libels of antisemites against Jews are taking root: *The "religious" want to take over the country; they are buying up land to strengthen their position; they are engaged in a war of conquest in order to step-by-step force their views on the entire land.*

We fail to realize that the opposite is taking place: What is happening is that more and more secular Jews who in the past related to religious Jews with tolerance and understanding (as it should be in a civilized society) are beginning to relate to them with hatred and constant opposition. It may reach the state that a man who observes mitzvohs may no longer feel himself at home in this country.

ANTISEMITISM HAS FREQUENTLY been used as a tool for political movements to achieve otherwise undesirable aims. The Nazis gained power in Germany by the use of hatred against the Jew which made

it possible to unite the Right and the Left into a single force against the "plutocratic" Jews and the "bolshevistic" Jews. I fear and suspect, that hatred against religious Jewry is beginning to serve this purpose in Israel's political life. Mouthings libels and slanders and through proven techniques which were previously used against *all* Jews, various political factions are attempting to gain easy popularity in order to strengthen their positions for matters unrelated to the question of religion.

Familiar devices are used, inspired by the propaganda from whose poisoned wells European Fascism drank in the thirties. Using similar caricatures of Jews with beard and *paños* and traditional dress, they spread the idea that if a port is closed on Shabbos it would be a threat to each citizen's freedom. After all, in a truly free land people should work seven days a week, and should they rest for one day—the country would be in the clutches of the religious minority.

The notion is deliberately spread that we have solved all problems of national productivity, but in order to achieve the high level of other countries all that is lacking is that there be work shifts on Friday nights.

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### *Flames are Fanned*

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With calculated malice, a technical problem is made out to be a matter of principle; differences are sharpened; the flames of conflict are fanned. As small a matter as traveling several hundred extra meters on Shabbos in order to avoid offense to one's fellow, becomes a major national issue, and a principle for which one must choose death rather than transgression.

Jew is urged to hate Jew, and the Jewish state girds its loins to battle the Jewish faith.

The dangerous poison of hatred of religion continues to permeate

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*"All of the religions of the world are relevant to the times, but we relegate Judaism to the Middle Ages."*

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our hearts and minds. Slowly we are being led to believe that all of the religions of the world are relevant to the times, but we relegate Judaism to the Middle Ages. All religions must be offered every advantage and potential, but the Jewish faith must be denied consideration. A Xmas tree in an Israeli hotel—most necessary; but Shabbos rest in Ashdod is ugly, degrading and must be forbidden.

The poison is seeping up to the top. The number of people is diminishing, who dare to state publicly and clearly their belief that it is possible to find a *modus vivendi*, that there is no need for the tensions engendered by the question of religion, that there is no problem that cannot be solved with a little understanding and broad-mindedness, and mutual respect.

The position that there is no room here for religious war and that the State of Israel should guarantee the religious Jew every potential for the religious life, as is the case in non-Jewish nations, is losing its appeal in the atmosphere of divisiveness brought about by those who conspire against the unity of our people. The simple realization that internal peace must come before external peace; that differences between Jews are easier to resolve, and should more readily be resolved—than differences between Jews and non-Jews, is no longer "in style." The pacifist in foreign affairs becomes the militarist on the home front. Those who are prepared to make compromises with the nation's borders in order to achieve even dubious peace with our enemies from *without*, are not prepared to yield even a drive through a religious area [on Shabbos] to achieve peace with

our brothers *within* the land. The reasoning is quite simple. Abdul Nasser and Hussein, apparently, are concerned with the well-being of Israel; Moshe Shapiro seeks to undermine it.

When this approach becomes the official position of top leaders; when it gains support among the masses; when coalition negotiations reach a dead-end because all problems but that of religion can be resolved; then the time has come to sound the alarm; then it becomes obvious that the agitators who are interested in destroying national unity and set Jew against Jew, have succeeded in their work to a greater extent than we realized, and to a greater extent than we dare permit.

This can be counted as a victory for those who desire conflict; who seek to zealously undermine the limited Jewish strength and its strongholds; who have tried in the past to loosen the bonds which tie the Jew in Israel to the Jew in the *Gola*, and who now endeavor to blur the bit of unity we still enjoy. But those who believe in the common destiny and in the unity of our people in spite of differences and points of view, must understand that religious Jews and non-religious Jews dare not be torn apart in the land which holds the remnants of Jewish existence and Jewish hopes.

Whoever is convinced that we are one people, whether religious or secular; that we share one destiny, must know that he shoulders a historic responsibility when he decrees that in the State of Israel Jewish religion must be in the opposition, because those values which prompted the Maccabees to go to war, are only able to arouse shame and hatred in our eyes.



# Who Has the Right to Speak for the Entire Religious Jewish Community?

In response to public debate on the war in Viet Nam, the Synagogue Council of America issued a statement which was reported by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency as follows:

*NEW YORK, Jan. 16, (JTA) — In an unprecedented step, the rabbinic and lay leaders of Conservative, Orthodox and Reform Judaism in the U.S. joined last night in a plea to President Johnson to resist pressures for escalating the war in Viet Nam if the Administration's current peace offensive should fail.*

*The action came in a policy statement issued by the Synagogue Council of America, coordinating agency for six congregational and rabbinical bodies representing over 3,500,000 American Jews. The appeal to President Johnson marked the first time that the entire Jewish religious community has taken a position on an international issue going beyond immediate Jewish concern . . .*

*The Synagogue Council statement voiced "deep concern" that if the present halt in the bombing of North Viet Nam failed to elicit a positive response from Hanoi, "discouragement and frustration might alter the present character of the conflict as a limited war for limited goals. The danger of new pressures for unlimited escalation of the war resulting from impatience and disappointment is grave indeed," the Jewish leaders cautioned. "Such an escalation would not only fail to achieve our goals; it would also ultimately involve the world in a war of mutual destruction."*

*"Our religious conscience compels us to exert every influence so that the action in Viet Nam can be moved from the battlefield to the negotiating table," the Synagogue Council statement said. "We recognize that those who see the need for checking Communist subversion by military means are no less dedicated to the cause of a just world peace than those who believe the*

*United States must cease hostilities in Viet Nam. We do believe, however, that the imperatives of our religious commitments call for the recommendations we prayerfully put forward and commend to the attention of our synagogues throughout the land . . ."*

*The Synagogue Council commended President Johnson's action in halting the bombing of Viet Nam, declaring: "It serves as a convincing demonstration that despite pressures from some quarters for a military solution to the problem, the purpose of our military effort in Viet Nam remains one that is aimed at speeding an honorable settlement. It is also a convincing demonstration of the integrity of President Johnson's public expressions of our willingness to negotiate unconditionally."*

On January 18, 1966, Agudath Israel of America took issue with the Synagogue Council in these words:

*We deplore the intervention by the Synagogue Council in the current controversy over American policy in Vietnam, because it creates a false image of the position taken by the Jewish citizens of our country in this delicate and complex area. By joining the chorus of ill-informed advisers seeking to bind the hands of the President in the Vietnam conflict, the Synagogue Council may unwittingly strengthen the intransigent posture of the adversaries of the United States, and thus harm the cause of peace.*

*In the Synagogue Council statement, the entire Jewish community is projected as implying that our administration is not itself sincerely enough seeking every avenue of restoring peace without broadening the conflict, and is in need of outside restraint. To attribute such a position to the entire Jewish community in this country is a disservice to its Jewish citizens.*

*The Synagogue Council cannot speak in behalf of the Orthodox Jews in the United States as the majority of the American Orthodox rabbinic organizations have rejected membership in this agency on religious principles. On the issue of*

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RABBI CHAIM D. KELLER, Rosh Yeshiva in the Chicago branch of Telshe, is a frequent contributor.

*Vietnam policy, the Synagogue Council probably cannot even speak in the name of their Reform and Conservative Jewish constituents, as this involves a highly complicated problem outside the realm of the ordinary policies established by the members of their affiliated groups.*

*A consensus of American Jewry will probably indicate overwhelming confidence in the desire of the President and his administration for peace and the containment of the Vietnam conflict. Involving the American Jewish community as a faction in the raging controversy creates headlines but does not serve the cause of peace nor the interests of the Jewish community.*

The *Chicago Jewish Sentinel*, in an editorial published on February 3rd, criticized Agudath Israel for arguing, "that politics was not a business of the rabbis and [for its position] that the Council ought to step out of the controversy."

A fair reading of the statement of Agudath Israel will demonstrate that it did not tell rabbis that politics

is not their business and that "they should stick to religion." The main emphasis of the statement is that by its involvement in the Viet Nam controversy, the Synagogue Council statement, in the words of JTA, "marked the first time that the entire Jewish religious community has taken a position on an international issue going beyond immediate Jewish concern."

As the Agudah statement clearly points out, the Synagogue Council has no right to speak for the "entire Jewish religious community" on this delicate issue, or on any other issue for that matter. The hard core of the Orthodox community and their rabbinic leaders have from its very inception to this day, rejected participation in the Synagogue Council.

It is seriously questionable too, if the Council can speak even in the name of their own constituents. At the recent winter conference of the Rabbinical Council of America, a constituent of the S.C.A., the membership took its president to task for having authorized the Viet Nam statement and proceeded to pass a resolution contrary to the spirit of the Synagogue Council statement.

### *What Is the Real Issue?*

The issue is not the right of any rabbi or member of the clergy to speak out on public affairs. If individual rabbis, or heads of national groups choose to speak in their own names or on behalf of their groups, this is certainly their prerogative. But . . . they have no right to speak for "the entire Jewish religious community." What adds irony to the situation is the statement issued by Reform Jewish leaders expressing "shock and dismay" over public statements made by the Jewish War Veterans of America in support of U.S. policy in Viet Nam. "Any group of Americans or any organization is free to take whatever position it sees fit," they benevolently declared, but severely criticized J.W.V. for, ". . . the arrogance . . . in presuming to speak for American Jewry at large." Of course, the Synagogue Council did not shrink from this arrogance.

Now that we have established the right of any rabbi, *speaking as an individual, or for those whom he truly represents*, to raise his voice on this question, let us consider the wisdom of this policy. (*Right* in this instance cannot be equated with *advisability*.) Here is the crux of my disagreement with the *Sentinel*, that "the rabbi not only has a *right* but a *duty* to raise his voice in behalf of peace."

Do they sincerely believe that all who dissent with the Synagogue Council are against peace or are afraid to speak out against war? To talk in pious generalities of "peace" in the face of a complicated situation involving the future course of world events, adds no understanding to the underlying moral and political

factors, nor does it offer any practical solution to a vexing and far-reaching problem.

*The Jewish People have never been for peace at all costs.* When Isaiah spoke of beating swords into plowshares he was not suggesting this as a means of containing aggressions and suppressing tyranny. He was speaking of peace as the ultimate blessing. But we have always been prepared to fight, when necessary, against the forces of evil. The Almighty Himself, the Torah teaches us, has committed Himself to a "war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exodus 17, 16).

Now I would not like to be regarded as a propagandist for the 'hawks.' My intention is merely to point out that "the imperatives of our religious commitments" (as the Synagogue Council terms them) do not necessarily dictate a retreat from the battlefield. I am sure that there is no member of the Council who would have opposed American intervention against Hitler.

In short, the Viet Nam situation involves complex political and military questions with profound ramifications affecting the future of the world. It is not simply a question of 'hawks' against 'doves,' or peace vs. war. I do not believe that rabbis should "keep out of politics and stick to religion." I do believe, however, that being rabbis does not make them *ipso facto* experts on politics, any more than being a major league ball player makes someone competent to advise me on what breakfast cereal I should eat.

Are the rabbis really sure that President Johnson's objectives in Viet Nam are immoral, or are they just jumping on the peace bandwagon?

As for the *Sentinel's* explanation for Jewish college students abandoning their Jewishness: Is it because Jewish leaders are not involving themselves sufficiently in causes of social justice, or is it because, as the *Sentinel* itself writes, "some frankly admitted they saw nothing special in being Jewish. They contended that Jewish values could not be differentiated from 'civilized non-Jewish values' in an era marked by a universal quest for social justice."

It is quite proper that rabbis should involve themselves in the struggle for civil rights and in the peace movement—providing they are well-enough informed to make mature judgments. But—and here's the rub—when our alleged spiritual leaders are too busy solving the world's problems to seriously consider the less glamorous but more pressing problem of educating our Jewish youth, they are untrue to themselves.

As to the alienated Jewish youth, our non-Orthodox brothers might look to Orthodoxy for some answers. Yeshivos are jammed to overflowing; our youth in growing numbers is committed to their identity as Jews and to living Jewish lives. What attracts these young people is not pontifical pronouncements on world affairs, but the beauty of a vibrant Torah life, wherein world affairs and social concerns are understood against a background of Torah values, not in the secular framework which motivates secular Jewish youth. The search for peace and man's quest for social justice are part of the Torah tradition, but the whole is greater than any of its parts.

Let the rabbis speak, but let them know whereof they speak, and let them speak from a true Jewish perspective. To represent that the Synagogue Council speaks for "the entire religious Jewish community" is a disservice to the Jewish people, and a disservice to the Almighty, whose *Seal*, the Sages tell us, is *Truth*.

## ISRAEL'S NEW COALITION

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*The following is adapted from an address to the Knesset by RABBI ISAAC MEIR LEWIN, Chairman of the International Executive of the Agudath Israel World Organization. We believe that this concise formulation of the problems which religious Jewry faces in Israel today, will be of special interest to our readers.*

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AGAIN ISRAELIS HAVE GONE TO THE POLLS TO ELECT their leadership and again they have denied a mandate to a single party. After prolonged wrangling, a new coalition has been formed.

The new government of Israel is different from its predecessor; it includes Mapam and the Independent Liberals. Religious Jewry which had little to expect from the previous coalition, can expect even less from a government which includes new elements whose hostility to religion is well-known.

It does not seem likely that the new government will enjoy the harmony which is needed to confront the difficult situation which faces the State. In spite of their willingness to form a coalition, the various parties, it appears, will be striving to achieve their own objectives; there is no clear-cut agreement in the coalition on foreign affairs, internal policy, or relations with the Arab minority; and not even on economic and social matters.

Contrary to popular opinion, Agudath Israel is not

inherently opposed to participation in the government, having done so for four and a half years. Such participation is predicated on the possibility of influencing the majority of the coalition to take a more positive stand toward Torah. When the overwhelming majority of a coalition consists of groups united in their opposition to Torah, participation of religious Jewry becomes impossible.

This position has been enforced by recent developments. Both the election campaign and the coalition negotiations revealed a hostility to religion which has poisoned the atmosphere of political debate and has brought discredit to the State of Israel. Incredibly, questions of security and economic stability hardly merited debate; the major issue was the intrusion of religion into the otherwise peaceful life of the average Israeli citizen.

The conditions which Agudath Israel laid down for participation in the government help us to focus on the basic issues involved. It is hardly necessary to expound in detail on the place which the Shabbos has occupied in Jewish life; the Shabbos rest has been the greatest factor in sustaining the high spiritual level of Jewish life which manifested itself in family and social life and permeated every area of human existence. Making of the Shabbos just another day of the week here in the Jewish State, has deprived our people of the ability to resist the moral breakdown of modern society.

## Need For a Shabbos Law

The need for a strong Shabbos law — such laws exist in all civilized countries — should require no debate among the people who gave the concept of Shabbos to mankind. Yet for years, such a law has been unable to emerge from the talking stage, even though we were led to believe that its passage had already been agreed upon. Agudath Israel has maintained that only a strong law which would outlaw all public acts of commerce on Shabbos would be of any value; a law too, which would include the city of Haifa. To argue that conditions which existed prior to the State dictate that Haifa should be viewed differently in regard to Shabbos, is to open the door to a return to other conditions which existed prior to the State.

The reaction of the National Religious Party (Mizrachi) to a Shabbos law is a history of compromise and retreat ending finally in total defeat. Dropping its insistence on a proper Shabbos law, Mizrachi agreed to 'enabling legislation' which would place the entire question of Shabbos into the hands of local bodies, giving them the option to legislate or not. Even this compromised position was further watered down to a demand for merely improving the current law which simply legislates 'hours of work and rest.' This improvement would seemingly have extended the existing law to encompass Moshavim and Kibbutzim, but an explanatory clause which would exempt all 'services needed for the public welfare' nullifies any possible gain in the new law. In substance, the new law would simply grant legal status to restrictions against Shabbos activity which are already in effect, a compromise coming two months after a firm declaration by Mizrachi that they would not serve in the government without a commitment for a Shabbos law.

One of the most painful aspects of existing Shabbos legislation is the issuance of '*heteirim*' (special permits for Shabbos work), which obviously should be issued only in cases of danger to human life — not for economic gain. Yet, to this day, the bulk of such '*heteirim*' are issued for economic reasons. In addition to the *Chilul Shabbos* which this encourages, it also creates a situation where the Jewish worker who insists on observing Shabbos is denied the right to work, a clear-cut case of religious coercion, which brings no outcry from the proponents of 'religious freedom' here and abroad.

In the port of Haifa, even the pretense of economic necessity is dropped; work goes on through Friday night and Shabbos, and only when Shabbos is over are the men relieved of work for rest and recreation. It is worthy of note that in England, a nation highly dependent on its maritime industry, the port of London

is shut down for forty-six hours each week, a procedure which the State of Israel refuses to adopt.

Construction of the new port in Ashdod has lagged on for years. The construction contractor made a mockery of deadlines; the port has been hit by wild-cat strikes due to wage demands. The port was originally built to expedite shipment for the important citrus industry, but citrus fruits are still being shipped through Haifa. The government did not bother to exact from the contractor the penalty payments which were due for the long delay, although a loss of 24 million pounds was suffered.

And suddenly, when confronted with the problem of Shabbos, the government has become economy-minded, declaring that without work on Shabbos the port cannot exist. Of course the workers need a day of rest, and so they work through Friday night and are off on Saturday night. Why such an arrangement? — this is the way it is done in Haifa — and this is the tragedy of 'status quo.'

## Shalom For Sale

The argument of economic necessity for *Chilul Shabbos* is shameful, but it is also suspect; behind it lies a spirit of ill-will. We recall, for example, the discussions concerning the ship *Shalom*. A luxury liner, it was argued, would face insurmountable financial problems unless *treifa* food was served. Now, it appears, the entire venture was a horrible economic blunder. The government invested 50 million pounds in the *Shalom* and now we are told there is no future for passenger ships and it is contemplated that the *Shalom* will have to be sold at a loss of 40 million pounds.

Similarly, in the *Marbek* affair, we were told that the price of meat was unduly high because of the vested-interests of the rabbis and other religious functionaries. Scores of *mashgichim* were dismissed and, instead of a drop in prices, they have risen since the establishment of *Marbek*.

## The Problem of Autopsies

The problem of post-mortem operations has been a source of anguish for years. Our request was quite simple: that the law forbid any post-mortem operation unless the deceased, prior to his death, or his family, grant permission in writing. Four years ago a commission composed of six physicians, two rabbis, and a jurist, was appointed to study the matter. A majority of the commission recommended sweeping reforms in the present law. Their recommendations were constantly watered down, to the extent that it is now proposed that all questions of autopsy be

resolved by the doctors, who have always been opposed to any changes in the present law, thus leaving the problem unsolved.

The situation has so deteriorated, that many Jews are reluctant to enter hospitals, lest — in case of death — their bodies will be mutilated. Some have noted on their identification cards that they forbid an autopsy on their bodies in the event of sudden death. This situation, which inhibits many from receiving proper medical treatment, certainly outweighs the alleged gains of indiscriminate performance of autopsies now being practiced.

It is a basic rule of Jewish tradition and a principle recognized by the law of most civilized countries, that the human body is sacred, that it is the property of the deceased and his family, and must not be tampered with by anyone. The Knesset has consistently refused to embody this principle in the law of the land.

### *Missionary Activities*

The Jew has through the ages been confronted with hostile efforts to snatch his soul from the bosom of his Faith; a threat which is still a living reality in many lands. One would have thought that in a Jewish state this insult to the Jew would be done away with, and yet, in the State of Israel missionaries are permitted to function with hardly any interference. The government refuses to restrict the activities of hundreds of full-time, active missionaries who are from day to day engaged in open soul-snatching. Here too, the argument—that it would jeopardize relations with certain foreign countries—is specious. The Arab lands have banned Christian mission activity, without injuring their relations with other countries. Some of these countries appear to be more kindly disposed to Arab interests than to Israeli interests.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT INHERITS THESE PROBLEMS, and there is no assurance that any effort will be made to solve them, or even to make them less pressing. More so, are there any assurances that the situation will not become even worse? How will the new coalition react to the growing pressure to legalize civil marriages contracted in Mexico and Cyprus? What of the new menace of mixed-marriages being performed by Catholic priests who appear to be delighted to marry a Jew to a Catholic without asking too many questions? A failure by the government to take a strong and effective stand against these practices would place in jeopardy the entire structure of *Gittin* and *Kiddushin* which now stands as a bulwark against the destruction of Jewish unity.

Another question: Why has the government chosen to allocate over 60% of its education budget for secular high-schools, to build impressive structures to house

them, and to deny support of any comparison to yeshivos? Why is there such discrimination between religious and non-religious youngsters?

SOME GOOD YET PREVAILS—THE GOVERNMENT ALLOCATION for Chinuch Atzmai schools—from that period when there was greater understanding of the just deserts of religious Jewry; yet even here we are far from equality. In the area of construction of new school facilities, children in the Chinuch Atzmai network are the victims of blatant discrimination.

It is difficult to find any achievement in the agreement under which Mizrahi agreed to enter the coalition, apart from an ambiguous letter relating to Shabbos in the port of Ashdod, which seems hardly likely to carry any weight in view of the fact that an agreement arrived at four years ago was not honored.

If this is the total accomplishment in the formative stage of the coalition, when Mizrahi had the advantage of driving a hard bargain in exchange for making the coalition possible, what can religious Jewry expect when the government, with its anti-religious majority, has had ample time to strengthen its position? Any effort by Mizrahi for improvement of the situation in the area of religion will be met by a hostile majority and by cries from the benches of "*status quo*." Will Mizrahi then have the strength of purpose to leave the government?

It is precisely for these reasons that Agudath Israel, in spite of the benefits which accrue to any group that is in the government, refused to become a partner to the coalition without minimum guarantees for improvement of the status of Torah in the State. The position of opposition offers the single benefit which Agudah has sought: the integrity and self-respect which comes with refusal to bargain away Torah principles.

While no man or group enjoys being in the minority, we draw comfort and sustenance from the history of our people. There have been other times when religious Jewry was the minority within the Jewish people, and it has inevitably been *this minority* that assured the continuity of *Klal Yisrael*. We draw further comfort from the hope that the many Jews who are unsuspecting victims of hatred against the religious Jew, will one day realize that the moral breakdown which afflicts so many of our brothers today is directly related to the mass effort to maintain a Jewish people and a Jewish land —without Torah.

Torah Jewry owes no apology to anyone. Torah Jewry has made possible Jewish continuity and stands today as the only force in Jewish life that can assure Jewish continuity for the future.

In this spirit, out of love for Israel, out of a desire to assure the physical and spiritual well-being of every Jew, we call for a renewed closeness to the *Shomer Yisrael*, who alone can assure us peace and security.



# BOOK REVIEW

**MEN OF THE SPIRIT**, edited by *Rabbi Leo Jung*  
New York, 1964 / KYMSON PUBLISHING CO., \$8.50.

SOME YEARS AGO A BOOK OF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES of "great Jews" fell into my hands, and I was grieved to note that all the personalities in that volume who lived before the modern era were outstanding Torah personalities — but *none* of those chosen from the modern period were even Mitzvah observers — it was as if Torah Judaism, had G-d forbid, disappeared with the coming of Moses Mendelsohn. In truth, there is an appalling lack of generally available information on the great men who, through all the vicissitudes of the modern age have not only helped preserve traditional Judaism but have kept it the most vital, fresh and dynamic segment of Jewish life, notwithstanding all the taunts levelled at its "old-fashioned and out-dated" conceptions.

Great thanks are therefore due to Dr. Jung for publishing *Jewish Leaders, Guardians of our Heritage*, and now, *Men of the Spirit* — three volumes of biographical essays on the great rabbis and religious leaders of the last three centuries. These essays bring us intimate glimpses of saintly personalities, towering scholarly minds, inspired and far-sighted leaders. Taken together, they reflect the immortality of the Torah spirit, as it raises Torah giants, widely differing in personality and approach, under the most divergent conditions of life, in Jewish settlements girdling half the globe.

Naturally, the selection of subjects for these biographies must be a matter of subjective preference. This reviewer, for one, feels that the desire to cover the widest range of Torah personalities has led the editor to include some historic personalities, outstanding

figures though they were, who do not belong in "a biography of the Rabbinic spirit" and may confuse in the reader's mind the clear image of the *Gedolei Ha-torah* who are the prime subject of these three volumes. Michael Friedlander, Moses Gaster, Nathan Isaacs were men of great distinction — but with Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Berditchiever or the *Chazon Ish*? Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan with his father, the *N'ziv*, and Rabbi Wolf Gold with the *Maharam Schick*? (The incongruity is not lessened but heightened by the exaggerations used by some of the biographers — such as the statement ascribing the religious renaissance of American Jewry in the first place to the labors of Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan, or crediting Rabbi Katz's *Tenuath Hamussar* with saving the Mussar movement from oblivion.)

IT IS DIFFICULT TO SINGLE OUT FOR PRAISE ANY ONE of the many excellent essays that make up the volume before us. There is a lengthy treatment of Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschuetz, for example, and an essay dealing, for once, with the great author of the *Sdei Chemed*. There is a thorough treatment of Lithuanian Mussar by Rabbi J. J. Weinberg — himself an outstanding personality so recently lost to us — and a comprehensive study of the *Maharam Shick*. Considering the range of the thirty-one biographies in this volume, only very few of the historical statements demand comments — and mostly only very minor comment at that.

Dr. Schick writes about "a few extremists" getting together at the Michalowitz conference (p. 317); this is somewhat uncharitable, as there were twenty four participants, and another forty six *rabbonim* and *dayonim* later added their signatures to the document. Incidentally, did the Pressburg Kehillah publish its Open Letter after the Michalowitz Conference, as he states (p. 317), or before, as J. Licht writes (p. 344)? Rabbi Isaac Blaser appears in Rabbi Weinberg's article sometimes as Rabbi Isaac Belser, a matter of faulty transcription — and the index lists two separate



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persons under these names. Dr. Michael Cahn, it is stated on page 364, "obtained the full consent of all Rabbinic authorities in Germany and abroad" for his Metzitzah tube — a statement that is far too sweeping. And where did Dr. Wind get the idea (p. 493) that the Shulchan Aruch was written "presumably to serve as the constitution for the forthcoming Jewish state?" More important, this reviewer would register his categorical disagreement with the quoted views of Nathan Isaacs on the development of the Oral Law, though unfortunately he cannot deal with them here in detail. The otherwise excellent essay on Rabbi Shraga Mendlowitz states (p. 570) that "although an Agudist in ideology, he never officially belonged to any political party"; actually he definitely and actively belonged to Agudath Israel.

There is one essay, however, that calls for lengthier comment — Rabbi Kalman Kahane's treatment of the *Chazon Ish*. The biography of the *Brisker Rav*, by Rabbi Pinchas Bieberfeld should be called more aptly a series of jottings about its subject, rather than a biography; yet, despite this literary shortcoming, it captures something of the essence of that *Godol Hador*. On the other hand, Rabbi Kahane's essay is very well written — but it contains fatal weaknesses. These defects are not only so disquieting because they do not permit the reader to get a truly adequate total picture of the *Chazon Ish*, but because they form a pattern that inevitably suggests a revision of the historical record. Let us look at some relevant items:

1) Rabbi Kahane stresses that "he refused to accept the responsibilities of leadership," speaks of "his reluctance to become directly involved," and states that "only of late did he change the policy he had established for himself. He did intervene directly in the conflicts which raged over the conscription of girls. . . ." This withdrawal from leadership Rabbi Kahane ascribes to studied humility — yet in his letters the *Chazon Ish* clearly spelled out the real reason in language clear to those acquainted with Israeli affairs: "I cannot make peace with what others call 'practical

reality' and since, for health reasons, I need quiet, I have been forced to withdraw from everything as if what happened around me is hidden from me . . . . But on what directly faces me, I must speak rather than keep silent — and this refers to the matter of girls. . . ." (vol.I, 123-4). The truth is that he did not just object to the conscription of women because "it would undermine the chastity and modesty of the Jewish daughter who had been reared in a purely religious atmosphere," as Rabbi Kahane writes, but because he considered it as violating the *issur of Giluy Arayos* for which every Jew, he included, had to sacrifice his life.

2) Rabbi Kahane has an entire chapter (pp. 160-165) on the love of the *Chazon Ish* for *Eretz Yisroel* — but not a single word about his utter and total denial of the State of Israel and his refusal to extend any recognition to it. This conviction was, of course, the basis of the words quoted above, and it led the

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*Chazon Ish*, to refuse for instance, to participate in the census and to obtain an official identity card even though this meant that he could not draw rationed foodstuffs. He saw in the establishment of the State a "Gezeroh," and considered a state-supported Rabbinate a particularly grave danger. To make his views quite clear he had *Tachanun* recited on Israel Independence Day, even on an occasion when he was a *Sandek*, "so that people should not err." Innumerable details of his views and actions in this respect could be given. How could Rabbi Kahane omit this entire subject?

3) Rabbi Kahane mentions at length the warm feelings of the *Chazon Ish* for Poalei Agudath Israel, and touches on the personal contact he had with the great *Gaon*. But he fails to give any indication of the estrangement that arose between the *Chazon Ish* and the leaders of Poalei Agudath Israel, particularly when these fought with *Chinuch Atzmai* and sought to attach their schools to the network of religious government schools. The estrangement found its definitive expression in a letter — presently in the possession of the brother-in-law of the *Chazon Ish* which directs the sharpest words to the leaders of Poalei Agudath Israel.

4) The same selectivity is used by Rabbi Kahane in stating as the view of the *Chazon Ish* that "there is none among us truly qualified to admonish the wayward and they are *all* in the category of those who have not been taught and therefore it is a Mitzvah to love the sinful and wayward" (my italics), p. 168. Rabbi Kahane does not mention the utterly negative attitude which the *Chazon Ish* adopted toward the secular leaders of the State, regarding whom he quoted, "No peace to the wicked." When Ben-Gurion came to see him, the *Chazon Ish* took off his eye-glasses without which he could see practically nothing in order "not to look into the face of a *roshoh*."

We are not concerned here with the views of the *Chazon Ish*, but with the obligation of the biographer to state the facts whether they are to his liking or not. If he feels unable to do so, integrity demands that he lay down his pen. It is a pity that such an important personality as the *Chazon Ish* should not be represented more adequately in this volume, and that the admirable objectivity of the volume should be marred in this way.

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## Understanding Mitzvos

IN THE *Yad Hachazakah*, IN THE SECTION ON THE laws of *Me'ilah*, the *Rambam* (Maimonides) writes: "A person should give thought to the laws of the Torah and try to understand them as fully as is within his power. But if he finds something for which he sees no reason or cause, he should not belittle it, or approach it in the same manner as he would any secular matter."

Note how severe the Torah is about the commission of *Me'ilah* (taking or misusing Temple property). Ordinary wood or stones, earth or ashes, are not sacred; yet a simple word of dedication to the Master of the Universe makes them holy, so that anybody using them thereafter for profane purposes becomes guilty of the act of *Me'ilah* and requires atonement, even if he did so unintentionally. Does it not follow even more strongly that the holy laws given to us by G-d himself should not be thought of in a profane and ordinary manner, and that a person should not dare to reject them merely because he does not understand their reason?

The Torah tells us: "You shall guard all My *Chukim* (statutes) and all My *Mishpatim* (laws) and you shall do them." The word *Mishpatim* refers to commandments whose reason is obvious; the reasons for *Chukim* are not obvious, and may be entirely beyond human comprehension. Our Sages explain that this verse aims to tell us that both the *Mishpatim* and the *Chukim* must be 'guarded' as well as 'done.' To 'do' the statutes obviously means that we must carry them out; and to 'guard' them means that we should be careful about them, and not consider them inferior to the laws—even though the reasons for the *Mishpatim* are obvious and their benefit for the world is known (e.g. the law against bloodshed, and the duty to honor one's par-

ents), while the reasons for the *Chukim* are not known.

Our Sages say that the *Chukim* have been ordained and one has no right to question them; but the evil instinct in man rebels against them, and the gentiles attack them—for instance, the prohibition against eating pig or mixing milk and meat. King David was deeply aggrieved at the non-believers and pagans who attacked the *Chukim*; and the more they pursued him with the false arguments that spring from man's inadequate understanding, the more he became attached to the Torah. Thus it is written, *The sinners have heaped falsehood upon me, but I will guard Your commandments with my whole heart*; and it is also written, *All your commandments are truth; they pursue me with falsehood; help me!*

The *Chukim* include the rules concerning the *Korbonos* (sacrifices); and our Sages have declared that it is by merit of these *Korbonos* that the world exists. They have also pointed out that the righteous become worthy of survival in the World to Come through the fulfilment of both the *Mishpatim* and the *Chukim*—and that, in this connection, the Torah mentions the duty of observing the *Chukim* before that of observing the *Mishpatim*. We are told: *You shall guard my Chukim and my Mishpatim which man shall do and live thereby.*

In the last part of the *Laws of Tamurah*, the *Rambam* writes: "Most of the laws of the Torah represent a supreme plan, from the Great Designer, to perfect man's way of thought and to correct his deeds; as it is said, *Have I not written for you excellent things, in plans and knowledge, to let you know the certainty of the words of truth, to return answers to those that send to you?*

### Desiring His Commandments

Psalm 112 declares, *Hail the man who fears G-d and who greatly desires His commandments*. Here the expression, *fearing G-d*, refers to the observance of the prohibitions of the Torah; and the expression, *greatly desiring his commandments*, refers to the fulfilment of the Torah's positive precepts. This psalm verse tells us to guard ourselves in order not to violate the prohibitions and to fulfil the precepts. We find that the Sages comment on this, pointing out that the verse wants us

greatly to desire the commandments, rather than the reward given for them.

This is strange, at first sight. After all, it is known that as reward for fulfilling G-d's commandments a person will be able to enjoy the splendor of G-d's presence, in *Gan Aiden*, a pleasure of such degree that our mind cannot grasp it; when our Sages wanted to reveal to us the greatness of this enjoyment, they could not give a definite description of it, but expressed it in the form of

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a general rule that *one hour of serenity in the World to Come is better than the whole of life in this world.* It is obvious that the phrase, "the whole of life in this world" includes all sorts of lives, even those of kings and princes, with their pleasures and greatness and wealth, and any life of pleasure which the human mind can at all conceive of; and they all are declared to be as nothing compared to "the enjoyment of the splendor of G-d's presence," and one hour of peace of mind in the World to Come is better than a whole life in this world. It is therefore strange to imagine that anybody would not long for the reward of the commandments which is so immeasurably great.

As an example, let us picture a large country ruled by a powerful monarch. From among all its inhabitants one man is chosen to be within the intimate circle of the King and, more than that, to serve as the Prime Minister. If he were offered any amount of money, he would surely, under no circumstances, be willing to accept the large sum offered in exchange for his privilege of seeing the king constantly and of standing at the head of the ministers. Does it not follow logically that all the treasures of kings, and their storehouses, cannot make up, in anybody's eyes, for one moment of repose in the World to Come where he would enjoy the splendor of G-d's presence which is a greater and truer pleasure than anything that we could imagine? How, then, is it possible to conclude that a person should not desire the reward given for fulfilling G-d's commandments?

To explain this matter, I would point out that wherever the word *greatly* is used by the Torah, it actually means "infinitely" or "without limits." This is the key to the observation of the Rabbis that the truly G-d fearing man "greatly desires His commandments" rather than the reward for them. However valuable the reward for commandments is, and however much man desires to attain this pleasure, his *greatest* longing—limitless and unending—will be devoted to the commandments themselves. When he contemplates the significance of a commandment, then even the great reward offered for it means nothing to him compared to the greatness of the commandment and his desire to carry it out.

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# second looks at the jewish scene

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## *What Is 'Dialogue'?*

*"Jews are not at all clear as to whether we belong to the ecumenical movement or not. For the concept of ecumenism has been used in many ways."*

So writes Arthur Gilbert of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith in *The Critic*, a Roman Catholic journal. Gilbert, who has been active in the 'dialogue' movement which is intended to bring about greater understanding between Jews and Christians, goes on to say that he realizes that ecumenism is a specifically Christian movement which seeks to unify the various Christian Churches, but he believes hopefully that there may be a place for the Jew in this movement if the concept can be broadened.

We pointed out in this space (THE JEWISH OBSERVER, December, 1964) the danger of applying non-Jewish categories and terms to Jewish life, in reaction to statements by several Jewish leaders to the effect that "if the Christian groups can get together, why can't we?" The danger is immeasureably compounded when the concept of ecumenism is applied to the relationships between Jews and Christians. Once again we are confronted with the use of words as a substitute for thinking, a malady which afflicts American society as a whole, and accounts for a good deal of muddled thinking in Jewish life as well.

If there is to be discussion between Orthodoxy—which has re-

jected 'dialogue,' and non-Orthodoxy which has strongly embraced it, it must be based on an understanding of terms, so that we may avoid the pitfalls of verbiage and the tragic errors that can result from muddled thinking.

The ecumenical movement is clearly defined as "a movement, chiefly among Protestants of the evangelical tradition, aiming at the establishment of as large a measure as possible of Christian unity."\* In recent years, the Catholic Church, mainly through the influence of Pope John and the Vatican Council, has become a partner in this movement. It is beyond doubt a Christian movement with a singular goal: the ultimate re-unification of the Catholic and Protestant churches into the one church which existed when their faith was founded.

It should be noted that until the ecumenical climate settled on American Christianity, both groups were opposed to talk of 'unity'—Catholics, because they could only see the danger of compromise of their religious doctrine, and Protestants because they feared being swallowed up by the more powerful Roman Catholic Church.

In 1960, Robert McAfee Brown, a prominent liberal Protestant theologian, wrote "Rules for the Dialogue" which was published simultaneously in a Catholic and a Protestant publication. He outlined the

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\* See: *The Vatican Council and the Jew*, THE JEWISH OBSERVER, Nov. 1964.

guide-lines which would make it possible through 'dialogue,' for both groups to reconcile the differences which had kept them at each others throats since the Reformation.

The word 'dialogue,' from the Greek *dialogos*, means simply, a conversation. The dictionary indicates no specific religious connotation of the word. But, in recent years—so recent that the third edition of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary has not yet taken note of it—the word has been applied to discussions among Christians. The newly-published *Maryknoll Catholic Dictionary* (Dimension Books/Grosset & Dunlap/New York, 1965) defines 'dialogue' as:

*A theological conversation between members of separated Christian churches which seeks for mutual doctrinal understanding in the light of the ecumenical movement.*

The invitation extended by Christian churches for Jewish participation in 'dialogue' can only be interpreted as a call for "mutual doctrinal understanding," a futile search, for there can be no reconciliation between two separate religious beliefs which are divided on the most fundamental level. The futility of such a search can only create frustration and the renewal of age-old hostilities. On the other hand, those Jews who may be prepared for the give-and-take of theological reconciliation, may find themselves traveling down the road to oblivion. The Jew who sees little difference to begin with between the two faiths, may become the victim

of his own illiteracy and the pagantry and color of Christianity, easing the path to the baptismal font and true ecumenism.

G. K. CHESTERTON, THE CATHOLIC novelist and thinker, in his book, *Orthodoxy*, cautions that, "you may free a tiger of his bars, but you cannot free him of his stripes" for then he ceases to be a tiger. 'Doctrinal understanding' may be achieved by Catholics and Protestants; they are all Christians—but the Jewish partner in 'dialogue' can achieve 'doctrinal understanding' only by removing his 'stripes' and ceasing to be a Jew.

The fruits of Jewish participation in ecumenism and dialogue are already blossoming. The results of substituting words for thinking are manifest in the following newspaper dispatch:

Chicago, Dec. 23 (AP)—An audience of Roman Catholics and Jews watched as parishioners of the Queen of the Universe Church formed the traditional menorah of the Jewish festival of Chanukah.

The "Christianized version" of Chanukah was enacted last night, said the Rev. Stanley Ryzner, pastor of the church, so parishioners "could try and get closer to our Jewish neighbors and friends."

"Its purpose was to foster deeper un-

derstanding and greater respect for the Jewish faith in keeping with the ecumenical spirit," he said . . .

Nuns from the parish school sang the Christian advent hymn, "Oh Come, Oh Come, Emanuel," taken from the Old Testament, as the enactment started.

Then the Shamus, representing the congregation and enacted by Gino L. Di-Vito, an assistant state's attorney, with a white candle lit the red and green candles of the Old Testament menorah.

Then each person holding a candle of the Old Testament menorah lit the candle held by the corresponding person in the New Testament menorah. . . .

About 150 persons watched the enactment, which Father Ryzner said could have symbolical connection with advent, the four-week period preceding Christmas in which it is traditional for Christians to light each week one candle of an advent wreath.

The *Boston Jewish Advocate* (Jan. 20, '66) reports that "The Union of American Hebrew Congregations [Reform], The United Synagogue of America [Conservative], together with Packard Manse, an ecumenical center, announced this week that they will jointly sponsor a course on Jewish Christian relations. . . . Father Charles Von Euw, executive secretary of the Boston Archdiocesan Ecumenical Commission, describes the course as a pioneering program in response to the Vatican Council's call for great-

er 'mutual knowledge and respect which is the fruit of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.'

The *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* (Jan. 21, '66) reports a Lutheran-Jewish Dialogue at which the Lutheran spokesman candidly admitted the "guilt of Protestantism in having failed, for all too long, to understand Judaism . . ." He referred to Martin Luther's words in regard to Christian-Jewish debates of his time: "I would threaten to cut out their tongues from their throats if they refuse to accept the Christian proof that God is a Trinity," but explained that these words must be understood "in the context of his time which saw Catholics no less zealous in the propagation of their faith." In the face of such expression of guilt, it would appear that not 'dialogue' with the victims is needed, but soul-searching and penance.

More disturbing yet, because it involved impressionable youngsters, was the visit of eight Jewish teenagers from the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue School to a Catholic Church in New York City for a

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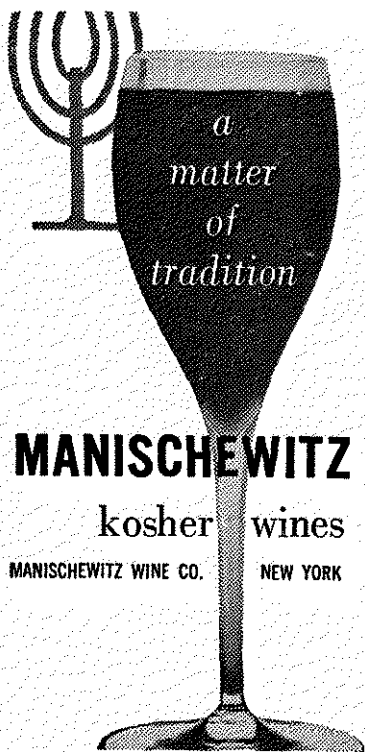
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"lesson in Catholic rites." (*The New York Times*, Feb. 7, '66) Two priests, assisted by alter boys and nuns, demonstrated the vestments used in the mass, causing one of the Jewish youngsters to whisper: "Gee." The Jewish boys and girls arrived late for the demonstration, but it later became clear that as a result of a misunderstanding they had attended mass *twice* in addition to the lecture, bringing from one of the nuns the comment: "*It should happen to more of our own.*" Even granting the false premise of such 'ecumenical' activity, it seems hardly fair to pit teen-agers with their "teacher of comparative religion" against a battery of informed clerics. Yet, this is not unlike what happens in many 'dialogues' where the Jewish 'spokesmen' are often Jewishly illiterate and unfairly matched with their partners in 'dialogue.'

'JUDEO-CHRISTIAN' IS AN EXPRESSION which is gaining popularity in the backwash of the Ecumenical Council. It is used as an adjective to describe a religious concept or the



tradition of our society. The use of this expression reveals a new way of thinking of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, which were once thought of as being at opposite ends of the pole. Grammarians tell us that certain expressions pass through three distinct stages in their use. At first two words are used in association with each other for a period of time; they become so closely associated

with each other that they are then joined to each other by a hyphen, and ultimately the hyphen disappears and the two words become one.

Orthodox Jewish leaders stand united in their opposition to theological dialogue. We do not expect our non-Orthodox brothers to listen to the voice of Orthodoxy, but surely we can expect of them that they listen to the voice of reason.



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HISTORIANS OF THE PRINTED WORD point out that the first presses used for printing with movable type were fashioned from wine presses. From the very beginning, the 'press' has had, like its forbear, the power to induce intoxication.

The *London Jewish Chronicle*, which has for 120 years described itself as "the organ of British Jewry" has set out on a crusade to modernize Orthodoxy in Great Britain, a task it had hoped to accomplish by placing Dr. Louis Jacobs in the seat of the Chief Rabbi. Throughout the period when Jacobs was manoeuvring for appointment as principal of Jews College—the institution which prepares young men for the British rabbinate—the *Chronicle* maintained a constant effort to denigrate the now-retired Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie who refused to certify Jacobs for the position and later blocked Jacobs' appointment as rabbi of his old congregation. Rabbi Brodie's objection to Jacobs was quite simple, and was summed up by Rabbi Nathan Bulman (*THE JEWISH OBSERVER*, May, 1964) in these words:

... the issue is not Dr. Jacobs' right or freedom to espouse

*the views he holds . . . the most devastating refutation of Dr. Jacobs' views, however important it otherwise is, is irrelevant at this point . . . what . . . Jacobs wants is not merely to be 'right' or to be free to espouse his views. What he wants is to function as an Orthodox rabbi and to teach those views as valid Orthodox views, which means that he wants Orthodoxy to accord legitimacy to his views.*

When the *Chronicle*—and Jacobs—failed to intoxicate British Orthodoxy, Jacobs organized a new congregation which is now his base of operations to bring about what even the vastly more powerful Conservative movement in America failed to achieve—to establish a new Jewish faith and to call it 'Orthodoxy.' Jacobs has kept the *Chronicle* busy with his various utterances, reported at length, out of proportion to their importance. In a manner most unbefitting the journalistic tradition of the *Chronicle*, its editorial page has poured over into the news columns, barely missing the opening pages of the *Chronicle* which list births, marriages and deaths, known affection-

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ately to British Jewry as "Hatches, Matches and Dispatches."

Of late the *Chronicle* has suffered from a shortage of issues, and with a squeeze of the press has created a 'new' issue. In a letter to the editor, a Reform minister raised the question of the validity of marriages performed under Reform auspices, declaring that certainly no one would dare question their acceptability by the British Beth Din, an indication that Reform and Orthodoxy are not really so far apart. Dayan M. Swift of the London Beth Din was quick to the challenge and declared that since Reform marriages are not arranged in accordance with halachic requirements, they are clearly not valid. The Dayan's declaration was splashed across the front page of the next issue of the *Chronicle* as though it were an exclusive 'hot' story ferreted out by the sharp eye of a *Chronicle* reporter. By the issue of Friday, December 24, 1965, the *Chronicle* carried the follow-up in a front-page story headed: REFORM MARRIAGES 'ARE VAL-

ID' BETH DIN CHALLENGED. In addition the *Chronicle* carried statements by the Reform group, the (Orthodox) Federation of Synagogues, the New London Synagogue (the Jacobs congregation); comments by columnist Ben Azai; nine man-in-the-street replies to the question: *Is The Beth Din Right?*; letters to the editor on the subject, and a BACKGROUND TO THE NEWS feature on *Marriage in Jewish Law* written by . . . Louis Jacobs.

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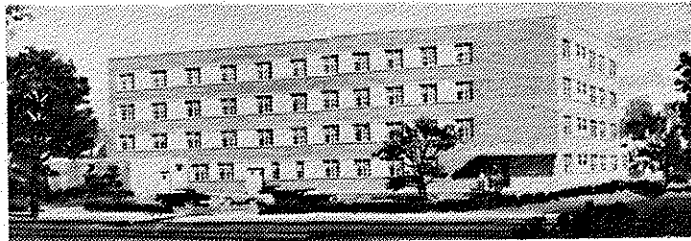
"The Ministers' Conference of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues and the Ministers Assembly of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain . . . reaffirmed that, where the eligibility of the partners to marry each other was unquestionable, even from the point of view of Orthodoxy, such marriages were unimpeachable on the basis of rabbinic law, 'for they satisfy all its essential requirements.'" Listing other opposition to the Beth Din, the story had nothing to say about any support the Beth Din may have from Britain's Orthodox Jews. The glaring absurdity of Reform min-

isters telling a Beth Din what it proper in rabbinic law, is lost to the *Chronicle* in its obvious desire to create a story.

Together with the statements of the Beth Din and the Reform ministers, the *Chronicle* carried the statement of the New London Synagogue, indicating that the congregation is now the spokesman for British Conservatism, though the group still has not run up the Conservative colors.

Perhaps most insidious is the *Chronicle's* posing the question to "a random selection of United Synagogue members whether they thought the Beth Din was right or wrong in attacking Reform and Liberal marriages." This loaded question—the Beth Din did not "attack" such marriages, but simply declared that they are invalid in Jewish law, certainly the prerogative of a Beth Din—brought the desired response.

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"I think the Beth Din is wrong in attacking Reform and Liberal marriages" one gentleman replied, "a person is entitled to his point of view." A young lady recently married in a United Synagogue replied, "I can't see why Liberal and Reform sympathizers should be attacked. After all, they are only following their own beliefs." A young man agreed with the Beth Din but noted that "they may have left it a bit late," swallowing the *Chronicle* line that non-recognition of non-Orthodox marriage was a new notion of the Beth Din.

Most intriguing was the attempt at *lumdu*s by Ben Azzai. To him the entire matter is simply one of legal ambiguity. He lumps together—as many often do—the rabbi and lawyer as people who can find support for any interpretation they choose. He further boils down the question to the Kashrus of the witnesses and concludes that many Orthodox weddings may be invalid if witnesses are guilty of "sinat chinam (causeless hatred)."

But the biggest blast of *lumdu*s comes from Louis Jacobs himself. We had to re-read his words several

times to be certain that he really says what he does. He declares the operating principle in Jewish marriage to be "the clear intention of the couple . . . to be married *Jewishly*" since "no officiating rabbi is required and the marriage need not take place in a synagogue." Consequently, Jacobs concludes that "The fact that the religious ceremony differs from Orthodox requirements in no way affects the validity of the marriage, even from the Orthodox point of view."

He ignores the fact that even the non-rabbi must abide by the basic

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halachic requirements without which the *kiddushin* is not valid.

Having exhausted his supply of *lumdus* Jacobs appeals to history. "... So far as I am aware even during the most vehement and bitter debates between Orthodoxy and Reform in the last century, Orthodox rabbis, for all their disapproval of Reform, did not challenge the validity of Reform marriages." We suggest that Dr. Jacobs take the time to brush up on his history as well as his *lumdus*.

A crucial point is quickly glossed

over by Jacobs and other Reform apologists. The Reform Ministers Conference reaffirms "that where the eligibility of the partners to marry each other was unquestionable, even from the point of view of Orthodoxy, such marriages were unimpeachable on the basis of rabbinic law, 'for they satisfy all its essential requirements.'" It is a sad truth that Reform ministers do not make any effort to establish "the eligibility of the partners to marry ... on the basis of rabbinic law ...," throwing into question every mar-

riage performed by Reform clergy.

In any case, the columns of a newspaper are not the proper forum for discussion of points of rabbinic law, and certainly no newspaper has the right to instruct a Beth Din in such matters.

No doubt, the *Chronicle* will continue to squeeze as much copy as they can out of this 'issue.' Yet, they who are constantly pointing their finger at Orthodoxy as fomenters of dissension, stand guilty of fabricating a dispute for the sole purpose of intoxicating the masses

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of British Jewry into believing that their only course is to allow the Jacobs cult to take over the institutions of British Jewry and to establish a 'New Orthodoxy' in England.

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## Poor Diplomacy

THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION on Human Rights has condemned racial and religious discrimination. It has failed to pass a resolution specifically condemning antisemitism.

Arthur Goldberg, the United

States Ambassador to the United Nations, has pledged U.S. support for such a resolution during the next session.

The State of Israel, which certainly wants to see the resolution passed, has designated Haim Cohen, of Is-

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rael's Supreme Court as its representative to the Commission.

We feel that this is a most unwise, and undiplomatic move on the part of Israel. It would prove most embarrassing to Israel and to Jews throughout the world if the delegate of a nation opposing the condemnation of antisemitism should remind Mr. Cohen of his having compared the Torah's standards for Jewish identity to the infamous Nuremberg laws of Nazi Germany. Self-hatred and hostility to the Jewish faith are hardly proper credentials for a diplomat who seeks to protect the interests of world Jewry.

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### Orthodox Marriage Guide Now Available Free

The 10th edition of JEWISH FAMILY LIFE, the Orthodox Jewish marriage ritual guide (*Taharas Hamishpocha*), is being distributed free of charge by *Agudath Israel of America*, national Orthodox Jewish movement. The 76-page book, written by Dr. Sidney B. Hoenig, is published by the Spero Foundation.

JEWISH FAMILY LIFE has won world-wide acclaim as the outstanding source of information in the English language on the meaning and practice of the traditional sanctity of Jewish married family life.

Agudath Israel of America, which has already distributed thousands of copies of this book as a public service throughout the United States, has announced that married Jewish couples can now once again obtain a free copy.

To cover shipping expenses, ten cents must accompany the request addressed to: RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE DIVISION, Agudath Israel of America, 5 Beekman Street, New York, N. Y. 10038.

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# Letters to the Editor

*Bingo, Kashrus, and . . .*

To the Editor:

I read your piece on BINGO, KASHRUS AND THEOLOGY in your latest issue, and I am really at a loss to understand the point that you are trying to make.

You report that the United Synagogue of America disciplines congregations for violating Kashrut and for employing bingo as a means of fund-raising, but that you know of no instance in which the United Synagogue disciplined a congregation for violation of the Sabbath.

You will forgive me for saying so, but it is difficult to tell from your piece which causes you greater disturbance—the fact that we *do* discipline congregations for violations of Kashrut and for resorting to bingo, or the fact that you are not aware of any instance in which we discipline congregations for violations of the Sabbath.

Would it really make you happy to know of instances in which we have disciplined congregations for Sabbath violations? If so, please feel free to say so, and I believe we can convince you that we take Sabbath observance at least as seriously as other tenets of Judaism.

Since you have raised the subject, may I take the liberty to inquire what, if anything has ever been done on your part to establish some kind

of discipline in Jewish observance in the orthodox community? Are you aware of the fact that congregations which are expelled from the United Synagogue for violations of Jewish law experience no difficulty in being admitted to the orthodox camp? Is it possible that you are not aware of the *hefkerut* which prevails in many orthodox congregations in their methods of fund-raising, in Sabbath violations, in *Kashrut* violations, and in other violations?

Wouldn't it be proper for you to take not a "second look" but a good first look at your own backyard?

Or is it your function simply to police the Conservative Movement?

BERNARD SEGAL  
Executive Director  
United Synagogue of America  
New York, N. Y.

*Dr. Segal implies, but he does not directly state, that constituent congregations of the United Synagogue have been disciplined for violations of Shabbos. If they have been, we are pleased that Shabbos is taken seriously by the United Synagogue.*

*A spokesman for the Union of Orthodox Congregations of America tells us that he knows of no instance of a congregation expelled by United Synagogue being admitted to the Union. In the one instance where a former Conservative congregation joined the Union, there were definite indications that the congregation was to meet the standards of the UOJCA.*

*We are aware of the weaknesses of Orthodox congregations that Dr. Segal points out and we have not shrunk from noting them in the pages of THE JEWISH OBSERVER.*

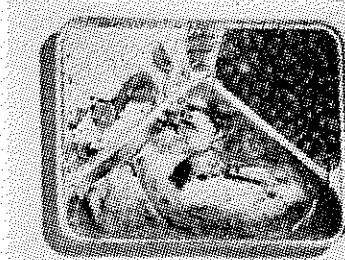
*However, the basic question raised in BINGO, KASHRUS AND THEOLOGY—that a member of the Conservative rabbinate has espoused "the new theology," which means that he denies the existence of G-d—remains unanswered.*

## Keren Hasheviis

Agudath Israel of America has launched a *Keren Hasheviis* to help the Agudist settlements in Israel with observing *Shmita*, of which the most famous is *Kome-miut* in the Negev. This fund for the observance of *Shmita* will be administered by a special committee which will mobilize nationwide financial support for this important project.

Contributions should be sent to: *Keren Hasheviis* of Agudath Israel, 5 Beekman Street, New York, N. Y. 10038.

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## Agudath Israel on the Legislative Front

### 'Humane Slaughter' Bills

Agudath Israel of America, together with a group of other Orthodox Jewish organizations, worked effectively to defeat several so-called Humane Slaughter bills introduced in the current session of the New York State Legislature in Al-

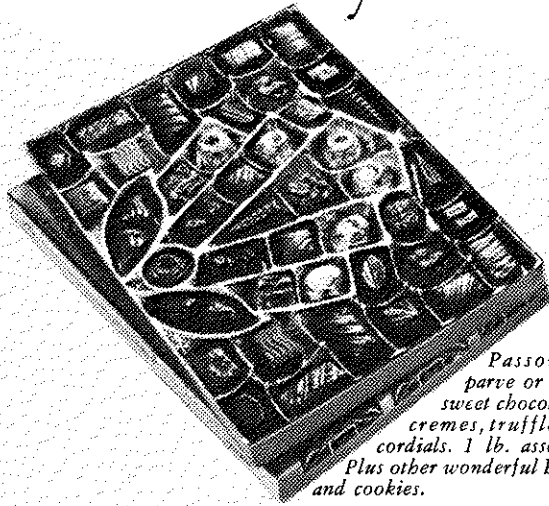
bany. As we go to press, prospects are that these bills, which are opposed by an overwhelming majority of the Orthodox Jewish organizations, *will not be passed*. Assemblymen Hausbeck and Feuer, sponsors of the extremist measures favored by the infamous Friends of Animals, Inc., publicly withdrew their bills. Assemblyman Turshen, who co-sponsored a bill with Senator Willard for the New York State Humane Association, also withdrew his bill.

The prospects of any such measure coming out of the New York State Legislature are therefore dim. This represents a major victory for the Ortho-

dox groups who adopted an independent position and forcefully articulated their views before the members of the New York State Assembly and Senate.

The efforts against the anti-shechita bills were conducted by a *United Committee for the Protection of Shechita*, in which ten Orthodox organizations participated. The *United Committee* met with Governor Nelson Rockefeller, organized a press conference, and twice arranged for cavalcades to Albany to meet with legislative leaders. In addition to this joint effort, Agudath Israel spearheaded many activities of its own to help defeat the bills. These activities included: sending a lengthy memorandum to all New York State legislators clarifying our position; the mobilization of all yeshivos throughout New York State for activating their parents in this struggle; individual contacts with top legislative leaders; activating Agudah branches and leaders for a special concentrated effort; and mobilizing public opinion through articles in the general press and in Agudist publications.

## When mama changes to the Passover dishes, Barton's changes to Passover candy. כשר לפסח



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ceilings and floors are hosed down with live steam.

When all is immaculate, the Passover utensils are taken out of their special place.

And the raw chocolate, fruits, nuts, honey, etc. that are Kosher-for-Passover are brought in.

Barton's makes these Passover preparations under the careful scrutiny of The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America.

Even mama doesn't go that far.



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### Health and Welfare Services

Agudath Israel of America has begun a state-wide mobilization of Orthodox Jews in New York, in a major effort to pass a bill introduced in Albany to provide students of religious schools with the same health and welfare services received by public-school children. The bill, introduced by New York State Senator Edward Speno and Assemblyman Arthur Hardwick, requires the State to provide health and welfare services on an equal basis to non-public school children, and spells out these services as including psychiatric, psychological, speech therapy, and remedial services.

In a statement, Agudath Israel pointed out that under a 1939 New York State Law, school districts are required to provide health services to children of private and religious schools without discrimination. However, because the school administrators have limited these benefits only to rudimentary health services, the new bill mandates the providing of the full gamut of health and welfare services to all school children on an equal basis.

Simultaneously, Agudath Israel issued a sharp statement criticizing the American Jewish Congress for "tampering with the physical and mental health of religious school students," by its vociferous opposition to the Speno-Hardwick bill. The Agudah statement declared that the activity of the AJC, which would deny sorely-needed health assistance to a handicapped child because of an extremist interpretation of the church-state separation doctrine is the antithesis of Americanism."

## Agudah Briefs

The leadership of the American Agudah and World Agudah tendered a reception this month at the Agudah's national headquarters to Rabbi Elias Katz, the chief rabbi of Slovakia who recently arrived in the United States for an Agudah-sponsored lecture tour. . . . *The third annual National Siyum Hamishnays of Pirchei Agudath Israel, which in the past attracted over a thousand youngsters, will take place on Motzai Shabbos, March 19th.* . . . This month marks the 20th radio broadcast in the weekly series, sponsored over radio station WEVD by the Metropolitan Branch Presidents Council of Agudath Israel every Saturday night at 9:30 P.M. . . . *Agudath Israel's statement denouncing the Synagogue Council for dragging the Jewish people into the Viet Nam controversy provoked the thinking of many persons, as evidenced by editorials written about the Agudist position in such major English-language weekly publications as the Boston Jewish Advocate, the Chicago Jewish Sentinel, and the National Jewish Post.* . . . Agudath Israel increases overseas shipment of matzo parcels to needy individuals in areas where this type of assistance is most needed. . . . *The Midwest convention of Bnos Agudath Israel, which was held in Cleveland over the weekend of February 11, was a huge success.* . . . New branches of Agudath Israel were opened this month in Wickliffe, Ohio and in Monsey, New York. . . . *All Agudist branches this month launched their annual Chinuch Atzmai campaigns.* . . . The Taharas Hamishpacha campaign sponsored by Agudath Israel each year, resulted in the largest number of *Jewish Family Life* books distributed since the drive was begun many years ago. . . . *The uniform weekly program material sent by the national headquarters to the 650 leaders of Agudist youth groups has been warmly received.* . . . The first national *Siyum Mishnays* sponsored by Bnos Agudath Israel of America on February 27 was an overwhelming success. . . .

### Rabbi Rein in U. S. A. For Shmita Campaign

Rabbi Abraham Rein, well-known Israeli Agudist leader arrived this month to head a nationwide drive to support the two Agudist settlements in Israel which are observing the current *shmitah* year: the famous moshav Komemiut in the Negev, and Kfar Gideon. Jewish communities are urged to lend their maximum assistance to help these *shmitah*-observers, who are facing great financial hardships this year.

### 44th ANNIVERSARY DINNER ON SUNDAY, MARCH 13th

The 44th Anniversary of Agudath Israel will be marked with an impressive dinner on Sunday evening, March 13th in the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Roosevelt, New York City. Over one thousand of the elite of American Orthodoxy is expected to attend this event.

The dinner will honor three distinguished Agudists upon the completion of their dedicated services as the Management Committee of Agudath Israel: Anshel Fink, Wolf Friedman and David Turkel. These Agudist leaders have earned great admiration in the movement for the five years in which they served as the Management Committee and helped normalize the financial structure of the organization. Reservations for the dinner are being accepted at the national headquarters of Agudath Israel: 5 Beekman Street, New York City 10038.

### Agudah Camp Registration

Registration for Camp Agudah for boys and Camp Bnos for girls has al-

ready begun at the city office of the Agudist-sponsored camps. These camps, which are located in Ferndale and Liberty, New York, have over two decades of experience in caring for thousands of youngsters from every part of the country during the summer-vacation period.

This year both camps are being refurbished with many new additions on the planning board. In order to avoid the last-minute difficulty which caused many children to be turned away due to lack of facilities, it is advisable that interested parents register their children without delay at 5 Beekman Street, New York City.

### Branch in Far Rockaway

A new branch of Agudath Israel, located in its own center, was opened last month in Far Rockaway, New York. The branch, which has its own *minyán*, also sponsors various youth activities for which a youth director has been engaged. It is located at 1231 Sage Street, and it is expected to be of great service to the local community as well as to the entire world-wide Agudah movement.

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