

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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On his thirtieth yahrtzeit

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## **From Freethinker to Believer**

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by **NATHAN BIRNBAUM**

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### **Jewish Looks at the American Scene**

Wayne, N. J. — A Tempest in a Teapot?

Is Humanism Becoming Anti-Humanism?

### **Second Looks at the Jewish Scene**

Hadassah and Autopsies

A Mythical Interview

### **The Maharal on Geulah**

A Pesach Feature

**חג כשר ושמח**

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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Reuben E. Gross

## Jewish Looks at the American Scene

"You don't have to be Jewish," says the subway poster, "to enjoy Levy's rye bread." But to understand all of the subtleties of *The New York Times* mentality, you *must* be Jewish. This mentality expresses itself not only in the editorial columns or in the slanting, shaping and emphasis of news, but also in the determination of what *is* news.

A case in point is the recent event in Wayne, New Jersey. A member of the school board of this small and virtually unknown town made a stupid—at best, an impolitic remark, suggesting to his neighbors that they should not vote for the Jewish candidates for the school board because Jews spend too much money on education and because Jews, if elected, would take the X out of Xmas. If all the foolish remarks of every small town candidate for public office were news fit to print, the sports pages and theater columns of *The Times* would be crowded out of the paper.

What gave these remarks their newsy flavor? Surely, if they were anti-Czech or anti-Hindu they would hardly rate four or five lines on page seventeen. But they were anti-semitic—or *seemingly so*. What is more, they sought to disparage Jews for two reasons: firstly, that they spend too much money on education—a kind of insult which makes every Jew proud—and secondly, that Jews are trying to de-Christianize public life, particularly as regards schools. Now to the liberal-secularist mentality, Mr. Miller, the telephone company employee who uttered these ill-advised remarks, was an arch-enemy of the sacred doctrine of separation of church and state and had to be destroyed. Accordingly he won for himself the first page of the second section of

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### Wayne, N. J. A Tempest in a Teapot?

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*The New York Times* where his inanities were amplified and magnified beyond all proportion. Mr. Miller was pictured as a boorish anti-semitic for whom no sophisticated suburbanite would vote. But the back-lash never materialized. Instead, the front lash whipped the Jewish candidates out of office, opened up healed-wounds and created new ones—leaving Wayne a town of acerbated feelings. Both sides may have stressed the budget as the chief election issue, but never did a budgetary matter raise such bitterness. Rare insight is not necessary to understand that the X in Xmas issue packed the emotional wallop.

Why do these school issues—Xmas plays, Bible readings and prayers arouse such deep feelings? These problems are neither new nor profound. A decision one way or the other as to the enactment of a play or the reading of a psalm will not materially affect the lives of those concerned. Why then, so much heat?

As for the gentile side, the matter is readily explicable. Rightly or wrongly, they resent the dictation of a minority in regard to a time-honored practise in a sensitive, emotional area—especially since the sense of "wrongness" in hating this minority is but recently acquired and is as yet but skin deep. *Havah nischakhmah lo* lingers just slightly below their level of articulation.

The opposition of the Jews is more complex. Their Jewishness, which they cannot totally shake off, rests uneasily upon them. Likewise, their newly won suburbanite peerage is nervously grasped. The challenge of the gentile's Christianity sends them scurrying for compensatory values. Chanukah is a weak form of such balance. Civil rights and community action movements are more satisfying ways of developing a sense of "belongingness." The Orthodox Jew, firmly planted in his peer group of the synagogue or day school, can reach out from a solid emotional base into communal participation without being shaken by the Christian orientation of the environment. But the indifferent Jew cannot accept the environment. He cannot quite cover up the shame of his own religious nakedness. His only compensation is to de-Christianize the gentile. Hence the slogan of separation of church and state which he prates at every manifestation of Christianity. It has become another religion to him. It fills the vacuum left by the abandonment, in whole or in part, of the religion of his forebears.

To a mentality wracked by these complexes the Wayne crusade was news. To all others it was a tempest in a teapot—but its undue amplification is a matter that merits contemplation.

In the introduction to his English translation of S. R. Hirsch's *Horeb*, Dayan Grunfeld of England, in commenting on Berdyaev's phrase, "the self-destructive dialectic within humanism," writes:

*Wordly humanism must in the end become not only anti-religious but anti-human.*

Today we see this process rapidly unfolding before our eyes. The change from religious humanism to secular humanism at first seemed to be nothing more than a subtle shading of emphasis accompanied by a variation in the underlying theory. Both emphasize the dignity of Man. Both insist upon the enforcement of his social, political and legal rights on a plane of equality with all other men—but for somewhat different reasons.

The secular humanist sees Man as the end product of a long line of development, the highest discoverable form of creation, a king in his own right and an end in himself—truly an object of adoration and respect.

The religious humanist, however, sees Man as created in the image of G-d entrusted with the power to dominate the earth and its creatures. In administering this trust, Man is endowed with the divine power of freely choosing or rejecting moral imperatives.

So long as religious humanism set the tone in institutions of learning and thereby provided the framework for thinking on public issues, the practical consequences of these different approaches were nil. A religious humanist like John Adams could join with a secular humanist like Thomas Jefferson in signing a fundamental declaration of their philosophy in regard to man and his social institutions without either being aware of any important difference. From the American Revolution to World War I, during

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## Has Humanism Become Anti- Humanism?

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which period the attitudes of religious humanism maintained an upper hand, differences between these two philosophies remained purely theoretical. However, in the period between the two world wars the hypotheses of Darwin, Marx and Freud became the staples of educated discourse. Today we are reaping the practical results of that altered viewpoint in many areas of our society. The philosophical differences are no longer academic; their influence is manifest in a growing effort to revise the social and moral codes which now govern our society. One of the most glaring, and blatant attacks has been directed against the codes which regulate sexual relationships.

BASIC TO the religious approach is a mystic regard for the sanctity of human life. Likewise, the procreative process, wherein man participates with G-d in bringing forth the most awesome of created things—another human life—is ringed with prohibitions that cannot fully be explained in a simple rational manner. While recognizing but subordinating the right of the individual to personal satisfaction, the religious approach emphasizes the family purpose of the procreative powers by encircling them with rules of modesty and chastity and by rigid prohibitions against their dissipation.

The secular humanist may rightly claim that he agrees with these value judgments but that he has merely shifted his emphasis by giving primacy to the individual's right to personal satisfaction. But from

this shift of emphasis, a process has begun that bids fair to veer the direction of humanism around to anti-humanism. Except in pietist religious circles, a suggestion of modesty among the sexes brings only ridicule in response. Legislatures now deliberate on bills for the abolition of adultery and homosexuality as offenses. Anything that transpires between consenting adults will soon be deemed licit. The consent of the individual is sovereign. He is answerable to no one unless perchance he invades the sovereign individuality of another person. Man is supreme. Toynbee classified religions according to their object of worship: G-d, idols and Man—and the god of Humanism is Man. But the relationship of the sexes is not so private as humanists would claim when the issue is the encouragement of birth-control. Whereas the cry of "privacy" goes up when the question involves traditionally recognized abuses of the procreative powers, yet the birth rate of the Hindus is a matter of great concern to these very same people. Whereas society hitherto frowned upon restraints upon procreation, now the encouragement of birth control is deemed a virtue. The next step, to permit legalized abortion, is already in the legislative mills. How much further away is euthanasia and infanticide? And once inferior individuals are deemed expendable, why not the inferior races?

What is happening in the area of sexual morals is but one illustration of the fact that the inversion of secular humanism into anti-humanism is no idle philosophic theory.

Thus the inversion of secular humanism into anti-humanism is no idle philosophic theory. The history of modern civilization offers no finer examples of humanism in practise than the Anglo Saxon countries. But the frayed moorings to their religious sources do not seem to be holding them back from the whirlpools of the "self destructive dialectic within humanism."

Harold Jacobs

# Torah Ethics in Business

## Is Honesty really "the best policy"?

An article in the *Harvard Business Review* a number of years ago, asked the question: "How Ethical Are Businessmen?" In the last decades, businessmen themselves—and the public at large—have been raising this question, and arguing it. More recently, the advertising industry has been subject to careful scrutiny in newspaper and magazine articles, and in a number of popular books.

For some idea of the scope of the questioning, here are some of the norms employed by the Advertising Federation of America in a book prepared by their associate general counsel. He suggests that the businessman can easily judge the honesty of his sales message by asking himself a few direct questions:

Is it *really* honest?

Is it *clear* to the people who hear it or read it?

Can I *prove* all this?

Would I approve, if my *competitor* used this sales approach?

Would I want *my* wife to spend *my* money, because of this ad?

Of course, honesty in business goes far beyond the advertising or sales-approach a business firm may use. It goes to the heart of every aspect of business: it relates to management practices; relationships with government; personnel practices, and, to a growing degree, the influence of business as a political and social force.

Let's take a brief look at some of these areas.

It has been said, with a good deal of truth, that every businessman is in partnership with government. It is also almost axiomatic that business partners frequently don't get along, and tend to keep things from each other. But, the government is one partner who insists that we get along with him, and has the machinery and the police-power to assure that we 'get along.' Yet, there are loop-holes; there are ways in which one can deceive the government in providing tax information, in padding expense accounts, and in ways that are too numerous to mention.

Business and businessmen today are not simply mer-

chants; they are not simply engaged in creating products and services for sale to the public. Business today is a social and political force which has great influence in the affairs of men, and carries a great responsibility to the buying public, beyond the commodities and services it offers to the public.

Of course, the power that business exercises, and abuses of this power, are not often called to the attention of the public, until, that is, some scandal breaks in the newspapers. In 1959, as we all recall, the famous TV payola scandal rocked the country, followed in 1961 by the indictment and sentencing of G.E. and Westinghouse officials for illegal price-fixing. Both these incidents had one thing in common: *No one would accept the responsibility.* Higher officials blamed it on lower officials, and lower officials blamed it on their superiors. And both these incidents have much in common with a moral problem of much greater proportions: the responsibility for the destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust. Hardened criminals guilty of the most horrible crimes paraded to the witness stand and told their accusers that they were simply cogs in a big wheel, '*kleine mentschen,*' and the defense: "everybody was doing it, we had no choice" continues to be heard in defense of all sorts of immorality and criminal acts.

When scandals become public, there is a quick rash of discussion, and then, as quickly, the discussion stops; it becomes dead as yesterday's newspaper. But businessmen, who must live with these problems constantly, do discuss them, very often in the pages of various business journals. And one theme recurs and recurs: "GOOD ETHICS IS GOOD BUSINESS." Now, one may agree, or disagree with this formulation, but it brings us to the question: How is a Jew, who has committed himself to obedience to Torah and Halachah, to react to this morass of ethical confusion, and refusal to accept responsibility?

One of the myths of American life—you probably were taught this at school in your earliest years—is embodied in the expression: "*Honesty is the best policy.*"

But what do we mean when we say its "the best policy"? Perhaps what we really mean is illustrated by the story of the two women who boarded a bus and sat down together. One of them said, "Oh, . . . I forgot

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to pay my fare." The other shrugged her shoulders: "Listen, the company has plenty of money, forget about it." "Oh no," her companion said, "honesty is the best policy." She walked down to the driver and returned with a big smile on her face. "See, I told you 'honesty is the best policy'—I gave the driver a quarter and he gave me change for half-a-dollar."

Honesty works—it 'pays off' . . . good ethics is good business . . . it pays off in the long run. But this is not what the Torah demands of us. Does eating only kosher food 'pay off'—hardly, it's usually more expensive. Does observing Shabbos 'pay off'—it may involve a serious financial loss. Does any mitzvah 'pay off' . . . except of course in a spiritual sense. And one *may* seriously question whether good ethics 'pays off'; whether it really is 'good business'; whether it will ultimately show up on the black side of the ledger. Good ethics is a Torah imperative—the Torah demands it of us, even at the expense of losing money which will never be recouped. We might ask just as well, does *tzedakah* 'pay off'—if it does, there may be something wrong.

An entire section of the *Shulchan Aruch* concerns itself with business ethics and procedures. It is interesting to note that in order to pass judgement on such matters, a rabbi must have a higher *smicha*, *Yodin Yodin*, than the general *smicha* given to rabbis. We can here only underline the simple fact that the *Shulchan Aruch* is concerned with what happens at the office, or at the plant, as much as it is concerned with Shabbos and Kashrus, with our *tefilos* and our *tefilin*. But even the text of the *Shulchan Aruch* itself does not have all the answers. Just as modern technology and food chemistry, for example, have created new problems which require technological data and a deeper understanding of Halachah, so too the complexities of modern business and finance require new insights and in-depth understanding of both sides of the coin.

Yet, this is not to say that the average Jew, anxious and willing to be guided by Halachah, is left completely in the dark. There are some basic guidelines in Torah tradition which can serve as rules-of-thumb in basic business problems.

1. The Torah deems personal property to be inviolate. Any act which seeks to secure ownership of property without the clear will and understanding of the person who is transferring the property, is a violation of one or more basic laws of the Torah. Of course, our zealotry to protect the rights of private property, must work both ways. Reb Yisroel Salanter, the great Mussar teacher, put it this way: *Yenems mili d'alma, zeinen meine mili d'shmaya*. That is, something which for my fellow Jew is simply a physical or material need, is for me a spiritual responsibility. Or, to put it in more concrete terms, for someone to provide bread for himself and his family, is a material problem, (*mili d'alma*);

but for me to help him to meet these needs, is a spiritual obligation (*mili d'shmaya*). Bearing this in mind will help to solve many ethical, or halachic problems that arise in the business world. A great *tzadik* and *talmid chochom* offered this example: If a man runs a winery and underpays his employees because they are off from work on Shabbos, then he is producing the worst kind of *Yayin Nesech*.

2. *Dina d'malchusa dina*, the Sages tell us; the law of the land in which we live is as binding as a *din* of the Torah (unless, of course, the law would force us to violate Torah law, a circumstance which we in democratic lands, fortunately do not face). This means, very simply, that our obligations to our government are to be viewed in the same light as we view our obligations in the religious sphere. If we are opposed to compromise in the realm of Shabbos, for example, then to be consistent, we must avoid compromise in meeting our obligations to the state, as well.

3. In our relationships with people, Jews and non-Jews, we must carry with us the basic teaching of our Torah: "*Choviv odom, she'nivra b'tzelem elokim*," "Man is especially dear, because he has been created in the image of G-d." While many problems may arise in dealing with personnel on all levels which are of a more specific nature and may require specific consideration and consultation with a rabbi, nevertheless, this rule-of-thumb can serve as a faithful guide in most instances.

Above all, the most basic rule-of-thumb that must guide the businessman is this: The Halochos which govern business ethics and business procedures require at least as much competence as the vast body of Halochos for which we usually turn to the rabbi as the expert. We live in an age of specialization; the good businessman confronted with a problem which takes him out of his depth in a particular area, will seek out expert advice from someone who has mastered this specific area. So too in the area of Halacha, if we would be true to our G-d, and true to ourselves, we must seek out the rabbi whose competence in talmudic scholarship qualifies him to give us the most expert guidance in this area.

A recent writer on the subject of business ethics proposes a test of your "integrity quotient" and here are some of the questions he asks:

- Do you pad your business expense accounts by overstating mileage, hotel, food, and other expenses?
- Do you place the blame on someone else for your own mistakes?
- If you are an employee, do you use company time or facilities for personal business?
- Do you try to 'beat' traffic laws, or try to avoid the consequences when you have been caught violating them?

There are other questions he asks, questions we might all ask ourselves, but his jack-pot question is most revealing:

HAVE YOU ANSWERED ANY OF THE ABOVE QUESTIONS WITH A "NO," WHEN IN YOUR HEART YOU KNOW IT SHOULD BE "YES?"

There is a familiar story told of the *Chofetz Chaim*—he had hitched a ride with a *ba'alegole*. The driver, seeing a field of fresh hay, stopped his wagon and asked

his passenger to stand guard while he snatched a few bales. Within minutes, the *Chofetz Chaim* began shouting "*M'e kukt, M'e kukt*" (we're being watched). The driver rushed back to his wagon, and rushed off. "Who was watching?" he asked his passenger, and the *Chofetz Chaim* pointed his finger upward.

We may fool others; we may succeed in fooling the government; and someone may even find a way to beat the computers, but the Jew must always remember: *we are being watched.* □

# From Freethinker to Believer

Nathan Birnbaum

If I am to explain how from a freethinker I became a believer, I must first answer another question: how I became a freethinker to begin with. Born of East European Jewish parents in the West European metropolitan Jewish community in Vienna, I grew up with the concepts, and amidst the practice, of traditional Judaism—yet in an environment that no longer retained much of that strong and vital Judaism we still find among the Jews of Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, I was a believing child and youth, eager to practice Judaism as I had been taught. And so until the early years of high school. Only later was I to be influenced by the sort of education I received and the non-Jewish culture around me. I did not, however, experience that precipitousness, that painful inner conflict and pathos so characteristic of young East European Jews who abandoned the old Jewish life for "enlightened" ways. My way of life did not, after all, differ so greatly from the non-Jewish way, as did the East European Jew's, yet I felt real satisfaction that there was a difference between me and the world outside, and not a small one at that. But bad influences did not appear to have played a role in the change I underwent. At first it showed itself only in the fact that calmly and without fuss I stopped observing one or another commandment. I gave no thought to the important questions. In my basic principles, I remained a believer and, as I recall, I had no doctrinal objection to the observance of the commandments.

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**"To me, modernity meant the liberation of the individual from all his bonds."**

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The change in me became more violent when, at about sixteen or seventeen, I began reading a certain type of literature, especially Büchner's *Force and*

*Matter*, then in fashion. Antiphilosophic natural philosophy succeeded in doing what the culture of my environment had not been able to accomplish—that is, to uproot me. I felt as if the scales had fallen from my eyes and suddenly I could see. The world was so simple to understand: it exists and that's that. Life evolves from dead matter and multiplies by sexual intercourse. Soul, spirit are simply functions of matter or, if you wish, their excrescences. Philosophy and, it goes without saying, religion—idle words. This materialistic monistic turn in my opinions about the most important things in the world would probably have greatly reinforced the revolutionary anarchistic sympathies which I had already had, had not something else kept me from wandering far off. This was the insight which I, the young Western Jew of East European Jewish origin, had at the end of the seventies—that assimilation was a delusion, a fallacy we might well bewail, and that we must remind ourselves of the fact of our peoplehood. Realizing this, I had, still in my early years, begun to work with great impetus among the educated younger Jews then unquestioningly assimilationist. It happened that I did not make much of my brand-new freethinking and even tried not to flaunt it. I did not have enough time for that. My national outlook had led me to look upon religion and the commandments as a national mode, cherished by the people—a mode freethinking nationalists could use, and one to which they ought even adapt themselves, if that was necessary for their purposes. Perhaps some nationalist romanticism intruded and perhaps also—so it seems today, looking back—an instinctive satisfaction that I had once again come closer to the old domain of the faith of my child-

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NATHAN BIRNBAUM, seminal Jewish thinker, was born in Vienna in 1864. His father had come of a Galician hasidic family and his mother was the daughter of a Carpathian mitnagid rabbi. Having moved to Vienna, however, his family was only moderately observant; his father was even something of a maskil. Birnbaum attended German schools, and German culture had a considerable influence on him.

As a student at the University of Vienna in 1883, he founded the first Jewish nationalist student society, Kadima, based on the idea of national renewal in Palestine. For some years he published a paper called *Selbst-Emenzipation*, named after Leon Pinsker's *Autoemanzipation*.

In 1885 he obtained his law degree but after four years gave up his position with a law firm to devote himself to writing and Jewish communal affairs. He eventually became deeply involved in the early Zionist movement. He read a paper at the first Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 and was elected secretary-general of the first Zionist Actions Committee.

But he became dissatisfied with political Zionism and began to question the validity of its approach to Jewish existence. Leaving the Zionist movement, he turned toward East European Jewry, which he considered to be the real and

living Jewish people, embodying a vital Jewish culture. From this perception he evolved a theory of galut-nationalism, which led him directly to Yiddish, a galut-language, and he entered into a lifelong battle to raise the prestige of Yiddish among those who spoke it and those who did not. In 1908, he went to the United States to lecture and plan the Yiddish Language Conference, held later that year in Czernowitz (Cernauti).

In 1911, Birnbaum went to Poland and Russia, where he lectured in every important Jewish center: Lodz, Warsaw, Vilna, Riga, Kiev and St. Petersburg. While there, Birnbaum had a great mystical experience, which he described in an autobiographical essay:

*I must first go back a few years. Even before my trip to America I had doubts about my materialist world outlook, which I had for so long accepted. But the first truly religious feelings, the first perceptions of G-d, first awoke in me when I was travelling on the sea. I myself did not know what was happening to me. Later, I looked upon it as a dream. But my doubts about materialism continued to harass me until I vanquished it totally. I began to understand the achievement of religion in the world. I recognized it as the axis on which human history revolved. I was already*

*close to the recognition of the eternal and living substance of religion, but I still somehow resisted, until the blessed moment arrived and He showed himself to me in His whole creative splendor. Yet still I did not get the idea that from this recognition some greater accomplishment still awaited me. It was when in Russia, at a discussion in St. Petersburg, after a lecture given by someone else, that suddenly it became clear to me that I must rise and bear witness to the Lord G-d. And I rose and in a passionate speech poured out my whole heart. Then I first realized that a great new obligation awaited me.*

After this public testimony of his conversion from secular materialism to Orthodox Judaism, Birnbaum devoted himself to writing about Messianic Judaism, teaching that Judaism and Jewishness had a single divine origin and that one could not exist without the other. In 1919 Birnbaum, who had arrived at professing Judaism by way of a mystical experience, joined the Agudat Israel . . . For a short time, he was its general secretary. [From *Freethinker to Believer*] was translated from an autobiographical essay first published in 1919.

Birnbaum lived in Germany until 1933. After Hitler's advent to power, he settled in Scheveningen in Holland.

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hood years. But my freethinking did not long permit me to put it aside. If my free thought had not been fitted into a general scheme of the world, it was simply because I still had not had such a view.

Things became quite different when I outgrew boyish unaccountability and arrived at the responsibility of manhood, when in all my work I reached the stage of viewing everything under the sun from a single point of view. Freethinking did not then seem to me to be an isolated phenomenon, but something which a modern man's world outlook ought not to lack. To me, modernity meant the liberation of the individual from all his bonds. My old anarchistic sympathies became clearly defined socialist demands. I was concerned about the individual, about saving his individuality, which economic exploitation menaced. As for our people, my concern was to liberate Jewish group individuality and Jewish individuals from their especially pressing poverty. Likewise, my freethinking seemed to be the cure for the disease of religion which, in my view at that time, enslaved and crippled the human spirit and thereby shrivelled the happiness of the individual and of peoples. I had no choice, then, but to destroy all bridges leading to religion, and I did so. But I did not wage any particular war for my freethinking, as I had done for my national ideals and for some of my social ideals. I was reluctant to insult the most sacred feelings of

others, and besides, I continued to make allowances for national needs because, even then, my greatest interest and my outlook were tied up with the question of peoplehood. Perhaps, also, a remnant of doubt persisted, though I would not have admitted it. During the period of my freethinking, there were moments when something out of keeping with my principles stirred in me, but, unwilling to submit to weakness, I always managed to throw it off with determination. In any case, the fact is that for over twenty years I served nationalist, socialist freethinking modernity in its most extreme mode. I was quite certain, and with cause, that I would never disbelieve in my disbelief.

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**"How can I convince them . . . that the 'sensible man' can be religious . . . ?"**

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And yet I did. I know many are angry with me for this — many more than those who were offended because, for twenty years, I have been critical of Zionism (though I doubt not at all the peoplehood of Jews and though the land of our ancestors is precious to me) and of modern Hebraism (though I love Hebrew, the sacred tongue). Many, though not all of them, resent my conversion and think the worse of me. First, there are those who believe I had dishonest motives. To



them, I have nothing to say. Whoever is acquainted with the course of my life knows what to think of it. For those who interpret my becoming a believer in the usual manner, that is, as a sign of mental deterioration, I cannot of course act as my own defense and demonstrate that I am still of sane mind. I can only say that their interpretation substantiates my opinion, based on many other facts which I have observed and about which I have learned: that the slogan "free thought" appeals particularly to those who do not have the least comprehension of the deepest essence of thought and who are, besides, the most stubborn and conceited fanatics imaginable. To a third group, who say I force myself to believe because I have somehow been disappointed in Judaism, I would like to reply. But I feel it is beyond my ability, for how can I convince them to imagine what they cannot imagine—that the "sensible man," the "educated man," the "man of intellect" can be religious nowadays? I cannot give them the sense they lack, though they see how large and towering the religious beliefs of man have loomed in all periods and among all nations, especially those of the greatest historical figures. For example, one of my critics, mentioning my conversion, wrote that God has no heirs. How can I make him, however superior intellectually, understand that indeed I do not pray to his God, who, in his eyes, is dead, but to the G-d that lives forever, the Lord of the Universe?

I wrote elsewhere that when I discarded ideological nationalism, putting greater stress on peoplehood as a living reality, I came to realize that the innermost nature of the Jewish people ought to be expressed in its religion and that it therefore deserved serious attention and the utmost respect. But this was not yet the start of my conversion, because I still held that religion in general was obsolete, and therefore the Jewish religion also could not survive. I pondered: "Is it not conceivable that something new will succeed Judaism and undertake to express what it hitherto expressed? Why could not the essence of the Jewish people appear everywhere in life in all its breadth?"

My conversion apparently began when my materialistic outlook showed its first spiritual traits. I cannot say precisely when this happened, except that some twelve to fourteen years ago I began to feel somewhat uncomfortable with materialism. It was harder for me to deny that modernity, which had once entered the world with great promise and was welcomed with very great expectations, had reached a stage in which its bankruptcy became evermore apparent. Its individualistic programs could not resolve the confusion of life; everything it had given rise to became resolved in disharmonies; its high priests turned out to be comical little figures. I began more frequently to suspect that the natural sciences refused to listen and learn about anything which seeks to emerge from the other side of our senses and our reason, lest we recognize it or



*Nathan Birnbaum*

**"My conversion apparently began when my materialistic outlook showed its first spiritual traits. I cannot say precisely when this happened."**

understand it better. Little by little, I realized that the limits which materialism set on thought, and even tried to set on feeling, were the limits of those people who had succumbed to it, but there was a higher stage of thinking than logic, of which the senses are aware, and a higher level of emotion than pure psychophysical sensitivity, and that, in essence, we cannot interpret the great and elevated revelations of spirit in history as the inevitable effects of senseless dead matter. More and more, I understood that even the fact of peoplehood, of each peoplehood, could not be explained by materialism, that economic materialism, based exclusively on economic data, could not explain the differences among peoples. Even racial materialism, supplementing economic materialism, could not, as I examined it closer, fulfill its promise. It was too obvious that from peoples of one race many cultural groups emerged, peoples with differing cultural ideals because of differing spiritual outlooks.

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**"... the true revelation came to me  
when I had conquered my . . . superstitious  
fear of the subject of religion . . ."**

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But the true and great revelation came to me when I had conquered my materialistic superstitious fear of the subject of religion and when I suddenly encountered the most grandiose and significant expressions of the spirit, the originators of the greatest cultural achievements of nations and the whole human race, the most magnificent cultural structures. What a boor I must have been to have passed them by unaware, busy instead with collecting all kinds of little facts and proofs. I felt the distaste rising in me for that cheap materialistic interpretation of religion which seeks to reduce the most elevated religious philosophies of the world to fetish, totem, taboo, and other such cute things. I even bowed before the pagan heaven of ancient Greece, however alien and remote from me. I bowed to it because I saw in it man's striving for the world of spirit and his inadequate understanding of the response of that spirit, because I saw the greatness this striving and this response wrought in human history. That was the great discovery, when before my very eyes the one and only true spiritual revolution took place, whose purpose is to divert man from the path that leads to the gods and set him upon the path that leads from and with G-d into the world, when before my very eyes unfolded the great innovations which Judaism introduced into human history. Though I was deeply aware how Christianity and Islam differed from Judaism, their mother, and though I could never forget how meanly they expressed their gratitude, nonetheless, seeing how these religions raised nations from a gray mass of heathens, teaching them the ABC's of Jewish thought, recreating them into workshops of fine cultures in which at least the sacred seed of Judaism remained, I could look upon them only with profound respect as magnificent experiments in which Jewish thought was poured into non-Jewish forms. But for the mother itself, for Judaism, in its uniqueness and majesty, I was seized with awe. I felt that the hope of the world was preserved in my people, that it was seeding the world with the future, the meaning of the religious way of life of the Jewish people transcended all historical measures. The axis of all axes around which world history revolved for thousands of years was revealed to me.

In the light of the awe I felt and the insight I had, I abandoned materialism completely and even left far behind ordinary philosophic idealism, for this was merely the bare philosophic assent that spirit is the original and creative force in the world. I was already carried along, as I understand today, by the vigorous religious stream of humankind, and particularly in a stream that originated in the profoundest depths of the

Jewish belief in G-d. This was the first outburst of my suppressed religious ecstasy, the day of crisis when the soul returned from abroad, forlorn in a long night illumined only by artificial light. But I was not yet aware of it, because I had neither the time nor the courage for self-understanding and because consciously I still served an alien power. My brand-new happiness then seemed only like painful restlessness, from which one question constantly cried out: What good is it that you have become absorbed in things that actually can have meaningfulness only on one premise which has no place in your philosophy? What are these huge cultural apparatuses, these great emitters of light rays, if He does not live, in whose name and with whose power they say they work? And what if this G-d, whose heralds they are, does not exist? Or, if machines create the spirit and function as the fiction of "G-d," then why the fiction, why the roundabout path? Is it only to prove that matter, brute force, must travel roundabout paths, *golem*-paths, if it is to express spirit?

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**"... only a thread held me to disbelief,  
the last thin thread of the materialistic  
web, with its *haskala* woof . . ."**

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For a long time I found no answer. The suppressed longing which suddenly erupted in many of my thoughts, sometimes even in waves of feeling, and in a few spiritual experiences had long pointed to G-d. At the end, only a thread held me to disbelief, the last thin thread of the materialistic web, with its *haskala* woof, which still encased my soul. But the thin thread was unbelievably strong, and strong also my obstinacy. Not only did I feel I dare not yield, that I dare not repudiate the philosophy which recognizes only a world that can be touched and computed, and which I served faithfully for twenty-five years, but I also feared, and with reason, I would sink into a bottomless abyss. I continued to cite everything wrong in the world, in the life of individuals and nations, as proofs against G-d. If there is a G-d, why does He need these progressions with their remote periods, catastrophes, and extremes? I was just not yet convinced that G-d existed.

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**"... the thin thread snapped and I  
recognized G-d . . . in His full  
obviousness, the Creator . . . of the world."**

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So the years passed until a day came—I no longer know when it was—when the thin thread snapped by itself and I recognized G-d, recognized Him in His full obviousness, the Creator and King of the world. Then I understood that all the arguments that I cited against Him and His existence proved only that one could not approach Him, but did not remove the assurance that

He existed. Once more, everything seemed so simple that I could not comprehend how I could have so long resisted this simple insight while assenting to a vulgar platitude. I remembered various things of the time of my disbelief which I had then disregarded and which were expressions of my imprisoned and suppressed volition. Then I also realized that the sorrow of recent years was nothing more than one great heralding of the Lord of the World, before He entered my consciousness. At the same time, I felt, as I wrote in *Gottesvolk*, a "burning shame" that "I should have been for so long among those who do not know Him, that the wisdom of my ancestors—the most magnificent on earth—lay dormant in me for so long, that the voice of my people was for so long silent within me."

After all I have said so far about my change, I was obviously not eager to qualify my tardy recognition with all sorts of fashionable and unfashionable "ifs" and "buts." I could not be satisfied with a nonpersonal god that does not exist, in whose name one could not proclaim moral law, shape human history nor form culture. Not for this, I thought, were we the first to be privileged to know G-d—to permit Him to be ground into a kind of G-d-dust and blown out into nature, or to let our megalomania stamp a formula by which He and our own humanness are identical. Nor could I accept a barren deism for myself alone. Not for this did we undertake to serve G-d as a people, that we should now renounce the power of communal service. Nor did I want to belittle our chosenness. For, if there was a G-d—and now I was sure of this—and if it was true that the Jewish people, obdurate against circumstances which affected other peoples and against the arrogance of the senses, thus became different from other peoples and became the first to recognize G-d (and this is true), then doubtless G-d decreed this differentness and chose the Jewish people to be the pioneer in recognizing Him, bestowing upon them special duties and responsibilities, and putting them on a special plane. Then it is also clear that all the laws which were given this chosen people, according to which they were to live and work, must have been given deliberately as a means or way or goal of chosenness. The Torah, then, which is the foundation of this Law, and the great records of the tradition which were built on this foundation cannot be regarded merely as Israel's national literature, but as documents which Almighty G-d gave to the Jews, setting forth their chosenness and the rights and obligations derived from it. Then, Revelation and the tradition are authentic, so authentic that it does not matter to me whether or not the arrogant faultfinding of errant generations recognizes them. It follows, then, that every word of the written and oral tradition is binding—on me just as much as on anyone else. It is not enough that I condescend to recognize G-d's existence, but I must stand among my believing people and go in its ways. . . .

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**"... one ceases to be discouraged by  
the superiority of the enlightened  
Jew toward the ritual ceremonies . . ."**

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I admit I did not always succeed in accommodating my actions to my belief, nor could I have succeeded. I had to surmount strong inner opposition, besides outer obstacles. A man who for decades valued and served individualism in its subservience to matter cannot simply divest himself of the effects of his education, of all Western habits and traits which contravene the meaning and the rigorous will of Judaism, as he would take off clothes he had put on a few hours before. Perhaps some trace of an alien sin will always persist in the blood of the soul which was among strangers, a trace which one hopes G-d in His mercy will forgive and the community of Israel in its strength will absorb. Nor is it any more possible to comprehend instantly the full seriousness of the commandments; it is even less possible swiftly to adjust to performing them. This is the last thing to be convinced of. It takes a long time until one ceases to be discouraged by the superiority of the enlightened Jew toward the ritual ceremonies, understanding that his is nothing but the old arrogance of the half-educated vulgarian toward the cultured man of history, of the easygoing, lax man toward the G-d-fearing man, of the pseudoreligious charlatan toward the truly and consistently pious man. It takes a long time until one understands that the commandments really require strictness and that this strictness preserved us from becoming common and vulgarized; and until one comprehends that special mercy of the Almighty who gave us the commandments on our solitary journey among the peoples as a guarantee that they would not absorb us and that we would survive, with our Jewish way of life and our Jewish outlook, until the Messiah will come, for our sake and theirs.

True, the more I became part of traditional Judaism, the fewer my complaints against it and the greater my demands on observant Jews. I could not help feeling that they did not attain the height of their task, and I could not keep from saying it. I realized that observant Jews had become lax in that cardinal article of faith concerning the Messiah and that in all respects they were non-doers, nothing-doers. They still struggled with the idol of time, before which Westerners, rested or restless, kneeled in the dust, but they did not try to do something that would for always keep Judaism above time. Submitting certain proposals, I demanded of them deeds and a new beginning to their old, old heritage, or, more accurately, to their ever-lasting heritage.

If someone starts talking about "reaction" and "clericalism," I must state these words do not frighten me

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***"Because for so long I ate the bread of  
exile, I am now gaining new strength..."***

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one bit. They displease me to the extent that they sound as uncomfortably European as, for instance, "revolution" and "liberalism." But I accept these designations with affection, if people mean to say of me that I dislike the everlasting European bustle around progress, which in the end adds up to nothing, and that I recognize the union of men with G-d and their organization based on this union to be of the highest importance. I am bored with Europe's progress and its "emancipated humanity," with the masquerade of little people who play god and keep sinking into the mire. If they choose to stay there, that is their pleasure.

If someone should charge me with having repudiated Jewish peoplehood by becoming a believer from a freethinker, I would respond to his stereotyped European nationalism with only a contemptuous laugh and

continue to believe that a community of Jews, truly G-d-fearing, faithful to the tradition and observing, must perforce be the most national and most creative community, and that no other Jewish community, howsoever conceived, can compare with it with regard to creative power.

I can think of no other way to conclude this essay than by telling my friends and opponents that I have never felt stronger and happier. Since I rejoined the great Jewish congregation of the past, the present and the future, with its Jewish outlook and its Jewish way of life, since I have been working in it, a brother among brethren, I have realized the greatness of authentic Jewish life and its joyfulness. Because for so long I ate the bread of exile, I am now gaining new strength at home.

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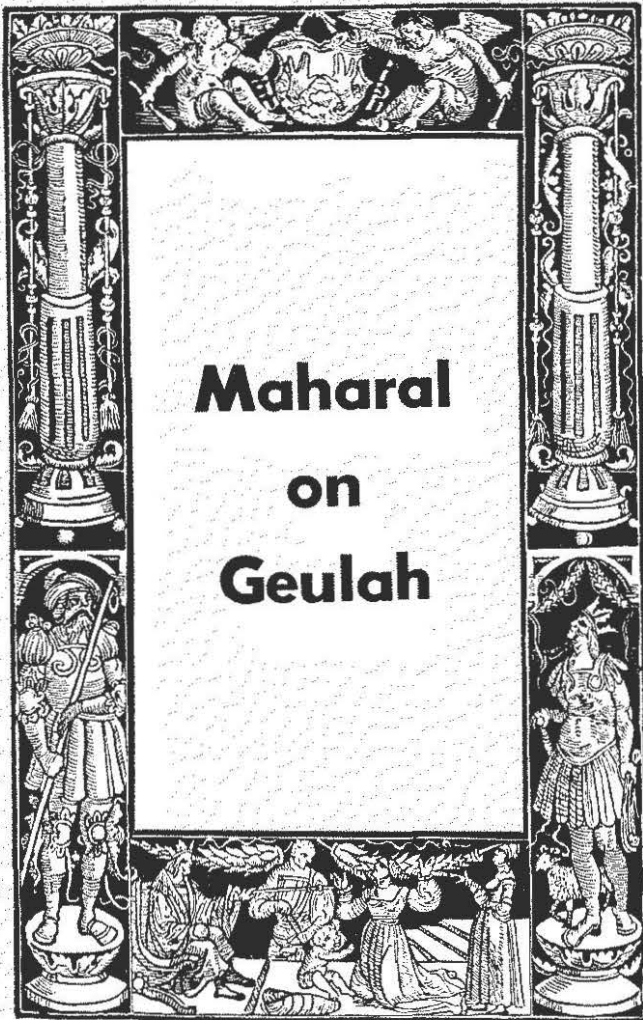
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*The following are selections freely translated from the writings of the 16th century, R' Yehudah Liva ben Bezalel, popularly known as Maharal Mi' Prague.*

### Four Expressions of Geulah

*The decree that the children of Avrohom would be enslaved encompassed three stages: 1) גְרוּחַ (estrangement), 2) עֲבָדוּת (subjugation), and 3) עֲנָוָה (affliction), each stage being progressively more severe. Being an alien in a strange land, without power, ruled over by others, yet leaves a man some measure of freedom. Being a bondsman is worse, for he is subject to his master's will. And yet, this is not unusual, for many men are subjugated to other men. But, affliction is the ugliest state of all . . .*

*When the Almighty initiated the process of Geulah, he began from the lowest stage. "And I will remove you from the oppression of Egypt"—refers to the affliction . . . "And I will rescue you from their bondage"—refers to subjugation. Having rescued them from avdus, the Almighty says "And I will redeem them," thereby removing the estrangement of being in an alien land. Yet, these acts simply took Israel out of Egyptian subjugation; they still lacked identification with Hakodosh Boruch Hu—therefore He said: "And I will take you to me as a people"—you will be Mine.*

— GEVUROS HASHEM

### Free Men

*There are those who ask: Of what value was the Exodus from Egypt, since we are now subjugated to other nations? But this is absurd. When Israel left Egypt, they were granted the ultimate good; they became worthy on their own right to be free men on the basis of a merit peculiar to Israel. [Consequently] a temporal circumstance cannot negate a permanent state. Israel is always inherently free—in spite of temporal subjugation, since the Almighty Himself took them out of Egypt and made them free men.*

— GEVUROS HASHEM

### The Chosen People

*"You alone have I known among all the families of the earth—I will therefore visit upon you all of your transgressions." We may ask: If this is the case, for what reason have so many and so varied troubles befallen them? Other nations sin, and they are not afflicted in the same degree as the nation of G-d.*

*You should therefore know, that the blows struck against Israel are intended to punish them, and since punishment for transgression derives from having acted in a manner unworthy of one's self, Israel has been more severely punished. There is no doubt that Israel, as a people, is more removed from transgression than any other nation, and transgression is unworthy of their spiritual status. Therefore, when they sin, it is considered a far greater deviation than the sins of other nations, and they are more severely punished than other nations.*

— NETZACH YISROEL

## Punishment and Love

*It may appear to some that affliction which comes upon Israel is intended to destroy them. On the contrary, it is intended to purify them and to remove the impurity of sin. We may compare it to a piece of gold ore which has impurities; the fire which removes the impurity enhances the gold. When affliction strikes Israel, it too purifies them from sin, and they thereby come closer to G-d, and call out His Name.*

*The Almighty afflicts Israel in order that they should NOT be destroyed. It is in this light that we can understand the passage "I will add to your punishment seven times." This does not mean that the Almighty punishes the transgressor seven-fold for what he has done. We dare not think this—He does not reckon above the actual sin.*

*The passage means: Were the Almighty to bring his retribution to bear all at once, no one could survive the blow. Therefore, He strikes His blow one-seventh at a time.*

— NETZACH YISROEL

## Israel Must Be One

*We can only know things from their opposites. From the appearance of 'black' we know the appearance of 'white.' And so it is with all things; knowing them consists of knowing both extremities. For this reason the Sages tell us, "In the Haggadah we begin with criticism [of our ancestors] and we close with their praise." And why?—because it is only through a critical view that we can truly recognize merit. Similarly, we cannot appreciate the final Geulah, without grasping the meaning of Golus and Churban—only in this way can we know what it is we look forward to in Geulah.*

*Golus itself is a manifestation of Geulah. Obviously, Golus is a deviation from the natural order, for the Almighty has set each nation in its proper place, and He has set Israel in its proper place, Eretz Yisroel. Being exiled from one's place is a total reversal of the natural order, and all things, when removed from their natural place, lose their stability, and gravitate toward their proper place. Should they remain away from their natural place, then that which is unnatural would become 'natural' . . .*

*In the natural order, Israel's place is in Eretz Yisroel, governing themselves, and not being governed . . .*

*It is the nature of things that G-d has implanted in them that sustains them. Should the accidental become normative, the natural order loses its meaning.*

*Dispersion is unnatural . . . and the dispersion of Israel among the nations is a deviation from the natural order, for since they are one people, they must stand together and be one.*

— NETZACH YISROEL

## This World and the Next

*Israel is the crux of all creation; for them was the world created . . . Yet we see that most of their days are spent in affliction and exile . . .*

*Our Sages have told us in their sublime wisdom, that Israel is not properly suited for this world. Were they actually suited for this world, and were this world their final lot, it would pose a great difficulty—have they sinned so much to deserve such an interminable golus?*

*It is rather, that Israel is simply not of this world . . . It is the glory of Israel that they are separate from the physical nature of this world, and how could anyone think them to be the rightful heirs of this mundane world.*

— NETZACH YISROEL

## "Moshiach dwells among the poor"

*This world is by nature physical, and the Moshiach is a meta-physical being. It is axiomatic that the physical is in constant tension with the non-physical. For this reason it is said that "Moshiach dwells among the poor." Since he has no share in this world, he shares the lot of the poor and the sick who find the world in constant tension with them. It is therefore proper that Moshiach should sit with them, that is, that he should be counted among them, since he too has no share in this world.*

## The End of Days

*The end of anything is more conducive to perfection by the very nature of things. From this it follows that the end of days shall be more conducive to human perfection—that is, the days of Moshiach which will be the end of days. □*

# אנטי-שמיות ישראלית

The following article appeared in the Israeli daily, *Yediot Achronot* on Tishrei 21, 5727. Written by Shlomo Shamgar, who identifies himself as an *apikores*, the article gives a deep insight into the attitude of many Israelis to the religious Jew. The translation is by MENACHEM GREENBERG. We have retained the original title: *Israeli Antisemitism*.

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Jews with side-locks were pushing past each other between the dilapidated houses of the ghetto. *Streimel*-wearers were passing like thieves in the night. Old men in *kapotes*, young men winged with *tzitzis*, children in white socks—at times a matronly woman hurrying on her way, adjusting the kerchief which covered her grotesque *sheitel*.

All of them—all of these children of this irritating “Chosen People”—hide their faces in their palms, conceal their long Semitic noses under black, wide-brimmed hats or behind their *sidurim* and *machzorim*, as they flee to their secret *minyotim* and their gloomy services.

And when one of these types sends a quick look at you through their fingers, you read clearly the feeling of Jewish guilt in the eyes of that obscure creature. . . .

And if you sit in the movie theatre—perhaps later you will see a film with admired Aryan actors, handsome and tall—you stretch back, guffaw like a horse, break up from laughter—and soaked with perspiration, you point at those degenerate types captured by the camera lens, shout at and scorn those crooked, despised characters who quickly escape the camera's lens . . .

\* \* \*

All this takes place—not in Nazi Germany or Poland or some other antisemitic land.

All this takes place as you sit in a movie theatre in the Land of the Jews, the Jewish State, and you inhale this intoxicating poison which blows out at you with the air-conditioned breezes.

On the eve of every Jewish holiday, our newsreels perpetuate and present to us these *golus*-types. The photographers ambush them with flashbulbs, from Safed to Meah Sheorim, and throughout the year they “catch” them where they live, in yeshivos, at religious weddings, at receptions for Chassidic Rebbes—all these myriad strange creatures, who could not be completely annihilated by Auschwitz, or by the two thousand years of persecution that preceded it.

You see them on the screen and you hate them.

You hate them because they throw stones on Shabbos and force you to travel by foot on Yom Kippur.

You hate them because you identify them with the dealings of their political party leaders.

You hate them because they are impeding your progress with the noise they are making over dissection of their corpses.

You hate them because they are only twenty per cent of the

electorate and yet they behave as if this Land was promised to G-d-fearing people only. . . .

And you hate them—let's not fool ourselves—because they have something to believe in—and you have nothing.

You hate them because they are different—different from you.

You hate them because they are Jews—and you—in the depths of your secular soul—envy them for being authentic Jews and true to themselves.

You hate them because they are closer to G-d; and you fear Him, even though you have determined to erase Him from your list of the guests invited to your home on Shabbos eve.

And that's why you shout when they appear on the movie screen; that's why you jeer, stamp your feet, whistle—take pleasure in your cultural superiority, cruelly mock their joyous celebrations, their customs and dress—the same dress worn by a hundred generations of Jews as they lived atop volcanoes and burned on pyres.

And when I see you, cold-hearted Israeli youngster, give vent to your gross rudeness at the sight of the people of Meah Sheorim, I ask myself: *Ribono Shel Olom*, from where does this nation draw such a huge sea of perfidy and self-hatred?

And I, the *apikores* who smokes on Shabbos and does not fast on *Tish'o B'Ov*—for years I have not set foot in a *shul*—my heart is *davko* with those who arouse antisemitism in you.

For they—this may strike you as sentimental poppycock—they are guarding the burning coals for you and for me.

Without them we would all turn into a nation of Jews destroying Jewry.

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## Torah and Secular Studies— The Two Sides of the Coin

Ever since the modern age forced the confrontation between the traditional Jew and modern culture, there has been profound heart-searching and debate on the problems that emerged. How should Torah Jewry relate to the intellectual and social currents swirling around it, and in general to the body of thought and knowledge that underlies modern life?

ESSENTIALLY, TWO APPROACHES EMERGED. One emphasized the duty of the Torah Jew to isolate himself totally from modern secular studies, while the other stressed the compatibility of Torah observance with

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### THESE AND THOSE

by Rabbi Simon Schwab

(New York, 1966, Philipp Feldheim, \$1.40)

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full participation in modern life. This, at least, is how the two approaches have largely been viewed. It is the merit of Rabbi Schwab's searching examination of the problem that it leads to a much deeper understanding of the viewpoints involved, and therefore also to a sounder appraisal of the prospects for a solution of the problem.

The author attacks his task by presenting, alternately, the views of what he calls the "Torah Only" and the "*Torah Im Derech Eretz*" ideals, and then the rejoinders each might offer to the other's arguments. The need for such classification rests upon the obvious fact, stressed in the introduction, "that neither side is sufficiently aware of the correct opposite view and of all its motivations"—and this reviewer would add that many who pledge adherence to one side or another are not even properly aware of the ideals and motivations of *their own side!*

One cannot read far without realizing how wrong it is to see in the "Torah Only" approach a benighted and narrow-minded blindness to life on the part of men who do not understand and may not be fit for the modern world. In reality, as Rabbi Schwab points out, this school of thought is motivated by a profound occupation with Torah, the foundation of all life and all existence; an equally profound awareness of the extraordinary singlemindedness which is necessary in

order to penetrate to a real mastery of Torah; and a very clear-sighted understanding of how the intellectual and material attitudes of the modern age drew away the ordinary Jew from the pursuit of Torah.

On the other hand it is a caricature of the truth to see in Rabbi S. R. Hirsch's "*Torah Im Derech Eretz*" a philosophy of accommodation which enables its adherents to follow all the blandishments of modern life while paying lip-service or a mere minimum of attention to the demands which the Torah makes upon the heart and mind of the Jew. In reality, "*Torah Im Derech Eretz*" is based on the conviction that it is possible and necessary to subjugate *all* spheres of life to the guidance of Torah; and that, if *Bnei Torah* cut themselves off from the world around them, they effectively isolate themselves from the Jewish masses and hand them over to the unchecked domination of non-Jewish ideas, living as they do in an open and free society unlike Eastern Europe of earlier centuries.

"WHO IS RIGHT AND WHO IS NOT?" the author asks in the epilogue. He points out that there are certain unanswerable arguments on each side, as well as classical Torah sources giving support to both; and he emphasizes that, actually, there is room and a need for *both* schools of thought. It is rather obvious that on the one hand there is—at the very least—a need for the encouragement of outstanding Torah scholars whose essential preoccupation is with Torah study only; and, on the other hand, that for large segments of Orthodox Jewry a rejection of secular learning is completely out of question. A coexistence of both philosophies is therefore a foregone conclusion (sealed by the emergence and general acceptance of the American Mesivta High School).

Such coexistence will not satisfy those who feel that whatever the consequences, the pursuit of worldly studies is under all circumstances forbidden—but, after all, even they will admit there is halachic disagreement on this subject. Nor will it satisfy those who feel that the pursuit of worldly studies is to be required from everybody under all circumstances—but they again will surely agree that this is not an immutable law. Somewhere, between these positions, Torah Jewry in America is likely to find room for both the approaches here discussed.

But what about the individual faced with the choice of which way to follow in the modern world? Except for those who are heirs of a definite tradition, our young people are in need of the serious soul-searching the author suggests: "Do you just mean to imitate, or to jump on anybody's bandwagon? . . . Or do you

honestly and sincerely seek to live up to what your Creator expects of you? . . . Are you aware of the consequences, the risks, and the sacrifices (implied in the course of action which you choose)?" It goes without saying that, before choosing to "go towards the world or away from it," a young man must develop to the fullest his knowledge and understanding of Torah. Then, "if you choose לישם שמים only, may G-d be on your side whatever road you travel."

A scant forty-seven pages can hardly exhaust a subject so complex and central to the Jewish future. In particular, the reality of the choice left to the individual youth may well demand more clarification. If he has the potential for attaining those heights of Torah scholarship which have always been the highest dream of the Jew, does he have the right to choose prematurely to divert his intellectual resources to other pursuits? And, if he definitely does not have the potential for outstanding Torah scholarship, must his preparation for life at some point include by necessity the acquisition of those disciplines which will enable him to function most effectively as a Torah personality within the community?

There are surely also other factors which limit the choice open to any individual. May a young person who knows himself to be very susceptible to environmental pressures expose himself to four, five, or six years of the pressure for conformity exerted by our colleges and universities? On the other hand, when an individual feels himself possessed of very special gifts, does he not have an obligation to develop them, in the spirit of the Torah, for the benefit of society? Such questions deserve further treatment—but this does not detract from the great service rendered by Rabbi Schwab in undertaking a clear statement of the basic issues.

It should be noted that Rabbi Schwab has taken scrupulous care to do justice to both sides. At the same time, he once more sums up his own judgment of the situation in a postscript addressed to his own congregation. He emphasizes that the heirs of the Hirschian tradition are committed to the approach so clearly outlined by Rabbi S. R. Hirsch—and that for the great bulk of American Orthodoxy there is in effect no other approach possible either, since the way of "Torah Only" will always be the way, necessarily, of limited numbers. Yet, just because of the role "Torah Im Derech Eretz" has to play on the American Jewish scene, the author warns against misinterpreting it and underlines the pre-eminence and centrality of Torah demanded by Rabbi S. R. Hirsch in thought and practice.

Rabbi Schwab's exposition will undoubtedly spark much discussion and even disagreement. But, whether in agreement or not, everybody concerned with Jewish education and the future of Jewish life is well advised to give it his thoughtful attention.

## The Path of the Just — A Welcome New Edition

The *Torah Classics Library*, an undertaking of Philipp Feldheim, has received wide recognition for its earlier offerings—the Hebrew and English editions of the *Chovoth Halvovos* and the *Sefer Ahava* and *Sefer Hamadah*. The new volume before us is bound to add further glory to this publishing venture, for it makes a most significant contribution to Torah literature.

Rabbi Mosheh Chayim Luzatto's *Mesilath Yeshorim* is generally recognized as the classic guide to a Jew's self-perfection, providing an outline of practical ethics upon the foundation of a systematic Torah world-view. As a result, it has virtually become a required subject of study for every yeshivah student, and has undergone

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### MESILATH YESHORIM

(The Path of the Just)

by Rabbi Mosheh Chayim Luzatto

translated into English by Shraga Silverstein  
(Jerusalem, 1966, *Torah Classics Library*, \$5.50)  
Feldheim

---

innumerable reprintings. Yet there remained a gap which the present volume finally has come to fill.

It contains a careful rendering of the first edition of the *Mesilath Yeshorim* (with inclusion of significant textual variants from other editions), with addition of vowel markings, and it is set in a particularly clear and readable Hebrew typeface. Facing each page of the Hebrew text is an English translation which combines readability with faithfulness to both letter and meaning of the original.

As the translator points out in his introduction, the spirit and message of the *Mesilath Yeshorim* can only be captured in a translation which is based upon the proper respect for this classic as a "statement of life and of how it can and should be lived." The *Mesilath Yeshorim*, after all, is not of interest to us as a relic of our literary past, nor even as an exposition of novel ideas about Jewish life. Its author stressed in his preface that he had not come to tell the reader anything new, but rather to remind him of truths readily ignored because they are all too familiar.

"It is not *what* one knows which shapes his moral conduct, but *how* one knows it," the translator's introduction points out. This, then, is the goal of the *Mesilath Yeshorim*: to teach us *how* to know, how to impress the truths of the Torah upon our consciousness, indeed upon our entire daily life. To do justice to this goal, it is not enough for the reader to leaf through

this work; it must be studied, pondered, and restudied—and this is where the new translation makes its greatest contribution. It not only opens access to the *Mesilath Yeshorim* to the reader who cannot study it in Hebrew, but it also helps the student of the Hebrew text who may need aid in extracting the full meaning of the author's words.

The publishers of the *Torah Classics Library* have a number of other volumes in preparation. We hope they will attain the same excellence as the present volume—certainly an outstanding publishing achievement.

## Found: An 18th Century Tosefta Manuscript

This remarkable volume, at first glance, seems rather forbidding, for it violates every rule about how a book should be produced. Its language bears the strong and often odd-sounding flavor of Dutch, the author's mother-tongue, and so does even the spelling; the theme of the book is time and again put aside by the author for the sake of elaborate digressions of the most varied kinds; the text—typewritten and photo-offset—is made even more difficult to follow because there are crowded into it large numbers of footnotes and reproductions of extracts from other publications, often in rather un-

expected places. Yet it will be the reader's great loss if he lets himself be discouraged and puts this book aside without reading it through.

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*MAVOCH* (Labyrinth)

by Joseph Onderwyzer

(New York, 1965, Bloch Pub. Co.)

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The fact is that this book tells a fascinating story, both in its main theme and in its digressions. The author, so to speak, takes the reader by the hand and takes him along on a wild chase for a lost—and very important—manuscript, a late eighteenth century commentary on the entire *Tosefta* (oral traditions not included in the *Mishnah* but collected separately, following the compilation of the *Mishnah*). This closely written 1,600 page work, which was only the third complete commentary written on the entire *Tosefta*, was rediscovered by the author in an Amsterdam library, and its significance can be readily perceived from a glance at the one manuscript page reproduced in this book (where it covers no less than 16 printed pages). This page deals with the order of the sacrifices on Yom Kippur (*Tos. Yomah* III, I), and its author masterfully analyzes and clarifies the twenty-six different steps involved and the legal controversies around them.

While this alone makes *Mavoch* of great interest to the Talmud student, the various digressions provide



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much further fascinating material, such as a report of the recent discovery of a complete text of the Targum Yerushalmi (pp. 1-7); the problem of the various versions of the *Yom Kippur* service in our *Machsorim* (pp. 75-90); the strange case of Avrohom Jochimi, *Tosefta* commentator and reputed follower of Sabbatai Tzvi (pp. 112-123). Interesting and shadowy historical figures appear and disappear before the reader's eyes, not the least of them the mysterious Rabbi Yitzchak Lemgo, rabbi of a tiny small-town community in Holland—and, at the same time, the towering Talmudic genius of whom we know nothing except for his monumental work on the *Tosefta*.

Perhaps the mystery of Rabbi Yitzchak Lemgo is, after all, the most important impression one carries away from this book. There are so many reflections it provokes in the reader's mind. We ponder the greatness of Torah which bestows some of its own immortality upon the obscure Dutch rabbi—and the greatness of the simple Jew of all ages, who poured his life and blood into the study of Torah until he—as a person—disappeared behind his Torah attainments. We are struck by how many manuscripts can still be found in the great libraries which have never been printed and would greatly enrich our understanding of many aspects of Torah—and we are moved to hope that, while there are individuals who have dedicated themselves to this task and published many old Talmudic writings (notably Rabbi M. J. Blau), many others will join in this sacred undertaking. In any case, whether for the information it offers to the talmudic student, the historian or the bibliophile, or on account of the insights it gives to the ordinary reader, *Mavoach* is a work that truly deserves public attention.

## A Contribution to Popular Torah Literature

"It is my purpose, in writing this book, to enable our people to become familiar with some of the beautiful gems of wisdom that our great rabbis of the past and of today have taught us, regarding the reasons for the mitzvos. Although we are not permitted to assert a definite reason for any mitzvah, we nevertheless are permitted to seek and accept intelligent explanations for them . . . I have included those mitzvos which, I

### THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT

by Rabbi Abraham Travitsky

(1965, published by the author, 220 Virginia Avenue, Danville, Virginia)

felt, would offer the reader some insight into the fundamental aims of Judaism." In these words the author sums up the purpose of the slender volume before us. While there is obviously an infinite variety of approaches that one can take to any mitzvah, Rabbi Travitsky's treatment—which singles out for discussion particularly those ideas on which the modern American Jewish layman may require clarification—is both valid in principle and praiseworthy in execution. It is to be hoped that it will find wide distribution among all those English-speaking Jews for whom it can provide needed enlightenment and inspiration.

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# Israel Digest

Menachem Greenberg

## Shalom, Shalom, But — There's No Shalom

Three years after the bitter controversy over the proposed non-kosher kitchen of the S.S. *Shalom*, Zim Lines, owners of the liner, finds itself in deep financial trouble.

While the liner was being built, the Zim management insisted that in order to attract passengers it would have to offer "international" flavor through *treifa* cuisine. A recent article by Yaacov Friedler in the *Jerusalem Post* reports that a motivational study conducted for Zim by the Ernest Dichter Institute for Motivational Research of New York found that:

for many *Shalom* passengers and prospective passengers as well, a cruise on the *Shalom* is almost like a retreat, a spiritual rebirth, an opportunity for reflection and self-examination. It affords them the opportunity to establish a rapport with Israel—a mystical if not entirely religious rapport—and it gives them as well the chance to re-examine their 'Jewishness.' . . . The overwhelming majority of respondents desire a kosher kitchen.

"Instead of preparing for the advent of the multi-million luxury liner," writes Friedler, "the then department head, Mr. Zvi Herman, was waging war for a non-kosher 'international' kitchen on board." The Dichter report is unequivocal in its condemnation of this idea on the Mediterranean route—on the Caribbean cruises the *Shalom* is non-kosher—both for the ship's future and for the damage already done in negating the ship's Israeli spirit, which, the report concludes, is the only attraction the ship can offer to make the passengers want to choose it, rather than the bigger vessels of more experienced companies . . . That is the attraction Israeli passenger ships have and should be exploited rather than aiming for a vague and unattainable internationalism that other ships can bring off with greater success."

[After this report was written, *The New York Times* reported that the *Shalom* has been sold to a German shipping firm, thus bringing the affair to a close—with a whimper.—ed.]

*The Jewish Observer* / April, 1967

## Knesset Passes New Religious Service Law

The Knesset has passed a permanent Religious Service Law which institutionalizes the present method of selecting local Religious Councils. The councils are responsible for looking after communal religious services in towns, serving as the lay *kehilah* in relation to the local Rabbinat Office for matters such as Kashrus supervision, maintenance of *mikvo'os*, assistance for religious education, and paying the salaries of the rabbis, *shochtim*, and *mashgichim*. Forty-five percent of the council membership is chosen by the town government which pay two-thirds of the council budget; forty-five percent are chosen by the Minister of Religions, whose Department pays one-third; and ten percent are chosen by the local Rabbinat.

The problem faced by the Orthodox community was how to devise a system of choosing the members which would insure that they would be religious persons, which would also be acceptable to the Knesset, which is overwhelmingly non-religious. A city-wide election was no solution since persons not bound by *Halochoh* would be given a voice in the administration of religious facilities which naturally must function according to *halochoh*. To have an election in which only religious persons would vote would involve defining who is a religious Jew and determining who would decide who fits the definition.

The new law assures at least a religious majority on the councils as long as the religious party is taken into the government coalition and the Minister of

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Religions is himself religious. In the event that a coalition be formed without a religious party, local religious councils could be dominated by non-religious members. The law does require that all members be acceptable to all three selectors, so the Rabbinate could veto non-religious candidates, but the Minister or the town council could in turn veto the Rabbinate's candidates, leading to a stalemate. The problem is less serious in towns where the local council itself is a coalition including religious parties which would influence the selection of the town's forty-five percent of the Religious Council.

### **Israel's Economic Crisis — 100,000 Now Unemployed**

Israel's economic crisis deepened as new unemployment figures showed 100,000 persons—10 percent of the labor force—out of work. Despite the domination of the Government by socialist parties, Israel has had no social welfare or unemployment insurance system. Until a few years ago Israel was considered to have underpopulation and full employment.

The recession began shortly after the Eshkol Government called for nationwide belt-tightening to curb the rising spiral of inflation caused by a rapidly expanding economy bloated by foreign aid and investment. The slowdown was either overdone or came too late, and the repression of the economy snowballed. Hardest hit were immigrant laborers in development areas.

### **City Council Grants Aid to Yeshivos**

The Jerusalem City Council voted a grant of IL 100,000 (\$33,000) from proceeds of *Mifal Hapayis* (the national lottery), to the Beis Yaakov seminary for girls. In addition, the seminary received a IL 90,000 loan. The Rizhiner Yeshiva, *Tiferes Yisroel*, and the Tchebiner Yeshiva, *Kochov Miyaakov*, received development grants of IL 50,000 each. *Bnei Ami*, a new Chinnuch Atzmai school built by the city in the Katamon quarter, was opened recently. The city also raised from IL 4 to IL 10 per child its monthly contribution to Agudath Israel's Children's Day Nurseries.

### **Rabbis Express Alarm At Growth of Missions**

A recent meeting of rabbis in Jerusalem's *Heichal Shlomo* expressed alarm over a sharp increase in the activity of Christian missionaries in Israel. According to P'EYLIM, the organization of yeshiva activists which promotes Torah education and fights missionaries in Israel and France, the missionaries are capitalizing upon poverty conditions more than ever, by offering food, clothing, and shelter in exchange for 'souls.' The rabbis called on the government to outlaw missionary activity.

The government has until now declined to take any form of action on the grounds that foreign countries might interpret it as a restriction of the religious freedom of Christians and might take reprisals against their Jewish citizens, and against Israel. However, P'EYLIM has pointed out that several democratic European countries outlaw all forms of missionary activity.

### **15,000 Protest Autopsies At Rally in Jerusalem**

A huge protest rally in Jerusalem against forced autopsies in Israeli hospitals resulted in injuries, arrests, charges of police brutality, and a growing feeling of desperation. The protest, called by the Sephardi religious community, drew over 15,000 persons and exceeded in size all previous demonstrations which have taken place all over Israel.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Eshkol indicated in private discussions that Mapam had threatened to leave the coalition if forced autopsies were banned, but that Mafdal (Mizrachi) had made no similar threats to support such a ban.

Reacting to criticism that it *has* threatened to leave

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*A section of the huge crowds that gathered in Jerusalem to protest forced autopsies.*

*(See: HADASSAH AND AUTOPSIES on the following page.)*



the coalition over economic matters, Mafdal, in its newspaper *Hatzofeh*, said that it could use threats in economic affairs, where other parties would join in support, but not in religious matters where no support from other coalition parties could be expected.

The autopsy controversy came before Tel Aviv University as the Student Council invited Rabbi Menachem Porush, M.K., to debate Dr. G. Gjebin, Director-General of the Ministry of Health. Rabbi Porush engaged

in a sharp exchange with both Dr. Gjebin and university students, but when it was over, students passed a resolution urging that, "A person who objects to autopsy and so indicates upon entering the hospital should not be dissected."

At present, Israeli hospitals are under orders from the Ministry of Health not to admit for treatment any person who demands assurance that no autopsy will be performed in the event of his death.



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## Hadassah and Autopsies

Mass meetings and protests in Israel, and mounting indignation and pressure from American Jewry have been of no avail as autopsy abuses continue in the Holy Land.

A recent grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare to the Hadassah Hospital to study bone fragility, (see: *Israel Digest*, TJO, Mar. '67) and similar grants to medical institutions for research involving the use of human organs, have critically aggravated the situation. The removal of organs for research projects gives further lie to the claim of some medical authorities that autopsies are vital for medical education—a claim which has been discredited by American authorities as well as leading physicians in Israel.

Efforts have been made to prevail upon the leadership of Hadassah in this country to instruct medical authorities at their hospital in Jerusa-

lem to respect the wishes of patients, and their families, regarding mutilation of their bodies following death. Such action on the part of Hadassah Hospital would be a helpful step in solving the problem of forced autopsies, and the failure to return organs removed in post-mortem operations, for proper burial. But, Hadassah officials in New York have blatantly denied the facts that have been proven many times over by documentation and eye-witness reports from Israel. (See: *The Autopsy Crisis*, TJO, Sept. '66.)

Not only has the Hadassah leadership in this country ignored the pleas of rabbinic delegations; they have labeled the testimony of the entire rabbinic world as . . . "sland-erous reports which have been circulated."

In what appears to be a form letter sent in response to inquiries by members of Hadassah, Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky, chairman of the Hadassah Medical Organization Committee writes:

Post mortems at the Hadassah Hospital are conducted according to the Law of Israel and rules laid down by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. These rules are detailed in formal agreements between the Hadassah Hospital and the Rabbinate.

Unfortunately Hadassah cannot cope with the slanderous reports which have been circulated except by reference to the facts. Therefore, we enclose a Fact Sheet which details complete and accurate information regarding this issue.

You may be interested in knowing that Hadassah Hospital employs a full time rabbi who concerns himself with such matters. In addition, we have recently had the opportunity to meet with both Chief Rabbi Unterman and Chief Rabbi Nissim. Since all of us are deeply sen-

sitive to the issues involved and eager to assure that Hadassah Hospital does not violate the Halachah, we were pleased to receive their assurance of satisfaction with procedures at our Hospital. We are completely satisfied that all due regard is given to the wishes of patients and their families by our Hospital Administration.

We hope that this information will allay your fears . . .

The "fact sheet" is filled with blatant lies, but none more blatant than the statement in the above letter that "post mortems at the Hadassah Hospital are conducted according to . . . rules laid down by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel." The Chief Rabbinate has publicly declared its firm opposition to the kind of abuses that occur regularly at the Hadassah Hospital. *It is true that the Chief Rabbis met with Hadassah officials, but rather than receiving "their assurance of satisfaction with procedures at our Hospital," they were warned to desist from their violations against the sanctity of the human body.*

WE HAVE HAD LITTLE to say about Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. Their ideology is so radically different from ours that there is little that we can say to each other. Yet, we do share with them the deep concern for the sick which they have brought to fruition in the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem—a concern which emanates from the wellspring of Torah tradition. Jews of all shades of opinion have benefited from the work of Hadassah. This makes it so terribly difficult for us to understand the total rejection by the Hadassah leadership of the sensitivities of those Jews who maintain the tradi-

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tional Jewish concern for the sanctity of the human body even after it is bereft of the human soul. That Jews should reject traditional Torah teachings is a sad reality of our times; that they should deliberately impose their rejection on traditional Jews in so sensitive an area, is a reality we find it difficult to cope with. That leaders of Hadassah should descend to distortion and falsehood; that they should willfully slander the collectivity of world Orthodoxy and the unanimous declarations of its rabbinic leaders, we can only attribute to the imminence of the coming of *Moshiach*, when our Sages tell us there will be manifest "*chutzpah yasgi*," an arrogance of unheard-of proportions.

(An interesting contrast to autopsy procedures in Israel recently came to light in New York City. A report by the New York Academy of Medicine criticized the city medical examiner's office which is responsible for autopsies. Among the abuses they noted, as reported in the *World Journal Tribune*, Feb. 3, '67, they charged that "organs are left standing for 24 to 48 hours before being taken to the central office . . . Tissues are unrefrigerated [and] . . . serological specimens are not preserved in a 'fitting' manner." These 'abuses' pale into insignificance, in contrast to the most minor abuses committed in Israel.)

RECENTLY, A CITIZEN of the state of Michigan wrote to Senator Philip A. Hart of that state. He was planning a trip to Israel and expressed his concern with the autopsy abuses, since a number of American citizens who died in Israel have been the victims of unauthorized post-mortem operations. Senator Hart forwarded to his constituent a report which the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv had sent to the State Department in Washington. (A copy is in our files.) It reads as follows:

Normally, post mortems are performed only in cases of unnatural deaths, such as violent deaths or suspected homicide, or in cases where the cause of death may be dangerous to the family or gen-

eral population, such as cases of infectious diseases. Almost all such autopsies are performed with the permission of the family of the deceased.

They may also be requested by the Ministry of Health or Police, or on the application of at least three licensed medical doctors. Even in cases where post mortems are requested by these authorities, prior permission is usually obtained from the family. If the family does not wish to have the operation performed, application for a writ of stay can be made to the Judge having jurisdiction. While the writ is being considered, all actions connected with the performance of the post mortem must cease. The Judge has full powers to find for or against either party and his decision is final.

It is true that certain hospitals require that permission to perform an autopsy,

if required, be given by the next of kin before admission. However, not all hospitals have such requirements, and even in those hospitals which require such permission, only a limited number of post mortems are performed, usually with approval of the family.

It is unnerving to ponder the thought that other reports which are sent to the U.S. State Department from diplomatic officials in critical areas of the world, might be as replete as this one with errors and an obviously gullible acceptance of facts made available by official sources.

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performed only in cases of unnatural death . . .

The director of the Hadassah Hospital has admitted to an autopsy rate of 40% in his institution; Israeli press reports indicate that from 70 to 80% of persons who die in Israel's hospitals are subjected to post-mortem operation. Surely no such percentage of deaths can be due to "unnatural" causes.

Even in cases where post-mortems are requested by . . . authorities, prior permission is

usually obtained from the family.

The burden of evidence that autopsies are performed in hospitals against the expressed desire of the deceased (prior to death) and the family is so overpowering as to qualify the words "permission is usually obtained" for a place of honor in the lexicon of the "new-think" of 1984.

It is true that certain hospitals require that permission to perform an autopsy, if required, be given by the next of kin before admission. However, not all hospitals have such requirements, and even in those hospitals which require such permission, only a limited number of post mortems are performed, usually with the permission of the family.

On June 7, 1966, the Director-General of Israel's Ministry of Health issued a directive to all hospitals instructing officials to make no conditions or promises regarding

autopsy to any incoming patients, and to refuse admission to those who insist on such conditions. The only hospitals which do not make such conditions are *Shaarei Zedek* and *Bikur Cholim*, both Orthodox institutions. The words "limited number" and "usually" in the last paragraph cited, need no further comment.

The final paragraph of the Embassy report is relatively clear of distortions, but is most ironic.

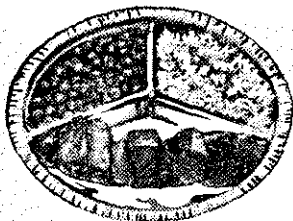
The Knesset, or parliament, is currently debating a new law intended to regulate post-mortem operations and pathology practices in general. It is not yet certain which form this law will take although the primary intent of the law appears to be to give medical authorities a stronger voice in deciding whether or not autopsies are to be performed.

A "new law" is being urged in the Knesset, but it is being pushed by religious Jewry to limit the power which medical authorities have trag-

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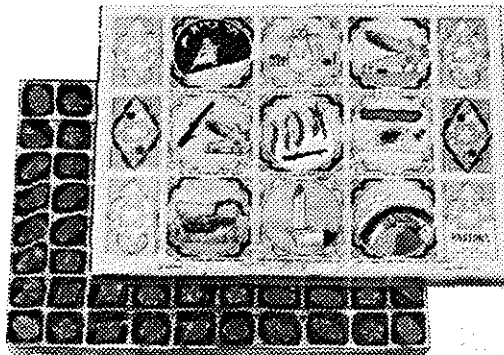
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ically abused, not, as the Embassy reports, to give them a "stronger voice."

The report states in essence that there have been no abuses by medical authorities to speak of, but that the new law will give them a "stronger voice"—it has all the earmarks of an official handout swallowed whole by U.S. officials.

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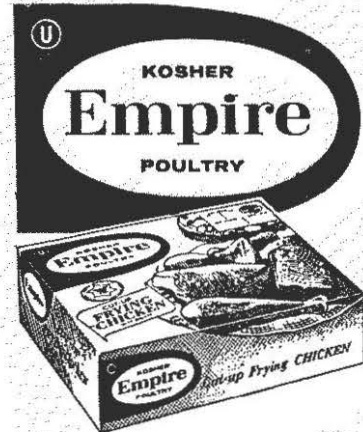
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## Max Kleeshaysky Calls For A Jewish Umbrella Stand

### An Interview

**EXCLUSIVE:** A member of our staff recently had the opportunity of meeting the distinguished Jewish leader, Max Kleeshaysky, who kindly consented to answer some questions on some of the major issues facing Jews today. This exclusive interview was taped, and with Mr. K's consent we present a transcript of the interview. Mr. Kleeshaysky is a self-made man; he came to this country from his native Poland at the age of fifteen and took a job in a junkyard. By his twenty-third birthday he was owner of the yard and he is today one of America's leading scrap dealers. He has been a national officer of B'nai Mitzvoh, JVS, NRJWPA, AJP and other Jewish communal groups. He is a 34th degree Bricklayer, a member of the Fraternal Order of Tigers, and former Grand Master of the Turning Wheels of America.

**Q.** Mr. K., what do you think is the most crucial issue facing American Jewry today?

**A.** Well, assimilation and inter-marriage, of course.

**Q.** What is your thinking on these matters?

**A.** They are definitely rampant.

**Q.** How would you solve this problem, Mr. K.?

**A.** I have said for forty years that the only solution is Jewish education.

**Q.** What do you think about Jewish education today?

**A.** As I told the plenary session of the NRAWPA at the last annual meeting, "Jewish education is a mile wide, but only one inch deep."

**Q.** I think we can all agree with you Mr. K., but how can we improve Jewish education?

**A.** What we need is a survey . . .

**Q.** But, Mr. K., don't you think we've had enough surveys . . .

**A.** That's just what I mean, we've had too many surveys; what we need is one big survey of all the surveys to determine whether we really need all those surveys. Why if I ran my business the way Jewish education is run, I'd have to cut back on all my big gifts, I'd go broke. If we can cut down on the number of surveys, we may be able to use some of the survey money for actually teaching children.

**Q.** Mr. K., I'm sure you realize that you're making quite a radical proposal; do you think the American Jewish community is ready for such a drastic step?

**A.** My boy, that's where public relations comes in; we need a strong public relations program to 'sell' this idea to our top leadership and the rank-and-file. Talking about the rank-and-file, they haven't been considered enough. We've got to get the rank-and-file more involved in Jewish communal work.

**Q.** Mr. K., do you care to tell us what you think about Day Schools, there's been lots of talk about the success the Orthodox have had with this kind of Jewish education.

**A.** You mean 'yeshivas'? I'm against them. This is a democracy, and we live in the twentieth century, we can't put our kids in a ghetto. Let me tell you about a personal tragedy we had in our own family. One of my grandchildren, a bright boy, with a great future ahead of him . . . so this rabbi talks my daughter into sending him to a Day School. So what happens? His teacher convinces him to go off to a Yeshiva in New York; he comes home religious—won't eat in anybody's house; says he wants to 'learn' for a few years. I had him lined up for a fancy Ivy League business school—after all I want

my grandchildren to have all the things I didn't have. So, Montgomery—he calls himself Moshe now—he won't hear of it. Four of my grandsons I have already in the business with me; for him I was holding open the Oshkosh branch office. But now, who knows what will come of him; he's liable to end up being a teacher in one of those Yeshivas; but, like they say, "you can't win 'em all." Yeshivos, Day Schools, that's not the solution. We need Jewish education that will make our children good Americans too; we don't want to go back to the ghetto.

Q. Do you have any other suggestion Mr. K. for curbing rampant assimilation?

A. Of course . . . we have to give our children pride in their Jewishness; you'd be surprised even today there are many Jewish boys and girls who are ashamed of being Jewish. Imagine, with a State of Israel today; when we gave America the genius of an Einstein; we gave the world Sigmund Freud . . .

Q. Mr. K., what about Karl Marx, we . . .

A. Son, don't bring politics into this, we're talking about religion, not politics, and besides, there's a rotten apple in every bunch; you can't help that. Look at the positive side, look at a nice Jewish boy like Sandy Koufax, why he did more for the Jewish religion in this country than hundreds of rabbis with their sermons.

Q. How's that Mr. K.?

A. Whatsamatter; you don't read the papers? When he said he wouldn't pitch on Yom Kippur, our stocks went up.


Q. But Mr. K., what about Shabbos and Yom Tov?

A. Listen, this is America, you gotta make a living; you want a poor boy should starve. That's the trouble with some Jews, they're living in the Shtetel still, like in Sholem Aleichem's times . . . But don't get me wrong about Sholem Aleichem; I chartered a plane and flew my

whole family into New York one Friday night to see "Fiddler." Y'see . . . that's what I mean by taking pride in being Jewish—after all, I come from the old country myself. After the show we went to eat at a nice Kosher restaurant uptown, and on the way we listened to Friday night services from Temple Emanuel on the car radio. You can be Jewish and modern too, that's the answer to assimilation.

Q. Well Mr. K., I think we've exhausted assimilation, what are some of the other problems we face?

A. We've got to do more for the State of Israel.



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Q. What do you see as the role of Israel in American Jewish life?

A. Well . . . Israel is a bastion of democracy in the Middle East . . . it's an outpost of the "free world" . . . an oasis of democracy.

Q. But, how does this affect American Jewry.

A. Well, it's obvious, I've pointed this out many times; we have to build a bridge between Israel and America. I think each and every Jew should visit Israel, and we should send our children . . .

Q. To settle there?

A. No . . . just to visit . . .

Q. Mr. K., what do you think of Ben Gurion's position that you're not a Zionist if you don't go to live in Israel?

A. Why that's ridiculous, I've been a Zionist all my life—I think the old man's had it . . . he ought to go back to his farm and let the young people run the country and not go around insulting Zionists.

Q. One last question Mr. K. What do you think can be done to bring about Jewish unity?

A. I'm glad you asked me that. Jewish unity is the need of the hour. In the words of another great leader, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." We need one umbrella group to include all of the groups.

Q. But, Mr. K., we have the NRJWPA, the Presidents Club, the American Jewish . . .

A. That's what I mean, we need an umbrella group to cover all the umbrella groups . . . an umbrella stands, you might call it. Say, why don't you use that for your headline: MAX KLEESHAISKY CALLS FOR JEWISH UMBRELLA STAND. *Terrific.*

# letters to the editor

## The Oral Law

To the Editor:

[In connection with your misinterpretation of my Foreword to "Jewish Law Faces Modern Problems"] I can only say to you that those of us to whom the halachic discipline is the center of our concern and spiritual mainstay are not going to be intimidated by extremist tendencies to distort statements and use phrases out of context . . . In my Foreword I attempted to address myself to those who still maintain that the rabbinic tradition projects a legal system that is repressive, static, inflexible, and anachronistic. Would you, then, give assent to this point of view by denying the rabbinic methodology of operating with postulates of reason to explicate the law and write Responsa? The Torah revealed to Moses by G-d was given over to man to understand to interpret in accordance with Sinaitic principles of interpretation. But it is the interpretation by qualified men which according to the Talmud (*Baba Metzia* 59b) is decisive in Jewish law. The decisions based upon these interpretations (The Oral Law) are known as halachah and constitute the norm in traditional Jewish life . . . I would be grateful to you if you reprint my Foreword in full and let your readers judge wherein my point of view is not the authentic traditional approach to halachah. I am convinced that the contemporary intellectual climate . . . is conducive to the challenge of religious commitment as embodied in the halachah and it is important that we don't miss the opportunity by obscurantism . . .

DR. LEON STITSKIN  
*Professor, Jewish Philosophy*  
*Editor, Special Publications*  
*Yeshiva University*

*Our reviewer replies:*

I am delighted to see Professor Stitskin speak of *Sinaitic* principles of interpreta-

tion, to be used by qualified men to reach halachic decisions. The fact is that *nowhere* in his *Foreword* was there any mention of the Sinaitic origin of the Oral Law. Instead, he spoke of the rabbinic tradition as receiving its impetus with the Pharisees or, in another passage, as being set into motion by the Pharisaic Tradition (his capitals), and of the emergence of the Oral Law, apparently as the result of their work. Rather than complaining that phrases are used out of contexts by extremists, obscurantists, etc., or rhetorically submitting that to object to the idea of the "Pharisaic Tradition" is to deny the rabbinic methodology, Professor Stitskin should have made clear in his original essay his acceptance of the Sinaitic origin of the Oral Law. To totally omit this in a discussion of the rabbinic tradition, while harping on the role of the Pharisees, is—to say the very least—dangerously to confuse the reader.

Incidentally, I am not sure that, even after reading Professor Stitskin's explanation of his ideas, I can assent to his view of the Oral Law. In the first place, the rules of interpretation surely were not all that was given at Sinai, but only part of the Sinaitic heritage. It certainly cannot be said that the rules of interpretation were Sinaitic, but that *all* the actual laws that make up the Oral Law were the human decisions based on these rules. Professor Stitskin's overemphasis on the role of the Pharisees seems to me to flow from such an underestimation of what actually was given at Sinai as *Torah Shebeal Peh*. In the second place, the rules of interpretation were given to help the Rabbis establish the exact and authentic meaning of the written text; even though this process involved the use of human reasoning power, one certainly cannot say that "Oral Law emerged" to endow man with a margin of subjectivity in applying the high ideals of the biblical law" (my italics), as Professor Stitskin wrote in the original essay.

The fact is that complaints about quotations out of context and ideas misunderstood are the lot of every reviewer. Actually, however, the obligation is on the author—especially in such a crucial area as that discussed by Professor Stitskin, which has become the hunting ground of all happy reformers of the Halachah—to exercise extreme caution in the formulation of his views.

JOSEPH ELIAS

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## News of Agudath Israel

IN RECENT WEEKS Agudath Israel of America has hit back at the vicious anti-shechita campaign launched on a large scale by the Friends of Animals group, and its affiliated Committee for Humane Slaughter. The organization sent a sharp letter of protest to *The New York Times* for publishing a full-page ad by the Committee, which attacked shechita with a viciousness unparalleled in contemporary American history. Protests were also sent to Radio Station WOR for broadcasting a similar attack on kosher slaughter. Protests were also lodged with the *New York Post* for accepting an ad from this so-called Humane Society group which described shechita as a process in which "the animal is skinned alive," and with the *World Journal Tribune* for publishing a full-page ad on March 28. On March 25th, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, Agudath Israel's executive vice-president, speaking on the organization's weekly radio program, exposed the alarming new approach of this group, which last year claimed to object only to the manner of preparing the animal for shechita, but has now launched a frontal assault on shechita itself. (A free copy of this radio address, "IS THE ANTI-SHECHITA CAMPAIGN BECOMING ANTI-SEMITIC?" can be obtained by sending a five-cent stamp to the Agudah headquarters, 5 Beekman Street, New York, N. Y. 10038). Agudath Israel is also an active member of the United Committee for the Protection of Shechita, which embraces most Orthodox Jewish groups, and which meets periodically in the offices of the Agudas Harabonim, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada.

\* \* \*

The campaign in the United States to help put a stop to the mass-scale practice of autopsies in Israel without permission, has been put into high gear. The United Committee of the American Orthodox Organizations, which for over a half year has made strenuous efforts to correct the situation, met with Israel's Ambassador Avraham Harman and with Dr. Joseph Schwartz, head of the Israel Bond Drive, and continued its contacts with the heads of the American Hadassah organization. A major obstacle which the United Committee has come across is the distorted information that various groups have been spreading throughout the country, falsely portraying the factual autopsy situation in the Holy Land. Despite these difficulties the Committee is working unrelentingly towards winning its objective: that the Israeli law should conform with the practice of all other

democratic countries, which forbids autopsy without the express permission of the family.

\* \* \*

Registration for CAMP AGUDAH (for boys) and CAMP BNOS (for girls) is proceeding at such a fast pace that both camps are expected to be filled very soon. The camps, which are sponsored as a public service by Agudath Israel of America, enjoy a nation-wide reputation for the unique benefits they provide to the campers, who come from every part of the United States. CAMP AGUDAH is located in Ferndale, New York, and CAMP BNOS is in Liberty, New York. The city office is located at 5 Beekman Street, N. Y. C.

\* \* \*

THE NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS of Agudath Israel last month moved into expanded and refurbished offices at 5 Beekman Street. The enlarged scope of the organization's activities in recent years necessitated this step. Besides increased and improved facilities for the growing Agudath "team" at its national headquarters, a new conference room is now available for the many meetings regularly held by the organization's various divisions.

\* \* \*

RABBI AVROHOM DAVIS, a distinguished member of the younger American rabbinates, was named Director of Development by Agudath Israel of America. He is a *musmach* of the Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin and has a long record of service for Torah causes, including the Bais Yaakov School of Baltimore and the Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin.

In his new capacity, Rabbi Davis will concentrate on developing the potential of the American Agudah movement by mobilizing Orthodox Jews to help expand the organization's many-faceted national and world-wide activities.

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