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Victory in Six Days –
How Long for Peace?

A New Plan for Peace in the Middle East

The Drama of Orthodox Life
In Search of an Author

Rabbi, Rosh Yeshiva, Ben Torah

Three Articles on Their Inter-relationships

Israel's Holy Places

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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Jews Discover Calendar Error On Eve of Rosh Hashonah Fete

Central Calendar Commission Miscalculated — Faithful Warned: Saturday Not Ordinary Day

NEW YORK, October 4 — In what is believed to be an unprecedented case since the institution of the Jewish calendar centuries ago, an error has been revealed on the eve of Rosh Hashonah, in the listing of the dates for the Jewish new year. Each year the Vaad Ha'luchos, the Central Calendar Commission releases to calendar publishers and all interested groups, the precise dates of the various holidays and holy days celebrated by Jews throughout the world. In the text released this year the two-day Rosh Hashonah Holy Days were listed to occur on Thursday October 5, and Friday October 6.

Community in Panic Mayor of New York Acts in Crisis

An official of the Commission who was studying records at the Commission's office in New York City, discovered that the correct reading should have been Friday October 6, and Saturday October 7.

In view of this error—officials have been unable to offer any ex-

planation, but have promised a full-scale investigation—Jews who might have thought Saturday October 7 to be just another day, are now being informed in every possible manner, that Saturday October 7 is the second day of Rosh Hashonah, and is to be observed accordingly. Readers of this newspaper have been asked to disseminate this information among their own circles, and as widely as possible.

Informed of this development, the Mayor of New York City has announced that the lifting of alternate-side-of-the-street-parking restrictions will continue through Saturday.

THE STORY IS of course as unprecedented as it is fictitious; but it does highlight a tragic aspect of Jewish life in America. With the coming of Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur, synagogues that are all but empty the year round are suddenly filled to the rafters. Where often the daily minyan is delayed while a frantic search takes place for the *tzenter*, and where even Shabbos and Yom Tov find a scant group of worshippers present, the main schul, the Beis Medrash, the auditorium—any space available, is filled with worshippers. The normally empty seats have been dusted, the *taleisim* taken out of the moth-balls, and the *siddurim* and *machzorim* removed from storage.

Of course, the brief surge of religious formalism or nostalgia which brings the stray co-religionist into the sanctuary—albeit for a fleeting interval—*does* attest to the hidden mysterious compelling force of religiosity which lingers in even the more distant and non-committed of our brothers. During these days even the hard-

ened cynic must acknowledge that there flickers a spark of faith in even the most errant Jewish soul, but the days that follow the *Yomim Noroim* give little cause to tax his charity. The hordes of holiday worshippers disappear as swiftly as they came; the faithful few remain, and the dust settles once more over the benches in the rear.

So accustomed have we become to this pattern year in and year out, that we see it as an unchangeable aspect of the American Jewish scene; but it is too painful a reality for us to accept without any effort to change it.

Never is this discrepancy so glaring as in a year such as this: The myriads of Rosh Hashonah worshippers in the synagogue on Thursday and Friday vanish, and the very next day the radiant Shabbos queen is greeted by an empty House of Worship. On Thursday and Friday the declaration issues forth from each congregation: "Our Father, our King, we have no ruler but You"—

and on the very next day—on the holy Shabbos, ordained by the Almighty at the climax of creation, we proceed to deny His Sovereignty.

And what of those of us who do frequent the synagogue the year-round; are we free of this discrepancy between our behavior during the *Yomim Noraim* and the days following? Perhaps our non-observant brothers do us a service in pointing up the blatancy of the three-day mentality, which reflects on a different level in our own lives. And . . . perhaps it is our own weaknesses that give rise to the three-day mentality; or by default, permit it to go its merry way.

THERE IS in fact some precedent for the satirical suggestion that we tell our fellow Jews of an error in the *luach*. It happened on the last day of Pesach in the city of Prague. The famed rabbi of the city, R. Yechezkel Landau, author of the *Nodah B'yehudah*, instructed that all of the Jews of Prague were to assemble in the Great Synagogue at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. At that time, the Rabbi ascended the pulpit and declared: "An unforunate error was made in setting the dates for Pesach. We started the Yom Tov one day early. As a result, today is not the 8th day of Pesach, but the 7th. Yom Tov will go on for one more day. Consequently, we are all forbidden to eat bread tomorrow, nor may we partake of any manner of *chometz* until nightfall tomorrow."

While the assembled Jews were of course astonished, no one questioned the Rabbi's ruling. That year, Jews observed one additional day of Pesach. But . . . there had been no error in the calculations—the rabbi had made his proclamation to save his people from a diabolical plot. The city's bakers knew that Jews had baked no bread during Pesach, and would flock to the non-Jewish bakers at the end of the eighth day to buy bread. The bread baked for sale to the Jews had been poisoned. When word of the plot reached the Nodah B'yehudah, he thought it best not to alarm the populace, and instead announced the 'error' in the *luach*.

Would that our fictitious story were true; it would have saved many thousands of Jews from the hypocrisy of spending Thursday and Friday in solemn prayer, and then desecrating the Shabbos—*Shabbos Shuvah*. The Sages tell us: "Were Israel to observe one Shabbos, and then another, they would immediately be redeemed." That Shabbos Shuvah might have taken us one Shabbos closer to the Geulah. DAVID BLEICH

RABBI DAVID BLEICH is the spiritual leader of the Yorkville Synagogue-Congregation B'nai Jehuda, in Manhattan and instructor in Philosophy at Hunter College. He studied at the Beth Medrash Elyon in Spring Valley, and this is his first contribution to The Jewish Observer.

AN EDITORIAL REACTION

"Were Israel to Observe one Shabbos, and then another Shabbos..."

THE RELATIONSHIP between writer and editor runs the gamut of all human relationships. It can be cold and impersonal; it can be tense; it can be warm and intimate—but it is most always stimulating.

Reading Rabbi Bleich's unique approach to an old problem that has troubled rabbis in America for decades, brought back to mind our own wrestlings with the problem, and a chain of thoughts which perhaps others may find of some use.

Rabbi Bleich notes that the problem has been diagnosed as chronic, with no cure even in sight. Many rabbis fight in their younger years until battle fatigue sets in, and then throw up their hands in defeat.

But this year is different; this Rosh Hashonah is different—it must be different—it follows so closely the manifestation of G-d's eternal love for His people during the Six Day War. Perhaps the problem of holding over the Rosh Hashonah worshipper until Shabbos Shuvah, is only part of the greater problem of how to penetrate to the hearts of our brothers who have become lax in their observance of mitzvohs, to tell them that the coming of Moshiach is close at hand. But how do we do this?

ELSEWHERE IN THIS ISSUE we have written of the possibility of using fiction to reach our brothers; we have at times proposed making use of modern media and technology for this purpose. But we chanced on the words of the Chofetz Chaim in a letter he wrote in 5687—four decades ago.

The Jewish people as a whole believe in the coming of Moshiach—they say each day: I believe with perfect faith in the coming of Moshiach! It is a cardinal principle of our Faith that the glory of G-d will then be revealed to the world. As the Rambam writes: If one does not believe in the coming of

Moshiach, let him not think that he is merely denying the words of the prophet Daniel; it is the entire Torah that he denies, for it is clearly written: 'If you shall be scattered to the ends of the earth, the Lord your G-d will take you from there and bring you to the Land. . . .'

*We do not know clearly the precise time that he will come, but the signs which our Sages have given us, which were to be evident prior to his coming, have almost all come to pass, and it is therefore clear that the day is not far off, and OUR days are the days of Ik'vasa d'Meshicho.**

The Chofetz Chaim wrote these words forty years ago—what would he say today!

Since this is so, my brothers, surely in Heaven Above there are forces that are striving to hasten the day by proclaiming the merits of our people; but opposed to them are forces which declare our weaknesses, and strive to prolong the golus. Can we sit with our hands folded; who knows how the balance will swing, and every Jew must contemplate that his actions alone may swing the balance—one way or the other.

Therefore, we must exert all our efforts to the study of Torah and carrying out mitzvohs. But, most especially must we seek to find new strength in the two 'signs' which manifest the bond between us and our G-d; 'signs' which have become weakened, to our great misfortune, in our days: the SHABBOS and TEFILIN. When Moshiach comes and finds that we have been lax in these mitzvohs, who can contemplate the dreadful shame we will feel, for our actions will be revealed for all to see. As it is written in Koheles: 'At the end, all will be heard . . .' and the Targum explains that at the end of days, those things which were hidden from the eyes of men will be revealed, and where will we flee to escape the shame when we are asked why we did not observe the mitzvohs.

Therefore, we must strengthen ourselves in observance of all the mitzvohs—but especially in THE TWO MITZVOHS OF SHAB-

*Ikvasa d'Meshicho is the talmudic term denoting the days prior to the coming of Moshiach.

BOS AND TEFILIN, whereby we will be redeemed from golus, and He will hasten the coming of Moshiach."

To the modern ear the words of the Chofetz Chaim may appear to lack sophistication, but there is no greater sophistication than simple truth.

In the spirit of the Chofetz Chaim's loving words to his brothers, there may be a way to break the three-day syndrome; to strike a single blow that may bring it to an end.

The Sages tell us—as Rabbi Bleich observes—"Were Israel to observe a Shabbos and then another Shabbos, they would immediately be redeemed."

Shabbos Shuva follows the second day of Rosh Hashonah, giving us one Shabbos. The next Shabbos all of our brothers will be back at shul—it's Yom Kippur. That gives us one Shabbos plus another which adds up to geula—to redemption, at the very least, from the absurdity that Shabbos Shuvah is just another day.

But, how do we get that first Shabbos; how do we get our brothers to come back to shul the day after Rosh Hashonah?

LET EVERY RABBI IN THE LAND—we don't mean to be presumptuous—set aside his planned sermons. Let there be one subject talked about in every shul in the land.

Let every rabbi plead, let him beg, let him cajole, let him use every ounce of persuasion at his command. Let him make the most stirring and successful appeal he has ever made—not for funds but . . . for that one Shabbos. Let the rabbi put the dignity and the force of his office on the line—let him command every Jew that he must give this one Shabbos—for the honor of those who died defending the Holy Land; for the glory of G-d and for the glory of our people; but most of all—for himself: that he may taste of Shabbos and find it sweet, and taste again.

And when the rabbi stands before his people on the morning of Shabbos Shuvah, let him again beg, let him cajole, let him persuade, let him command every Jew in his shul that on Sunday morning he must get out of bed, and before he does anything else, he must put on TEFILIN.

What will all this do?—who can tell. Will it bring the geula?—perhaps. Will it save American Jewry—who knows. Will it work at all?—we hope so. But this is clear: We will have earned more of G-d's love for having tried.

YAAKOV JACOBS

Reuben E. Gross

Victory in Six Days — How Long for Peace?

A New Plan for Peace in the Middle East

THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION continues to be one of the most dangerous threats to world peace. For close to twenty years a state of war has existed between Israel and her Arab neighbors. Israeli leaders have constantly proclaimed their willingness to discuss peace, and the Arabs have stubbornly refused.

Middle East experts have observed that there are no insoluble problems standing in the way of an Israel-Arab rapprochement. On the contrary—each side has economic assets sorely needed by the other. Arabs have oil, agricultural products, and other raw materials. Israel has industrial and technical know-how which has been generously shared with African states.

By capturing in battle Arab areas which had been used to harass her borders, Israel has neutralized the capacity of the Arab nations to make war; but it has done little to neutralize the Arab *will* to make war. Their attitude following their latest defeat was simply: We have been defeated; we will fight again and ultimately we will drive the invaders from our homeland. Nasser was able to fire some of his top generals, blame the defeat on them, and in a feat unrivalled in modern history, regained popular support after a devastating military defeat. He was then able to return to his sword-waving and threats, almost as though nothing had happened.

What is the factor that enables Arab leaders to find a receptive ear for war talk, and threats to annihilate Israel, even after each successive defeat?

A Deep Psychological Wound

THE DEFEAT by Israel in 1947-1948 inflicted a deep psychological wound on the proud and highly emotional Arab mind. Seven fully equipped and trained Arab armies were overwhelmingly defeated by a rabble that never before operated in the field on anything higher than a company level. Israel's small arms were odds-and-ends. Its cannons were comic looking 'Davidkas' assembled in underground workshops. Its air force started with nothing but a few Piper Cubs. Its com-

munication equipment consisted of funny little black boxes hastily thrown together that had the sole virtue that they worked most of the time. To all this was added a potpourri of surplus from the stores of assorted armies that fought in World War II. Uniforms were castoff odds-and-ends from His Majesty's Jordanian Forces. Indicia of rank were not existent. Not until shortly before the end of the hostilities in the War of Liberation were there any ranks at all in Israel's armed services, except for the distinction between officers and men. To be defeated by such a motley mob—lacking most of the appurtenances of a decent army—would be disturbing to any nation. *To the Arab mind it was and still is devastating.* The miraculous manner in which small groups of Jews swiftly overwhelmed large well-trained and equipped Arab units did little to help Arab self-respect. As an exercise in psychology, the towering rage and frustration and its concomitant unslaked desire for revenge on the part of Nasser is quite understandable, especially since he personally tasted the ignominy of defeat in the field in the War of Liberation and as national leader in the Sinai campaign and the Six Day War.

The problem of peace in the Middle East, therefore, boils itself down to finding a formula whereby the Arabs can accept the existence of Israel without shame over their military defeats—not a simple problem—but not impossible.

“You are thieves . . .”

IN OUR SOPHISTICATED times, one would hardly expect to pick up a Chumash with Rashi to find a new approach to a complex political problem—yet there it is, in Rashi's very first comment on the Torah:

R' Yitzchok said: The Torah should have opened with the words 'This month shall be to you . . .', which is the first mitzva enjoined upon Israel. Why then did it begin with Braishis? because [of the concept embodied in the passage] 'He has told to His people the strength of his acts, that He might give them the heritage of the nations.'

"It is this divine will which is the essence of our claim to the Land, and the acceptance by the Arabs of this hard fact could dispel the Arab hostility that has blocked any acceptance of the possession of the Land by the Jewish people."

For should the nations say to Israel: You are thieves for having taken the lands of the seven nations—they [Israel] would reply: The entire earth is the Almighty's—He has created it, and given it according to His will. At His will he gave it to you; and at His will He took it from you and gave it to us.

In propaganda broadcasts to the Arab people, and in statements directed to the Arab leadership, there has been stress laid on democracy, and social progress as the needs of the hour, which Israel-Arab peace would bring to fruition. Should the line be changed to point out that the possession of the Holy Land by the Jewish people is the will of the Almighty, there is reason to hope that it might go further than the current approach, in restoring peace in the Middle East. *It is his Divine Will which is the essence of our claim to the Land, and the acceptance by the Arabs of this hard fact could dispel the Arab hostility that has blocked any acceptance of the possession of the Land by the Jewish people.* Should the Arabs become convinced that the achievements of the Jewish people were not the result of Arab cowardice or weakness, this could be the catharsis for their shame and guilt which would remove the barrier that has blocked all attempts at reconciling Arab and Jewish interests for the last nineteen years.

Arab Self-respect

While Islam is a monotheistic faith and accepts our Torah as Holy Writ, the fatalism of pre-Islamic paganism still hangs heavily over the thinking of the Middle-East. Divine Will is therefore fully acceptable to the Arab mind as an explanation of set-backs and tragedy. Resolving the problem in this manner would satisfy the

deep yearning for restoration of Arab self-respect, without the need for the bloodshed involved in another 'round.'

Just as there are no basically insoluble economic or political problems between Israel and the Arabs, so too there is no basic cultural obstacle. Islam is not committed to the belief that the Jewish nation is condemned to perpetual wandering because of deicide, a doctrine which is belied by the presence of the Jewish people in the Holy Land. The Arab press and radio persist in maintaining that the Arab people have never been guilty of anti-Jewish hatred. Being Semites themselves, this would rule out raw racial antisemitism.

Thus, the simple but sage understanding of the relationship of the Jewish people to the Holy Land, which Rashi preserved for us from his teacher, Reb Yitzchok, points the way to a Torah solution of a vexing problem of international relations. While this approach may seem too pat to some, there is one rub that must be anticipated. It is reminiscent of the dilemma that faced Moshe Rabbenu on one of his first ventures into the arena of diplomatic relations:

Behold, the Jewish people do not listen to me; how then will Pharoh listen to me?
(*Shemos* 6:12)

Can we persuade the Israel Foreign Ministry and their propaganda services of the truth and wisdom of this approach? □

REUBEN E. GROSS served in Israel's Defense Forces in the War of Liberation. The "little black boxes" he refers to were part of the communications system which he helped organize. He was on 'stand-by' during the recent crisis, but the War ended too quickly for him to be called up. Mr. Gross is a frequent contributor to The Jewish Observer and other journals.

Yaakov Jacobs

The Drama of Orthodox Life In Search of an Author

Can fiction become a tool for Torah?

NO PEOPLE HAS BEEN as intimately associated with the written word as the Jew. The written word links the Jew to his G-d. The Jew alone still reads his scripture from a hand-written scroll, in the era of high-speed presses and electronic printing devices.

On the Shabbos the Jew is forbidden to write; writing is *melecho*, a creative act akin to other categories of work forbidden on the Shabbos. He must not even erase a written word if it is his intention to write again—even if he does not actually do so.

Yet, strangely, in the vast literature of the Jew, there is no tradition of fiction: no attempt to fabricate a story, and to put it in writing for others to read. Here and there in the Torah we find a prophet or a sage using an allegory (*moshol*) to illustrate his point, but the *moshol* is so intimately tied to the point (*nimshol*) as to be unable in most cases to stand by itself. A rare exception in the sacred literature is the Book of Job, which one talmudic authority declares was a fictitious work.

The Haskala, the 'enlightenment' which brought darkness into Jewish life, did bring forth a body of fiction; but in spite of its apparent Jewishness, it was stimulated by a desire to be "like the nations" even in their use of the written word. At best this literature was indifferent to traditional Jewish values—at its worst, all too often, it was overtly hostile to Torah, and proved to be a potent force in breaking down the Jew's allegiance to Torah. Among the early Jewish writers of fiction, not one maintained a commitment to Torah.

IN WESTERN SOCIETY today fiction has replaced the writing of philosophy. Ask the average well-informed American to name an outstanding living American philosopher and he will be hard put to reply. Yet he knows the names Bellow, Malamud, Salinger, Roth, and of other popular practitioners of the short story and the novel. It is these men who shape the thinking of American society; they are the cultural avant-garde who become the heroes of our youth, though they rarely see them and know little about them.

In the Soviet Union, which stifles free expression, it

is not the philosophers or theologians—name one!—who are the dissenters; it is the writers and the poets; and Americans who at best buy only a few thousand copies of the works of American poets, buy the Russian poets in much greater numbers and flock to their poetry readings in capacity crowds.

Reaching Millions of People

In America today, a successful novel—its success may be a function of the publisher's willingness to spend thousands of dollars on advertising and promotion—will reach hundreds of thousands of readers; often many times the number of copies sold, since the buyer passes it among his friends, and single copies are read many times by library patrons. If the novel later appears in paperback, it may reach millions of Americans. True, few readers will take the novel as seriously as the literary critics; books *about* best-selling novels at best sell only in the thousands. But the average reader of a novel is significantly influenced by the writer's presentation of his characters, their way of life, their values, their religion; and they are influenced by the writer's own ideas as expressed by his characters. If the novel is 'Jewish,' and if—as is most often the case—the writer is Jewishly illiterate, then millions of readers, Jewish and non-Jewish, will assimilate the distorted picture of Judaism into their way of thinking. In a symposium on Jewish writing published in London (*The Jewish Quarterly*, Spring, 1967), Chaim Bermant, a British novelist writes:

There seems to be a common belief abroad that the Jew is reared on the Bible, the Talmud and the Kabala as naturally as the English writer is reared on Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, and if someone writes and he is Jewish his work must be suffused with ancient and holy writ. Would that it were true.

I once discussed this with Bernard Malamud, who in my opinion is one of the greatest living Jewish writers of this century. I referred to an article on him by some English critic who described the

“There are of course, very definite Jewish strains in his work, but Malamud is almost wholly ignorant of Jewish learning, history, tradition. I asked him if he had read the Bible. Yes, he said, parts of it. And how did you find it? I asked. ‘I was impressed,’ he said.”

various influences in his work—here was an infusion from the prophets, there from Job, and so on—and Malamud was as amused by it as I was. There are of course, very definite Jewish strains in his work, but Malamud is almost wholly ignorant of Jewish learning, history, tradition. I asked him if he had read the Bible. Yes, he said, parts of it. And how did you find it? I asked, ‘I was impressed,’ he said.

Yet, to all the world, and to Bermant himself, Malamud is considered “one of the greatest living Jewish writers”—which implies more than that he is simply a writer who is by chance Jewish.

The Line Becomes Thinner

To the Orthodox Jew, the popular novel is an enigma; he hesitates to read them and to expose his children to them as the thin line between art and pornography in fiction grows thinner, and thinner, and thinner. . . . The ‘Jewish’ novels are replete with heroes—mostly anti-heroes—who are disturbed, alienated Jews troubled by their Jewishness; pouring out their guts on the psychiatric couch, and in general reflecting the ambivalence of their creators. (In a sense, as will be noted below, these portraits are of value in our attempt to understand the alienated Jew, but they are nevertheless disconcerting to the committed Jew.) On the other hand, the Orthodox Jewish novelist who has something to offer in a positive vein has not yet appeared on the scene. Herman Wouk, who has done much to popularize Orthodoxy, has yet to write a novel about the Orthodox Jewish world which he lives in, and which he knows best.

WE COULD EASILY dismiss this problem: the Orthodox Jew has no need for reading novels; we need ‘Orthodox novels’ like we need kosher pizza; it would only be a waste of time better spent in study of Torah. But we could say the same for Orthodox journalism—the newspaper and the magazine—which has earned a place of respect within Orthodoxy—though its potential is

hardly achieved or understood. When Torah leaders recognized that journalism in the hands of the secularists was a threat to the loyal Jewish masses, they encouraged the creation of Orthodox publications. What this meant in essence was taking a craft developed by the non-Jewish world and enlisting it in the cause of Torah, much the same as the invention of printing, for example, was utilized for the spread of Torah works until then accessible only to small numbers. But the analogy to printing is more than illustrative—it is instructive. To print a *sefer* well, the best techniques of the craft must be used; to publish an Orthodox newspaper or journal, it is not sufficient to simply ink some type and press it against a sheet of paper; unless we assimilate and master the finest techniques of journalism, the results will be a mockery, and a detriment to the cause of Torah.

And, if we become convinced that somehow the writing of fiction can be incorporated into the weaponry of Torah dissemination, its success depends on being the real thing. Attempts at writing ‘Orthodox fiction’ have too often been amateurish, and their impact, if any, is limited to those who read it because they are already convinced of the truth of its message. Fiction written in this style is not unlike the type of literature which the Soviet Union has encouraged, which they describe as ‘socialist realism.’ But, an Orthodox Jew, drawing on his own knowledge of Judaism, and his life-experience as a committed Jew—as any good novelist draws on his background and experience—could create a work that could expose millions of Jews (and non-Jews) to a deeper understanding of the authentic Jew and his beliefs. It could be a means of communicating with our alienated brothers of infinitely greater potency than the polemics which has been typical of our approach in the past—and polemics often create more resentment than understanding; even when—perhaps especially when—the arguments are correct.

Are we bereft of any body of fiction that portrays traditional Torah Jews and Judaism in a favorable light? If we look for it among American Jewish writers, we are. But fortunately, in recent years, and more so

since he became a Nobel laureate, the works of S. Y. Agnon have become more accessible to the English reader through the efforts of Schocken Books, his dedicated publishers.

No 'Identity' Crisis

Agnon stands alone as the only Jewish writer who is committed to Torah; who has drawn on his own experiences as an observant Jew, and on his knowledge of the literary sources of Torah; who has turned his pen to the creation of a body of fiction which recreates the Jewish world of the past with authenticity, with love and understanding. And he has done this with the integrity and the craftsmanship of a great artist, which none who have read him can deny. Agnon deserves a more serious reading than he has had, in terms of his contribution to the understanding of the Torah Jew which bursts forth from every page of his works. To compare him to Bellow, Malamud, and the other popular 'Jewish writers' is as unfair to them as it is to Agnon. Theirs is a Jewishness with which they fumble; it is a Jewishness which reflects more cogently than sociological surveys, the abysmal Jewish illiteracy which is the hallmark of American Jewry.*

Agnon knows who he is—he suffers no 'identity-crisis'—and his heroes and even his anti-heroes know who they are. Bellow's 'dangling man,' his Herzog, would just as soon not be Jews—if they had the choice. They are searching for adjustment to their Jewishness—Agnon's Jews are struggling to adjust their environment to their Jewishness. When they sigh "*Siz shver tzo zein a Yid,*" there isn't the slightest thought that they would choose to be anything else.

To many American Jews the shtetel is a part of their past they would like to forget; it smacks of dreariness and despair. They welcome the chance to laugh about it as it is reflected in *Sholem Aleichem* and 'Fiddler on the Roof', because it reinforces their feeling that it is totally unrelated to their lives as Americans—even

* From this perspective their work can be of interest and of value to the Torah community, for the insights which they offer into the alienation of the acculturated Jew from Torah. Perhaps in a closer study of their work—of their heroes and anti-heroes, we may find the means of winning back the alienated Jew to the traditions which they appear to be groping for. In many cases it is not Torah and Tradition which the Jewish intellectual has rejected; it is a false image of Yiddishkeit which they have rejected—an image which the committed Jew also rejects. And perhaps it is to the credit of Bellow and Malamud and Roth and the others, that bereft of any understanding they blindly grope for Jewish values.

Philip Roth, among others, has been severely pounded by the Jewish establishment for the seamy picture he paints of his Jews—Jews without Torah. Perhaps they would prefer not to see this aspect of their constituency—perhaps in their subconscious they see mirrored in Roth's seamy Jews . . . the reflection of their own lives.

as Jews. Agnon has portrayed Jewish life in the shtetel as it really was—a link in the chain which anchors the Jew to his immediate past, and from there back to Sinai.

In his short novel, *In the Heart of the Seas*, Agnon exposes to his reader the meaning of Eretz Yisroel to the traditional Jew—the yearning for the Land which is a yearning for holiness, for the elevation of his spirit. His was—is—a yearning for his Land, not so that he may be "like the other nations," but as a Place of release from the pressures of alien cultures; a Place where he can live a full life as a Jew, *unlike* the other nations. And it is not the alienated Jew alone who needs to understand; many a yeshiva bocher today, born and reared in this country, needs so desperately to know more about his fathers and grandfathers who lived in the shtetel; he needs to appreciate better their dreams, their aspirations, their struggles to maintain their Jewish integrity, as a source of strength in meeting the unique challenges he faces in the more sophisticated and more treacherous society in which he lives.

AN ATTEMPT to portray some of the perplexities of American Orthodox life in fiction is now enjoying best-sellerdom, and appears likely to go into a paperback edition which will be read by millions. The critics have been generous in their appraisal of *The Chosen*, a first novel by Chaim Potok, himself a product of an American yeshiva, who has left traditional belief. He tells the story of two yeshiva students—one the son of a chasidic rebbe, the other of an Orthodox scholar. They live in Williamsburg, and they are brought together by a baseball game in which the teams of their respective yeshivos are pitted against each other. As their relationship grows, the reader is exposed to the ideological gap which separates their fathers; and to the problems of the yeshiva bocher growing up in a secular society.

We must confess that we opened the book with fear of what we would find, and with a bias not wholly unjustified in the light of past excursions into Orthodoxy by other Jewish novelists. It is not here our purpose to review *The Chosen*, or to evaluate it from a literary or even a religious point of view; but only to state that Potok—in spite of his own non-Orthodox convictions—has demonstrated *the possibility of a sympathetic and authentic portrayal in fiction of the world of the Orthodox Jew*. Potok's characters are real Jews—like Agnon's they know who they are; their conflicts arise out of their insistence on remaining faithful to Yiddishkeit, not from an attempt to escape it. While there is a good deal of talk about Freud, all of the characters are refreshingly wholesome and un-neurotic. There is no trace of smuttiness or vulgarity in the book—again a refreshing change from the usual pattern. If the average American must learn about Judaism from novels, he will do better with *The Chosen*, than with *The Source*, or *The Rabbi*.

Why is the Jew a new culture-hero? Most answers are insufficiently spiritual. . . . Perhaps the increased interest in Jewishness—unclear and self-deceiving as it is for Jew and non-Jew—is caused by one unconscious need: we are “waiting for G-d.” When we enjoy the schmaltzy anecdotes of Golden, we simply accept “low” religion; when we read about but do not believe in Hasidim, we are equally guilty. The Jew, whether he likes it or not, has always been “chosen” to bear G-d’s message. He tells

unbelievers that He exists. The Jew is respected—and feared. . . . But in America he is unsure of his historic mission. He wants to be accepted by the others; he relinquishes religious commitment for social gospel; he tries desperately to be “natural,” not “supernatural”—to use Arthur A. Cohen’s distinction.

Irving Malin, in *JEWS AND AMERICANS*,
a study of seven Jewish writers,
Southern Illinois University Press.

The Orthodox Renaissance

The resurgence of Orthodoxy in America has been described in a sporadic manner in various Orthodox publications; in a growing number of instances recognition of this renaissance appears in non-Orthodox sources. In *Today’s American Jew*, just published by McGraw-Hill, Morris Kertzer offers this back-handed compliment to Orthodoxy:

One of the curious anomalies of American religious life, Christian and Jewish alike, is the remarkable expansion of more conservative and fundamentalist groups during the past quarter century. Our national culture is science-oriented, permissive rather than authoritarian, individualistic more than collective. By all logical expectations, a natural tug of war should have developed between our secular society and those religious groups which emphasize dogma and conformity. . . . Yet, it is the conservative religious bodies that are waxing large—the Southern Baptists . . . and the Roman Catholic Church. Further, judging by statistics alone, Jewish Orthodoxy is faring equally well.

But apart from the hit-and-miss approach, and the superficiality of most all of these reports; there is lacking what in this writer’s opinion can best be achieved in fiction: the excitement—the high drama of this renaissance as it reflects in the lives of the people who have made it possible and those whose own lives have been radically altered by their exposure to authentic Yiddishkeit. The raw material for such work already exists as a folk-literature which is passed along by word of mouth:

- the Jewish youngster who becomes aware of the heritage his family has deprived him of, who comes home one day and asks, “Mother, what’s my real

name?”; the Jewish child who can’t eat in his own home—whose new understanding of his Jewishness makes it unbearable to spend Shabbos with his family—

- the yeshiva bochur who is torn by conflict; who finds the glitter of the ‘outside’ too blinding to ignore; how he resolves his conflicts, or how he doesn’t—

- the yeshiva bochur who leaves the Beis Medrash and becomes a rabbi and finds himself responsible to lead Jews who utterly refuse to be lead; who is forced to chose between conviction and a job—

- the yeshiva bochur who chooses the life of a professional and is thrust into the belligerent climate of the college campus; whose refusal to work on Shabbos and Yom Tov inhibits his professional growth—

- the son of a Reform rabbi who shows up one day in a yeshiva and wants to learn Torah—

- the chasidic parent who struggles with two traditions which he must impart to his children—

- the Orthodox Jew who loves his people and loves his Land, but is heartbroken as he contemplates a secular state with all of its ambiguities; the confusion that strikes at his being when he realizes that some of his fellow-Jews see him as a wild-eyed fanatic—

the list is longer; it is as long as life itself.

The assimilated Jew, the Jew affiliated with non-Orthodox congregations, the Jew whose Jewishness is expressed by going bowling with his B’nai Brith lodge-buddies—all of these Jews have been stirred by the miraculous Six Day War. We can’t scold these Jews; we can’t simply bemoan their fate; we dare not write them off as a loss; we must reach out for them. There are many avenues open—more widely since the war. Perhaps fiction is one. □

Rabbi, Rosh Yeshiva, Ben Torah

The Rabbi and the Rosh Yeshiva

Ralph Pelcovitz

Torah life in this country has attained a degree of intensity which—however inadequate when measured by the ideal of a Jewish community ruled by Torah in its entirety—confounds all those prophets of its doom. At the same time, it has developed a pattern and structure distinctively its own, and this has brought about a need for re-evaluation and, occasionally, painful readjustments.

A crucial issue, in this context, is the position of the

rabbi in the American Torah world; it has undergone changes that have been vociferously discussed in many publications, but in our estimation have not been adequately understood.

We are therefore presenting two articles, each dealing with one facet of the problem, seen through the eyes of the rabbi, as it has been frequently put before the public in recent months and years—followed by a rejoinder. □

SCHOLARS AND SAGES have played a crucial leadership role throughout our history. The bearers and teachers of Torah selflessly dedicated themselves to attain the fulfillment and realization of the Jewish people's mission, guarding zealously the source of Israel's true strength—the knowledge, pursuit, and practice of Torah. For the past two thousand years in particular, bereft of king, priest, or prophet, it is obvious that we owe our continued existence as a people, our internal unity and discipline, our common experience and goals, to rabbinic, Torah scholar leadership.

For many centuries the areas in which the Torah leader functioned—whether known as rav, *marbitz Torah*, or *chachem*—were varied and broad in scope. He was teacher and preacher, community leader and judge, statesman and author of responsa. The position and power of the *morah de'asroh* were neither uniform nor equal at all times, in all localities. Nevertheless, it is apparent to us that, in general, the rabbi commanded respect and obedience, and wielded great influence over his community.

The records and sources concerning the rabbinate during the 18th and 19th centuries indicate that the rabbi's duties were great, and so were his honors, rewards, and prestige. His primary duty was to establish and conduct a yeshiva which the community agreed to support; it was the common practice that the rav was also the *rosh mesivta*.

RABBI RALPH PELCOVITZ is the spiritual leader of the Congregation Knesseth Israel in Far Rockaway, and a past-president of the Igud Harabbonim.

The role of the rabbi as *marbitz Torah*, disseminator of Torah, is especially apparent in Sephardic communities. As early as the Takanos of 1432, the primary stress is placed on the duty of the rabbi—indeed reflected by the title of rabbi—to disseminate Torah, in addition to his function as judge and arbiter of controversies and civil cases.

IN TIME, as communities grew and the rabbi's functions and duties increased, a rosh yeshiva was retained, by the rav, to help relieve him of this taxing role, although he still continued to give shiurim in the yeshiva. It is interesting to note that in Mir, where one of the great yeshivos of modern days was established in 1815, the rav and rosh yeshiva were one and the same, and even when a rosh yeshiva was retained the rav continued his active role until a conflict arose in 1867 between the rabbi and the rosh yeshiva. The rav complained that he was not invited to give shiurim in the yeshiva or participate in its administration. The case was submitted to a Beis Din (among others, those who sat on the court were: Rabbi Isaac Elchonon Spektor, Reb Eisel Charif of Slonim and the Warsaw Rav, Dov-Beresh Meislis) and the decision was in favor of the rosh yeshiva. It was felt that these two areas—the rabbinical and the yeshiva-educational—were separate and distinct. Although in later years the rav of Mir did serve as second rosh yeshiva, this was due in every instance to some family connection. The story of Mir is not unusual or unique—it is rather indicative of a new development and evolutionary process which took

place during the past hundred years or so. The roles of community rabbi and rosh yeshiva grew to be quite separate and distinct, even though never defined formally: the rabbi served as 'master of the city,' concerned with its every religious and spiritual need and fulfilling all rabbinic functions—while the rosh yeshiva emerged as the head of the Torah academy, educator—and quite often author of scholarly writings; but rarely, if ever, of responsa, for that belonged to the realm of the rabbi.

DURING THE EARLY years of Jewish religious life in the United States, the European pattern was followed quite closely—the role of the rabbi and the position of the synagogue was all-important. Rabbis played prominent roles not only in purely religious areas but also in philanthropy, politics, and social services. But there was one exception to the European pattern: the yeshivos were yet to appear. True, the Talmud Torah in many communities was on a par with some contemporary day schools, but the yeshiva gedolah was unknown, and of course the rosh yeshiva was not, as yet, a member of Jewish leadership. When yeshivos eventually were founded, the rosh yeshiva confined himself to his natural area of activity—the educational one. Thus, the administration of the Agudas Harabonim was vested in the hands of rabbis of communities and synagogues, who lived, breathed, and practiced rabbonus.

Today—reflecting the radical change that has occurred in the Torah community—the majority of the presidium of the Agudas Harabonim consists of roshei yeshivos and *not* rabbis of synagogues. The incursion of the rosh yeshiva into the traditional domain of the rabbi is obvious. The rosh yeshiva is more likely to be the *mesader kidushin* at a wedding, than the rabbi of the bride or groom. Halachic questions are directed to the rosh yeshiva by individuals and communities, rather than to the rabbonim; this occurs unhappily even in cases where the community leadership has already posed the question to their rabbi and then goes over his head to verify his ruling with a rosh yeshiva. Even the time-honored title of 'Rav' has been transferred from the synagogue or community rabbi and is granted only to the rosh yeshiva, even where the rabbi may be an outstanding Torah scholar and the rosh yeshiva only an instructor in Talmud.

WHAT HAS CAUSED THIS downgrading of the rabbi and why has the rosh yeshiva entered into the field of rabbinical activity? What effect is this having upon the *kehillah* and the entire institution of rabbonus? Above all, how is this disruption in the respective roles of rabbi and rosh yeshiva affecting the strength, position, and future of the Torah community in the U.S.A.? These are some pertinent questions we should address

ourselves to, in a search for answers that are vital to our Torah future.

The destruction of the great European Torah centers resulted in the transfer of certain yeshivos to these shores and marked the arrival of a number of great roshei yeshiva who aroused renewed devotion to Torah study, on a higher level than had been pursued heretofore in America. A new type of bnei Torah was developed over the years, imbued with the special values and standards of bnei yeshiva. Many became educators, some rabbonim, and many more businessmen. Few, unfortunately, became shul baalebatim. The average ben yeshiva has little use for the community synagogue and the rabbi is varyingly ignored, pitied, tolerated, or reluctantly recognized.

This attitude has been fostered, although at times unintentionally, by the spirit prevailing in the yeshivos. The yeshiva world maintains that the tempo of the times, the demands of the modern day synagogue, the low caliber of the average shul member—all these conspire to transform the rabbi into an executive and social director, a minister and preacher—but not a lamdon or moreh horo'oh. There is much truth to this thesis, but little effort is made to recognize the reasons and find a solution.

At the heart of this vexing problem which has sapped the vitality and health of the Torah community in our country, lies a deceptively simple but tragically overlooked fact. To be a mature, learned, real *rav*, one needs mature, learned, real baalebatim. No rabbi has ever come forth from the yeshiva fully developed. He grew and matured—developed in stature and learning—because his people asked she'elos, attended his shiurim, respected his Torah wisdom and guidance. If those who have the qualifications to be such baalebatim, refuse to play this role and abdicate their responsibilities, thereby abandoning the rabbi to laymen unversed in Torah, then they ensure the diminution of the rabbi in his Torah knowledge and practically preclude any opportunity for his growth and development. With the resultant decline of rabbonus, bnei Torah have turned to the roshei yeshiva, transforming them in effect into rabbis. Many of the roshei yeshiva have not sought this role, nor do they welcome it; but unfortunately, instead of training the bulk of their pupils to become responsible congregants, so that their superior disciples can become real rabbonim, they are doing very little to resolve the dilemma.

What is the harm in this situation? In the first place, many a rosh yeshiva, while an outstanding lamdon, is not an experienced moreh horo'oh—while the community rabbi, if given the opportunity to function in this field which is his, can and should develop into a competent halachic authority. This competence can only be fostered if the *kovod harabbonus* is nurtured by the bnei yeshiva, and they will agree to deprive

themselves of their comfortable dependence upon their rosh yeshiva, relying instead upon the skill and sincere search for Torah truth of the rav.

The diminution of *kovod harabbonus* has also had harmful effects in the field of Jewish education. The Orthodox rav, when transformed into a rabbi, is put on a par with Conservative and Reform clergy. Now, the paramount importance of the day school in American Jewish life is no longer ignored by the deviationist forces, and they seek a role in these schools. As a result—faced with the need to establish a clear policy—day school administrators have been led either to *include* all rabbis, or to *exclude* them all. The role of the Orthodox rabbi as mold of the Torah image in the community is one that cannot be fulfilled unless he is involved in the chinuch of his community. When this role is denied him, or no distinction is made between his role and that of the deviationist clergyman, a bitter harvest is bound to be harvested in but a few brief years.

Also, lines of demarcation between the pulpit rabbi and the businessman rabbi have been erased; strangely, in many instances, the businessman rabbi has taken over day school leadership, while community rabbis have been removed from positions of influence. This development ignores the fact that the practicing rabbi, whatever his failings, still retains that special Torah approach which is a natural consequence of his professional position.

As a result of the denigration of rabbonus in our time we are confronted with qualitative depreciation in the ranks of rabbinical candidates. The rabbinate has

always presented a great challenge, even though a difficult calling—"the worst of all trades but the best of all professions," as one perceptive observer put it. Today, however, every yeshiva is confronted with the problem of their best students refusing to enter the rabbinate, while the less able student who cannot foresee a successful career in mathematics or physics chooses the rabbinate as a safe, soft status profession. In some yeshivos the students eschew these technical fields of endeavor to continue their Torah studies at a kollel leading to a career in the field of chinuch. Their goal is to attain the coveted title of rosh yeshiva—even if in practice they only teach a class of beginners Talmud.

Whatever the motivations, one inescapable fact confronts us: we are not producing the rabbinical leadership which our Torah communities will need in the next decade. This can only be rectified by elevating the *kovod harabbonus*, which can only be achieved by the yeshivos urging their best students to enter the rabbinate, while encouraging all their talmidim who will not become rabbonim to become baalebatim.

The weakness apparent so often in the Torah community is not due to our lack of numbers or power as such, but to our failure to mobilize our forces and the splintering of the power we do possess. To change this situation, a two-way street must be opened. The rabbi and the synagogue must support fully the yeshiva and its leadership, while the yeshiva heads must speak out forthrightly in behalf of the rabbinate and the synagogue. In this way the presently existing tension between the two worlds will be eased, and the prestige and power of Torah will be enhanced. □

The Rabbi and the Ben Torah

Ruth Finkelstein

TO THE MANY PROBLEMS plaguing the Orthodox rabbi who is trying to bring Yiddishkeit into Smalltown, U.S.A., a new one has been added in recent years. Paradoxically, this dilemma stems from the newest arrival in his community, the Ben-Torah.

Take the case of Rabbi X.

Rabbi X had come to the small town some fifteen years ago and he had succeeded by sheer force of personality, and G-d's help, in establishing a shul with a proper mechitzah—the first in the history of the community. And the going hasn't been easy since. Every few years or so, a new knot of opposition springs up to undo much that the rabbi had accomplished.

MRS. RUTH FINKELSTEIN is a staff writer for *Olomeinu*, and Editorial Associate for *The Jewish Parent*, both published by *Torah Umesorah*. This is her first contribution to *The Jewish Observer*.

"Who of us are really Orthodox, so what do we need a mechitzah for?" was the by now familiar cry.

Once more the rabbi would patiently take down one of his *seforim* and teach, explain, enlarge, and finally exhort. After a while the tumult died down as suddenly as it had materialized. But before long it was the question of installing a microphone in the schul; kashrus supervision of the shul's kitchen; using bingo as a fundraiser, or a proposed dinner-dance, to be sponsored by the congregation.

Weary From Standing Guard

Rabbi X felt like a policeman and sometimes he admitted—only to himself—to a weariness from standing guard. But he found consolation in the mechitzah—to the rabbi, the symbol of his success—which stood

proudly in its full and unquestionably proper height. Only in one instance had Rabbi X failed: the dinner-dance.

"This is one time he is no going to tell us what to do, especially since it's not going to be held on the Schul's premises."

The rabbi stood his ground. It occurred to him that he had to be equally stiff-necked. To his congregation's outrage, the rabbi and his wife had the nerve to stay away from the dinner-dance, as he had warned.

"As your spiritual leader my presence would have given sanction to something which is against the Torah."

This time the fire smoldered and refused to die for quite some time. But it did burn itself out.

For the hundredth time, Rabbi X asked himself if it was all worth it. Was he building a house of cards which would tumble down the moment he relaxed his vigilance? What did he have to show for his many years of *m'siras nefesh*, for his self-sacrifice? According to the present-day standard of success, nothing—his salary from the shul was still solely inadequate; he had to supplement his income by various means during the years.

But then he thought of the handful of *shomrei Shabbos* in the community and those whom the existence of a 'kosher' shul in the area had attracted through the years. If he were to leave, these people, most of them in their waning years, would be left without their spiritual necessities, unless they had the strength to move to a different town.

Then there swam before his mind's eye the faces of those adults and children he had influenced: the men from the various study broups, some held daily, some weekly; those he had taught to daven and influenced to wear tefillin, to keep *kashrus*, *taharas hamishpocha*; the children and their parents he had impressed with the importance of a *yeshivah* education. And what about the college students who were beginning to trickle in of late? Also not to be forgotten was the work his wife was doing among the women—the sacrifices had not been his alone. Not only his wife but his children too had given of themselves.

'Let's Move to Brooklyn'

RABBI X WAS TIRED, so tired of the constant struggle for everything he as a Jew believed in—and wanted for his fellow Jews. The thought of moving to a place like Brooklyn began to crop up in his mind with ever more persistent frequency than it had in the past.

Enough, cried his soul, let someone else do his share now. That's when there appeared what he thought would be (and could be) a ray of hope and light: Several Bnei-Torah, professional men, and their families had been lured into the area by the local chemical industry. Rabbi X was exalted beyond words. At last,

here were knowledgeable, Orthodox young men who would back him up and give him support.

Or so he thought.

As the weeks and months passed, it became evident to Rabbi X, though plead and coax he did, that his new congregants were mostly not willing, and for some reason incapable of helping him. They, the *bnei-torah*, contented themselves with attending *schul*.

They turned a deaf ear to the rabbi's pleas to join the *schul*, pay membership dues, attend meetings, and become active in the *schul's* affairs, so that their voices would carry weight in helping the rabbi to swing the pendulum to the side of *halocho*, whenever a controversy would arise. "Show your non-religious brothers what it means to be a committed Jew, the rabbi pleaded.

But all entreaties were to no avail. Not only did the Bnei-Torah ignore the rabbi's request—they remained aloof toward the other worshippers in the *schul*.

Their attitude was not lost, of course, on the other worshippers. Thus, instead of receiving support from the *bnei-torah*, the rabbi found himself trying to make excuses for them to his members.

The dilemma Rabbi X and others like him face today is how to break the barrier the *ben-torah* in his congregation has erected between himself and the others.

Surely there must be some way to break down this barrier. □

A Rejoinder

THE POSITION OF THE RABBI in the American Torah community has certainly drastically changed from what it was in Europe. This fact, with all its ramifications and implications, well merits our thoughtful consideration, and a good deal has been written about it in recent years. Unfortunately however, there has been a failure to understand the real meaning of this development. This is obvious in the case of Chief Rabbi Jakobovits who (in the Spring and Summer 1966 issues of *Tradition*) simply blames the *roshei yeshiva* for "the usurpation of the rabbinic institution by Talmudic scholars holding no rabbinic office." Rabbi Pelcovitz, in the article before us, sees the root of the trouble in the failure of *yeshiva* disciples to respect the rabbi and their insistence, therefore, to see the *rosh yeshiva* as their *rav*. While this analysis is much more perceptive than the extreme and over-simplified views of Dr. Jakobovits, it cannot, however, satisfy us.

Like others before us, Rabbi Pelcovitz—distressed by the problem of the American Rabbi—grasps at the readily available scape-goat, the *ben Torah*, and does not realize that, in so doing, he puts the cart before the horse—confuses cause and effect: *The lack of kovod harabonus, which he castigates, is not the CAUSE of the decline of the rabbinate but its RESULT.* There

have been fundamental historical changes in the nature of the rabbinic office which have brought about the decline in prestige, the alienation of the ben Torah, and the new role of the rosh yeshiva. Failure to recognize this brings with it an obvious result: the offering of solutions that will solve nothing. Merely to call for more kovod harabonus will not cope with the underlying issues, which really need our attention.

As Rabbi Pelcovitz himself points out, the role of the Torah scholar has not always been the same. If he had not confined himself to the last few centuries, he would have noted that there were times in Jewish life when local communal leadership was neither organized nor equipped to provide the answers to the religious problems of the community and when these had to be furnished by central authorities—by the academies of Babylonia in the Gaonic era, or by the greatest Torah personalities of the country or region.

As local Torah scholarship grew, more and more authority was exercised locally—but there never existed the neat divisions which Rabbi Pelcovitz seems to read into the past. It is true that in due course the local moroh de'asroh reigned supreme in his community. But even then it was clear that his authority was based on his qualifications as a Torah scholar and deferred to that of international, regional, or even local scholars of greater stature, whether they happened to be practicing rabbis, or roshei yeshivos, or even laymen. Can we overlook the overriding authority readily conceded to the Vilna Gaon, the Chofetz Chayim, Rabbi Menachem Zemba, or the Chazon Ish, to name just a few who never held rabbinic office? The fact is that rabbinic authority was always related to Torah scholarship rather than office-holding. Far from the local rabbi holding an 'in office' authority entitling him to set himself up as the final arbiter for his community, his real authority was based in great measure on the knowledge that he himself would, as a matter of course, subject himself to the authority of the Gedolei Hador. In instances where he did not, we find him vigorously challenged, from within and without his community.

As to his leadership of the local yeshiva, it is important to remember that until the 19th century yeshivos were not permanent institutions as we know them today, but the personal creation of each local rabbi. The formal separation of functions which Rabbi Pelcovitz notes coincides with the emergence of the modern yeshivos—and with the emergence of the roshei yeshiva as national figures. It is true where the rosh yeshiva was not, at the same time, the local rav, he scrupulously left the adjudication of local matters to the latter—but that did not prevent him from exercising wider leadership, by his teachings as well as by writings—not excluding responsa. And where he happened to be the local rav as well, his authority was by no means the result of his holding this office; would Rabbi Meir Shapiro, for instance, have played a different role if

he had only been the creator of Yeshivas Chachmey Lublin and not Lubliner Rav?

To sum up: even though the young Rabbi proud of his brand-new semichah and rabbinic contract, may not always realize it, *the real authority in Torah life has always ultimately rested with those who were the most effective guardians of Torah.* And here we come face to face with the true problems of American Jewish life. A number of profound social changes have decisively cut into the effectiveness and even competence of the rabbinate—changes that owe little or nothing to the attitude of either roshei yeshiva or the rank and file bnei Torah. Let us list some of them.

1. The European rav was the leader of a *community*, usually an active town; the American rabbi, as a rule, is the head of a *congregation*. This distinction, completely ignored by Rabbi Pelcovitz, has the most profound implications (as shown by the fact that the exceptions to the decline of the American Rabbinate, are in those places where, under the leadership of strong Torah personalities and communal leaders conscious of the true meaning of a kehilah, European-type kehillos were created despite all the obstacles facing them. Obviously, a rabbi of an entire town, responsible for all the religious services from kashrus and mikvah to education and burial, occupies an entirely different position than the spiritual leader of a congregation, a voluntary association of individuals who receive their religious needs from many different sources, may daven part of the time in other synagogues, and will inevitably examine the merits of their respective rabbis with his next-door neighbor.

2. Even where this is not the case, as in small-town communities, there are other factors profoundly affecting the authority of the rabbi. The compromises made by numerous waves of immigrants and their children as they struggled to find a modus vivendi in this new country, led to a spectrum of 'Orthodox' or 'Traditional' congregations: from those adhering most strictly to the Shulchan Aruch to those practically indistinguishable from their Conservative counterpart. All too often, the members, in effect, made the decisions and the rabbi, far from being the morah de'asroh of the European kehillah, had to bend, at least within certain very broad limits. When to draw the line was in itself a difficult decision—not so much because the rabbi's livelihood depended on the extension of his one- or two-year contract and was more important to him than his principles, but because he wanted to save what could be saved and, therefore, would stretch any point if only the slightest halachic justification could possibly be found. The pressure to relax standards, in order "to keep the congregation together" and to prevent it from going over to Conservatism, must be experienced to be believed.

3. At the same time, new duties were thrust upon the rabbi—social, pastoral, administrative—which inter-

ferred not only with the time he could give to growth in Torah learning, but also with the image of a true *morah de'asroh*—just imagine him as M.C. at a sisterhood Purim Party. *And be it noted that the conscientious rabbi in a good many cases could only shirk his new duties at the cost of losing his hold on his flock.* The result, in all too many instances?—a level of personal conduct and congregational life that could not possibly be satisfactory to a ben Torah.

4. Faced with a variety of new problems involving Din Torah and, even more difficult, Da'as Torah, and daily questions of fundamental importance and extreme halachic complexity; torn apart by difficulties and duties not of his choosing—stands an American Rabbi generally much less prepared for his task than the European rabbi of Old. It is ludicrous to suggest that this problem can be solved by adding a department of *rabbonus* to our yeshivos, or more specialized professional 'rabbinic seminaries.' The *shimush* that the European Rabbi received, came at the end of a long and single-minded period of Torah study and personal growth, which enabled him to pass on all issues *l'amitah shel Torah*, according to the true teachings of the Torah, uninfluenced in so far as this is possible—by personal predilections and human weaknesses.

5. This problem is aggravated by the heavy demands of the secular education expected of the rabbi—not only high school but also college, with possibly the pursuit of a Ph. D. The product of this educational process all too often is a rabbi who, far from being a *lamdon*, has a woefully limited mastery of the 'ocean of Torah' and, perhaps worse, carries into his rabbinic work, the ideas picked up in his psychological, sociological, or philosophical studies. Matters are not helped by the fact that all too many rabbis are blissfully unaware of their limitations, and, in proud awareness of their *s'michas rabbonus*, pontificate on matters of *halocha* and *daas Torah* with utter disregard or even in opposition to the true Torah authorities. This was a major factor in some of the recent controversies in American Orthodoxy—which did nothing to raise the prestige of the rabbinate in the eyes of *bnei Torah*.

6. As a result of all these factors, the young Orthodox rabbi all too often has come to offer the image of a modern minister not different in kind—though in belief and practice—from his deviationist colleagues—and contrary to Rabbi Pelcovitz's view, it was not the *bnei yeshiva* that put him on a par with them, but he himself when, in so many instances all over the country he joined with Reform and Conservative rabbis in local and national bodies. Whatever the reason—a desire to rival their prestigious status, or to make his influence felt in the wider community—this step fatally compromised the image not only of the rabbis that took it, but of all those joined with them in rabbinic organizations tolerating this confusion of boundaries. *It was the roshei yeshiva who struck the strongest blow*

for the kovod harabbonus when they forbade mixed-rabbinic groups, and it is regrettable that their lead is disregarded by many of those who most insistently press for more respect for the rabbinate.

HERE ARE SOME of the factors that would account for the weakening of the rabbi's position in this country and, in a vicious circle, for the disinclination of our best yeshiva disciples to enter the rabbinate—developments that cannot be reversed merely by *bnei Torah* becoming more active *baalebatim*, and *roshei yeshiva* insisting on more *kovod* for rabbis. Parallel to these developments on the other hand, came the growth of the authority of the *roshei yeshiva*, traced, for instance, in the perceptive essay, *Twenty Years After*, by Hillel Seidman (*Jewish Life*, Nov.-Dec., 1966). The bald fact is that the *roshei yeshiva* who arrived in this country following the Nazi era, and the yeshivos that arose, filled a virtual vacuum on the American Jewish scene, with the replacement of the *kehilloh* by the congregational synagogue, new centers radiating Torah commitment were needed—and the yeshivos filled this need. With the decline of the rabbinate, there arose the need for leadership that would provide charismatic inspiration and unequivocal Torah guidance—and the *roshei yeshiva*, simply by virtue of what they were and represented, became the needed leaders. The weakness of the local communities and of the rabbinate are—without any doubt—a source of great weakness and danger for the American Torah community; but we will not remedy this situation by overlooking the basic causes, and by kidding ourselves that by a simple fiat we can restore the authority of the rabbi and the health of the congregation.

WE MUST REALIZE that when we talk in anonymous terms of "the *roshei yeshivos*," we actually refer in the first place to a very specific group of extraordinary Torah personalities, as well as to the outstanding disciples they have reared. They lacked all that is considered essential to success in our society: they were newcomers, did not know the language of their new country, they lacked academic credentials—and yet, in a mere fifty years they effected a revolution on the American Jewish scene, reaching far beyond the confines of the most recent post-war wave of immigration. They not only established new levels of Torah scholarship, but made the serious concern with Torah the central issue in life for untold numbers of the best of our youth; and they carried this concern for Torah into the communal arena by providing leadership and guidance *where others were either unable or unwilling to do so.*

(In this connection, a comment is in order on the view that *roshei yeshivos* took over the deciding of *halacha* from the local rabbis, and that this was not actually their fields—Rabbi Jakobovits actually goes so

far as to assert that they are guilty of "distortion of the halachic process [and] self-reliant haughtiness."! Such statements overlook the fact that the roshei yeshivos prominently involved in p'sak were at one time rabbis of communities; that halachic questions are not only addressed to roshei yeshivos but also to generally recognized rabbonim such as the late Rabbi Yonasan Steif, ז"ל, and (*yibodel v'chaim*) Rabbi Henkin—and that the failure to rely on the local rabbi must therefore have something to do with the limitations of a good many local rabbis.)

It is most significant that the first great step toward a stronger American Torah community, the rapid propagation of day schools, had its inspiration and impetus in the work of the late Rabbi Mendlowitz, ז"ל, and the disciples he trained—a yeshiva-centered force—rather than in the American Orthodox rabbinate. Likewise the proliferation of mesivtos and talmudical seminaries—and most recently the emergence of kollelim—were pioneered not by rabbis but by the roshei yeshiva, by the full use of their Torah authority. Somehow, "the primary role of the rabbi as marbitz Torah," of which Rabbi Pelcovitz speaks, was no longer central to a good many of the harassed rabbis. In turn, these developments inevitably confirmed the pre-eminence of the roshei yeshiva on the American scene. With yeshiva attendance by our children much more taken for granted in this country than it was in Europe, "the influence of the roshei yeshivos reaches through their talmidim and their families far beyond the immediate bounds of the yeshivos. This periphery also includes the many who contribute to the maintenance of the yeshivos" (Seidman).

Cherishing this bond to his rebbe who bore him, "the average ben yeshiva has little use for the community synagogue," Rabbi Pelcovitz submits; and this point is eloquently echoed by Mrs. Finkelstein. The implication is that of a self-centered lack of community responsibility. Not so long ago, Rabbi Morris Halpern wrote in *Jewish Life*, of "the supposed exemplar of devout Orthodoxy, unconcerned with, and uncommitted to, other fellow Jews of lesser observance." In actual fact, the non-practicing rabbi, the ben Torah who is in business or in religious education, can take credit for many of the proudest achievements in the American Torah community. Contrary to the view that the professional position of the rabbi assures him of a special Torah approach, all too often the demands of his position have inhibited him from striking out for the highest goals. How many new mikvos have been built, how many day schools have been created by the maligned 'businessmen rabbis' with the greatest personal sacrifices, while oftentimes local rabbis were pre-occupied with their congregational concerns, and even ambivalent in their attitudes?

WHAT THEN IS THE REAL reason for the ben Torah's

frequent lack of involvement in the community synagogue? All too often, the bnei yeshiva cannot be the desirable baalebatim that the rabbi needs, because the rabbi or the synagogue do not make it possible. In a recent address at a synagogue banquet, Rabbi Meir Eisenmann said:

I humbly suggest that it is the task of the Orthodox community and its functionaries to try and bridge this gap [between the synagogue and the ben Torah]. . . . There is a kehilloh waiting for you, counting on you, not really so very different as you might have thought. . . .

The young man must be shown that his concern for the absolute observance of all mitzvos is as respected as is the mere whim of some newly attracted outsider who now graces the shul. . . . He must see a sense of reverence and humility displayed by the local rabbi and community leaders for the opinion of the Torah greats of our day. . . . He must be made to realize that from HIM we do not expect responsiveness but responsibility, active participation, not humble passiveness. In short, he must be helped to understand that we recognize that HE is our hope for the future more than anyone else in our Congregation.

All too often, instead of utilizing the ben Torah to help raise the Torah standards of the congregation, we demand that he lower his own standards—or be labelled 'unsociable,' 'arrogant,' and 'unconcerned with others.' To avoid this, he is expected to go along with the heterim that the rabbi may feel compelled to give for the sake of the community; to give some of his precious time of Torah study for participation in synagogue socials, and to develop a broad tolerance for fashionable transgressions. It goes without saying that we expect him to give up davening under the conditions he is accustomed to, led by people who understand what it means. Do we realize what we demand of him? And can we tell him with conviction that his full participation in the shul will make the rabbi a better rabbi? There is a very real problem here, that can only be alleviated along the lines indicated in Rabbi Eisenmann's remarks.

It is this problem, too, that keeps so many of the most serious of our bnei yeshiva out of the rabbinate. They cannot but consider the almost unbearable pressures and difficulties that the American rabbinate suffers from that we analyzed earlier. If they truly believe what we all profess, that the Torah "is our life and the length of our days," they will seek to enter a kollel in order to attain some degree of perfection in Torah, and to prepare for the possibility of a life involved in the study and spreading of Torah. (To say that they attend a kollel for "a career in chinuch . . . to attain the coveted title of rosh yeshiva" shows a strange lack of insight.) If they do not feel capable of this undertaking they may enter business or the professions where

they feel that the pressures they will encounter will not be as lethal as in the rabbinate.

NO QUESTION ABOUT IT; the unwillingness of top-notch yeshiva students to consider the rabbinate is a most serious problem. But again, it cannot be solved by sermons on *kovod harabonus*; the underlying factors that shape the nature of the American rabbinate must be faced up to. Rabbi Pelcovitz lightly touches upon some of them, but he does not really come to grips with them. If we try to do so, we quickly realize that we face here a problem to which there is no easy solution.

Let me forestall a misunderstanding: this gloomy analysis is of course not meant to convey that every American rabbi and congregation were weighed and found wanting, nor even that *the* American rabbi and *the* American congregation as such have failed. Rather, it is my contention that *too many* have failed, and that too many others have had to bring extraordinary sacrifices and undergo extraordinary suffering to keep the banner of Torah flying. Hence the need to recognize clearly the problems of the rabbinate and not to take refuge in easy but superficial palliatives. Undoubtedly

there are contributions that the yeshivos and the *bnei Torah* in general can make toward easing the situation; but I maintain that they cannot resolve its fundamental complexity.

Perhaps, noting that those rabbis who represent Torah learning and leadership at its highest, can still command respect and authority, we may conclude that the first step to a solution of the problem of the American rabbinate is a determined effort to get across to our future rabbis the importance of higher standards. Noting too, that the rabbi who is most conscious of his limitations, and seeks the guidance of his *rosh yeshiva*, is least likely to falter and most likely to enjoy the respect of the *ben Torah*, we may well feel that the time has come to stop waving the *semicha* as a 'declaration of independence' and to seek more leadership from the *roshei yeshiva* rather than decrying their "usurpation of authority." In fact, we should perhaps welcome a development analogous to the conditions of a thousand years ago, when local leadership received its direction from the yeshivos, the centers of Torah. In such a united effort, rather than in a "separation of powers" may lie the solution to the problem of our rabbinate. □

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Menachem Greenberg

Israel's Holy Places

The restoration of many of the sacred sites in the Holy Land previously not accessible to us, has turned our attention to the background of these places. The following brief sketches give us a broader historical perspective on the Holy Places, and a deeper understanding of their significance to our people. □

THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH

The Torah in Bereishis 23 describes Avrohom's purchase of *M'oras Hamachpelah* (in Chevron) from Efron Hachiti in great detail. Our Sages comment that the name *Bnei Cheis*—they sold the M'oroh to Avrohom—appears in the Torah ten times, to demonstrate that whoever confirms the authenticity of a righteous man's purchase is considered to have confirmed the revelation of the *Aseres Hadibros*, the Decalogue.

What have the Chitim and the confirmation of purchases to do with the *Aseres Hadibros*? The Chitim did not believe in the eternal life of the soul (*hash'oras hanefesh*). Avrohom went to great pains and spared no expense to acquire a choice burial place, to implant in the hearts of the gentiles some measure of belief in the soul's eternal life, just as the *Aseres Hadibros* strengthened belief in Divine reward and punishment, another pillar of our faith.

Also, were it not for the M'oras Hamachpelah, the nations of the world could deny the authenticity of the Torah's account of the lives of the *Avos Hak'doshim*—the forebears of the Jewish nation. This site has for centuries served as physical proof of our nation's chosenness and *yichus*, for the Chitim revered it as a holy place, and passed on the tradition to their descendants. Since it is through this preservation of the identity of the M'oroh that we know its location today, those who bear that testimony which upholds the heritage of our forefathers are considered to have confirmed the testimony given by the Tablets, which also remained in our hands as proof of our Divine election at Sinai. THE M'OROH, the Torah tells us, is located in Kiryas Ho'arba (Town of Four), another name for Chevron, which derives from the four husbands and wives buried there — Odom and Chavah; Avrohom and Sorah; Yitzchok and Rivkah; and Yaakov and Leah.

Avrohom and the M'oroh

In telling of Avrohom's purchase, the pair of words *bury* and *dead* appears seven times: six times the word *bury* precedes the word *dead*, but the last time the words are reversed. Why?

• When Avrohom purchased the M'oroh, he knew by prophetic insight that Odom and Chavah were already buried there and that they would be followed by six more. This accounts for six of the word-pairs.

• The Gemoro in *Sotah* (13a) relates that when Yaakov's sons came to the M'oroh to bury their father, his brother Eisov blocked their way, claiming that Yaakov had already used his plot for Leah, and that Eisov had inherited the other plot from their father Yitzchok. The brothers immediately sent the fleet-footed Naftoli back to Egypt to bring back the bill of sale to prove that Eisov had sold his share in the M'oroh to Yaakov. Chushim, the son of Don, was hard-of-hearing and asked why their father's honor was being desecrated by delaying his burial. When told that Eisov was blocking the burial, Chushim, in a fit of anger, took a spear and beheaded Eisov. The head rolled into the cave and onto the lap of Yitzchok, and there it remained. The remainder of Eisov's body was buried by his children in Seir. Thus the seventh word-pair is accounted for.

• The Gemoro in *B'rochos* (18a) says that wicked people are regarded as dead even during their lives, and the righteous are termed living even after death because of their eventual restoration to life. When speaking of Eisov, it is fitting that death should precede burial, and this is the seventh word-pair ordered; the opposite is true of the six righteous ancestors, and therefore the word order is reversed in the first six word-pairs.

Prayer at the M'oroh

The M'oras Hamachpelah has always been a special place of prayer for Jews—especially in time of distress. When Moshe Rabbenu was giving instructions to the spies, he said, "Go up to the Negev"; Moshe wanted the *meraglim* to prostrate themselves on the graves of the Fathers to remind them of G-d's oath to give the Holy Land to their descendants, and to pray for the speedy fulfillment of this promise. By this act they would elevate themselves to the level of being worthy of inheriting the land, but it was only Kolev who carried out Moshe's request.

In the course of the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdosh, G-d commanded Yirmiyohu to call the Fathers to prayer, whereupon the prophet went to Chevron to the M'oroh.

The power of prayer at this site is illustrated by the story told by R' Yeshayoh Horowitz in *Aden Zion*. There was a severe drought in Eretz Yisroel which left



Jews inside the structure over the Cave of Machpelah after its capture

the people with parched fields, dry wells, and the threat of famine in the following year. After decreeing several fast days, the rabbis gathered all the Jews to Chevron to pray. In the midst of their prayers, several non-Jews rushed in, exclaiming that they had heard a thunderous roar near the entrance to the *M'oroh*. That night a plentiful rain quenched the earth's thirst, and the impending catastrophe was averted.

R' Binyomin of Toledo, Spain, the famed 12th century traveler, writes that the structure over the tombstones dates from the first *Beis Hamikdosh*. Following the Arab conquests, a small congregation built a synagogue near the *M'oroh*, but the area was taken by the Christians, who desecrated it and erected a church on the site. When the Moslems recaptured the site, they converted the church into a mosque, and Jews were excluded from the area. In 1031, R' Shmiel b'rabi Shimon was given a special permit from the Caliph of Baghdad to pray at the *M'oroh*. For a period of time Jews were allowed to enter upon payment of a fee—Christians were excluded.

Later on, the *M'oroh* was completely closed. Rab Ovadiah of Bartinura, author of the well-known commentary on the *Mishnah*, writes: "One is permitted to enter the *M'oroh*—Jew or Arab. There is a small window outside the wall of the Cave and it is said that the window goes down to the grave of Avrohom."

The small Jewish community in Chevron was continuously oppressed by the Arab rulers. In 1813, the rabbis of the town were imprisoned and tortured, and

a heavy ransom was demanded from the community. Messengers were sent to Germany to raise the money; in Amsterdam, a special committee was organized to help. The conquest of Chevron by Ibrahim Pasha in 1834 brought new oppressive measures against the Jews.

The persecution continued until the 1929 Arab pogroms, in which tens of students at the Chevron Yeshiva were cruelly murdered. The Yeshiva fled to Yerushalayim, where it is now located, and Jewish habitation of the town ceased. Israeli captors of Chevron in the Six-Day War found the Jewish Cemetery plowed over and planted with potatoes.

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

Har Hazeisim (the Mt. of Olives) is popularly known as a traditional burial place, but it is also known as *Har Hamischo*, the Mount of Anointment. When the *Beis Hamikdosh* stood on the Har Habayis, the olive trees on Har Hazeisim provided the oil used to anoint the king and the *Kohen Godol*. The *Mishnah* in *Poroh* tells of a bridge which connected Har Hazeisim with Har Habayis, the site of the *Beis Hamikdosh*. Because the eastern walls of the *Beis Hamikdosh* and of the Har Habayis were lower than the other structures, it was possible to view the inside of the sanctuary from Har Hazeisim.

The *Talmud Yerushalmi* in *Ta'anis* relates that there were two cedars on the Mount; under one of them were four shops which did a brisk business among Jews who came to Yerushalayim on Pesach, Shovuos, and Succos.

Har Hazeisim also served as the first signal-point for the notification that the new moon (month) had been sanctified (*kiddush hachodesh*). On the heights of the Mount, the heads of the Sanhedrin and other dignitaries would gather to light the torches which started the process of informing Jews in the Diaspora when to celebrate the holidays.

When the Beis Hamikdosh was destroyed, Har Hazeisim acquired a unique place in Jewish hearts; here they could go to see the ruins. In return for assistance to the Caliph Omar, Jews were given access to the Mount. They used to circle it on Tisha B'av, and on Hoshano Rabbo Palestinian Jews would make a festive trip to the Mount—a remembrance of the pilgrimages (*aliyah loregel*) of times past. Rav Hai Gaon came from Babylonia every Succos and on Hoshano Rabbo circled the Mount seven times. Then the Palestinian Gaon, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Gaon Yaakov in Yerushalayim, would make the “Har Hazeisim proclamation” with details of the calendar for the coming year.

The End of Days

Har Hazeisim is also closely associated with the *Acharis Hayomim* (the End of Days), and the coming of the *Moshiach*.

On this Mount, *Eliyohu Hanovi* will stand prior to the *Moshiach's* arrival, and here will begin the revival of the dead (Zechariah 14:45): “His feet shall stand that day on Har Hazeisim which faces Yerushalayim from the East, and the Mount will be split down the middle, eastward and westward, forming a great valley, and one half of the mountain will move northward and one half southward.”

The association of Har Hazeisim with *t'chiyas hameisim*—our Sages tell us that this is the destination of all the dead during *gilgul hameisim* (the return of the dead), and from here they will rise—is the main reason that the Mount became a popular burial place. There is also a tradition that bodies buried in Har Hazeisim are not affected by worms: the Mount is mostly rocky and chalky, and the body quickly disintegrates. Sacks of earth from the Mount have always been treasured by Jews in the Diaspora; they were buried with the dead as a *segulah*.

According to many *poskim*, a request for burial on the Mount must be honored—even if it entails great difficulty and expense.

The Parness family of Yerushalayim owns lists of those buried on the Mount for the past 400 years. In the seven volumes of *Chelkas M'chokeik*, published by Rav Aryeh Leib of Brisk, are listed those who were buried on the Mount since 1882.

But the first burials were much earlier. There is a tradition that King Uziyoh and King Yehoshofot were buried in the Kidron Valley, near the slope of the

Mount. Some believe that Chuldoh the prophetess is buried there. Many travellers have referred to the cave on Har Hazeisim as the burial place of the prophets Chagai and Malachi. One of the later visitors, Rabbi Chaim Horowitz, wrote in 1835 that inside the cave are countless smaller caves forming a huge labyrinth.

The most important site on Har Hazeisim is the tomb of Zechariah who prophesied regarding the Mount. The stone tomb is pyramid-shaped, and rises to a height of about 30 feet. A mid-17th century source states that the Ramban, R' Mordechai ben Hillel (author of the Talmudic work *Mordechai*) and R' Ovadiah of Bartinura are buried on the Mount. Other important graves found intact are those of R' Klonymos Ba'al Haness and the author of the *Or Hachayim*, a commentary on the Torah. The former's grave is marked by a large mound of stones.

The desecration of graves on Har Hazeisim did not begin with the Arabs in 1948; R' Binyomin of Toledo wrote in the 12th century, “Every grave has a date, but the gentiles have been wrecking the monuments and using them to build houses.” Similar accounts are given by R' Naftali ben Yitzchok in *Emek Hamelech* and by R' Chaim Horowitz in his work, *Chibas Yerushalayim*.

The Minister of Religion has appointed a commission to consider the future of Har Hazeisim and it has been proposed to use the remaining plots for the burial of war dead. □

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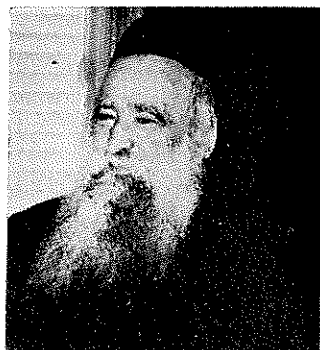
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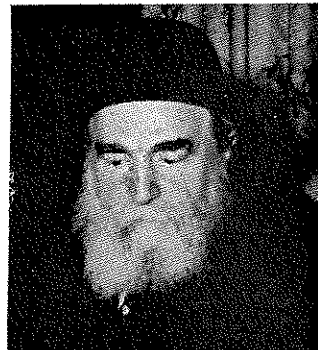
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second looks at the jewish scene

"Sidney (Also Known as Steven)"

ANY COURTROOM BATTLE for the custody of a child has unhappy—often tragic undertones. It bespeaks an unsuccessful marriage, a broken home, and broken hearts. Whichever way it is finally resolved the pain lingers on.

But a recent case which came to our attention, which revolved around a nine-year-old boy — as the court described him "Sidney

(also known as Steven)"—bespeaks the story of a broken people. The case was described in the decision of Mr. Justice Ostrow which appeared in *The New York Law Journal* on June 14 last. In the cold legalisms of 'habeas corpus,' 'custody' and 'visitation rights' a tale unfolds which has all the elements of the tragedy of a people divided between those who have left Torah and those who stubbornly cling to it.

We saw "Sidney (also known as Steven)" in a Shabbos visit to Camp Dora Golding, popularly known as Camp Deal, a camp for underprivileged yeshiva students in Deal, New Jersey. "See that boy"—a camp official pointed to a youngster with a clean white arba-kanfos draped over his shirt, jet-black *peios* neatly tucked behind his ears, siddur in hand, and swaying as though he had been davening for a thousand years—"last year he was going to church on Sundays."

Sidney was born into tragedy — his mother is chronically ill and hospitalized, and since the first day of his life he had been in the care of his grandmother. When he reached school age he was sent to a public school where he was considered to be a 'slow' student and was transferred to a New York City '600'-school where he spent three years in the first grade.

It became increasingly difficult for Sidney's grandmother to care for him and give him a proper home; she was in her seventies and her

husband in his nineties. When friends on the block invited Sidney to Mass on Sunday, his grandmother dressed him appropriately and sent him off to church.

In September of 1966, Sidney's grandmother entered the hospital for surgery. She placed the child in the care of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Ostreicher, a chasidic family living in Boro Park, and distant relatives of the boy.

Sidney was enrolled in a yeshiva, and enjoyed the love of his temporary parents and the companionship of their six children. He made remarkable progress in his religious and secular studies, and it became clear that his failure in public school was not due to lack of intelligence.

"Sidney was unusually thin, and emaciated, quiet and withdrawn," so testified his principal—but "he demonstrated remarkable improvement within two months. He gained weight, took on a happy mien, became well-adjusted and there was no indication that he was retarded. He showed an aptitude in his studies and earned good marks."

When the grandmother came home from the hospital and asked that Sidney be returned, the Ostreichers refused to give him up. The grandmother then instituted a habeas corpus procedure and petitioned the court to order the boy's return.

Mid-way in the proceedings it became clear to the court that the grandparents, because of their ad-

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vanced age, could not cope with the needs of a boy of nine, and it was agreed by both parties that an uncle of the boy be permitted to become a co-petitioner with Sidney's grandmother, to obtain custody of the boy.

Sidney's uncle told the court that—in the words of the court—"the orthodoxy of the respondents is of such extreme nature that it would be detrimental to the welfare of the child," but the court noted that "the well being of Sidney, his progress at the Yeshiva, belie any adverse effect resulting from his studies."

In questioning the boy's uncle, who was seeking custody, it was revealed that he (the uncle) had been divorced from his first wife, had made no request for visitation rights to his child; had not seen her for the past eighteen years; and had not contributed to her support. But he was asking the court to take Sidney away from his foster parents because of their 'extreme' Orthodoxy.

Justice Ostrow rejected the petition to remove Sidney from the Ostreichers, and awarded custody to them because, "in the opinion of the court . . . the respondents [the Ostreichers] have demonstrated clearly and convincingly their ability and desire to give Sidney a good home and proper care."

"Sidney (also known as Steven)" is now living in Boro Park with his 'new' parents and brothers and sisters where he is now known as "Shmuel."

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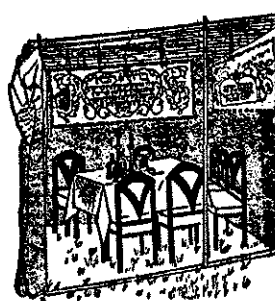
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The Sick and the Orthodox

WE RECENTLY received a copy of *The Jewish Wedding Book* (Harper & Row, New York). The book is in a way intriguing and will one day be a gold-mine for cultural historians and anthropologists when they study *homo-sapien americanus judaic*. It is a sort of Emily Post manual of wedding etiquette, with texts for announcements, and invitations, advice on flowers, kosher and non-kosher menus, and . . . the proper wording of the release

of the happy tidings to the press. There are schematic drawings of the positions of the bridal party processional, subdivided — as is most of the book—into 'traditional,' 'standard American,' 'double-ring,' and . . . 'variations.'

The dust-jacket carries blurbs from rabbis representing the "three wings." A prominent Orthodox rabbi writes: "An excellent job . . . written with sensitiveness. The authors hew close to tradition. They do not give any approval to non-traditional practices; they merely mention them . . . but do not endorse them. All in all, I think the entire book shows, in addition to other qualities, very excellent taste."

One paragraph caught our eye, and struck in our throat.

A guest whose health requires that he follow a strict diet, or one who eats only kosher food and knows that it will be a non-kosher reception, will feel more comfortable — and his

hosts will too—if he informs them beforehand, so that proper arrangements can be made. . . .

Now, we have been making a special effort at restraint in recent months; even passing over matters that cried for comment. This same Rabbi recently expressed severe criticism of the Orthodox 'fundamentalists,' to the extent of suggesting that they may have been guilty—by using such non-Jewish devices as picketing — of *chukas akum* (aping heathen practices). We bit our tongue and remained silent. Here is a book filled with instructions for what he calls 'non-traditional practices'—not 'merely mentioned' but described in complete detail, and he calls the book "an excellent job." The authors in one breath prescribe the proper procedure for the bride's parents to follow when faced with guests who are 'sick' or 'Orthodox,' and he calls it "excellent taste." Our supply of reserved expressions of surprise is exhausted—*Nu, I ask you?*



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"I Know"

AHARON AMIR IS AN anti-religious writer for the Israeli daily *Yediot Acharanot*. He reported the following conversation between himself and his small daughter, following the Six Day War.

"G-d is looking after us."

"G-d?"

"Yes."

I was utterly astonished. I thought for a moment and then asked another question.

"Who told you? Nadav?"

Nadav is my older son; he's nine and in grade three.

"Yes" the child answered. . . .

I cross-examined my son and told him of my conversation with his baby sister, and the triumphant retort that she had attributed to his wisdom.

"You told her that G-d is looking after us?"

"Yes" he answered. . . .

"And who told you—the teacher?"

"No. No one."

"Then who told you?"

"No one. Just myself."

"How do you know?"

"I know."

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The Power of the Press?

IN OUR ISSUE of September, 1965, we published an article by Dr. Yehuda Sorscher, in which he outlined the critical situation which confronts the Orthodox man in the armed forces. In May of this year, Rabbi Harvey Spring, himself a former U.S. Army chaplain, again explored the problem in our pages. He deplored the apathy of Orthodoxy to the Jew in the service of his country, and noted that many young men shake off their Yiddishkeit while in the service, never to return when they re-enter civilian life.

In the July-August issue of *Jewish Life*, Dr. Sorscher again writes of "Orthodoxy's Forgotten Soldiers," and closes with the question: "How many more lost souls can we afford to lose . . .?"

The score now reads: articles bemoaning the problem: 3, attempts to solve it: 0. □

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Letters to the Editor

The Golden Heritage

To the Editor:

Thank you for the praiseworthy review of *The Golden Heritage* in your May issue. I certainly appreciate the laudatory comments.

The reviewer regrets, however, that "the controversy between Rambam and Ramban (page 73) does not emerge clearly." My statement merely mentions their viewpoints. In an abbreviated introduction to the subject of Midrash, space could not be devoted to the intricacies of the differences of opinion; yet the simple statement seems to me to be quite clear. In Rambam's *Sefer HaMitzvos*, it seems evident that he believed that Midrash is a *product* of Halachah. Ramban, however, in his commentary thereon, tends to theorize that Midrash under certain circumstances is the *source* of Halacha.

In the final analysis, are not both saying the same thing . . . that (as I mentioned), "Midrash and Halacha are so closely interwoven" . . . that *all* Torah interpreted by the thirteen exegetical principles comes from Sinai?

He also states that Antiochus Epphanes was not "just the leader of the Syrio-Greeks." True—but again, space did not permit a biographical account of his deeds—or, rather, misdeeds!

On page 37, I mention that *Ezra HaSofeir* instituted the practice of reading portions of Torah on Mondays and Thursdays, which statement the reviewer calls untrue. In *Baba Kama* 82, we are told that this is one of the ten *takanos* instituted by Ezra. The Gemara expounds on this, however, and explains that while Moshe Rabbeinu established this rule, Ezra specified that three people had to be called up for the reading of a minimum of ten sentences (summarized by Rambam in *Hilchos Tefillah* XII,1.) Again, I must take refuge in space-limitation.

The reviewer is profuse in his praise,

The Jewish Observer / October, 1967

for which I am truly thankful. But in all conscience, he takes issue with my inclusion of excerpts from the *Biur* of Moses Mendelssohn among Torah commentaries, and of his being listed, along with Wesseley, Plessner, and S. D. Luzzatto among "Some Prominent Jewish Scholars."

Should they be omitted because mistaken followers misinterpreted their observations, or misused them for their own nefarious purposes? By the same token, should I have omitted Rambam because certain readers "found" the *Moreh Nevuchim* an "apology" for Aristotelianism and other Greek philosophy? Or because it became the "standby" of such individuals as Spinoza and Solomon "Maimon"?

I must admit in all fairness that errors of omission excluded many from my abbreviated outline of Prominent Jewish Scholars. Not only *Baal Hatanyoh* and Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, as the reviewer points out, but also hundreds, nay, thousands, of others! My list was necessarily brief, and I tried to mention scholars from various lands, to show the dissemination of Torah throughout the world. Had I endeavored to include all of them—an impossible task!—a separate volume would have been required.

DAVID M. HAUSDORF
New York, New York

OUR BOOK REVIEWER REPLIES:
Apparently I did not make my remarks clear enough. I am very much aware of the extreme limitations of space inherent in such an anthology. But it would not have taken more space to call Antiochus the "king" of the Syrians than to call him their "leader." Where, however, space would not permit adequate treatment of a subject it seems to me

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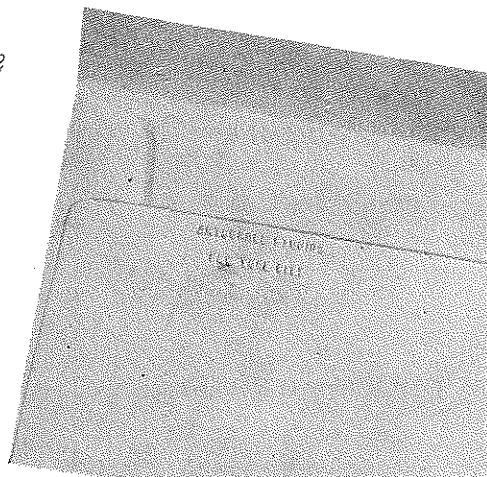
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that it should not have been included; this applies to the crucial controversy between Rambam and Ramban and, even more so, to the question of Torah readings. I completely fail to understand Mr. Hausdorff's remarks on this point; if the Gemorah explains that Ezra only elaborated on a *Taknoh* of Mosheh Rabenu, then this is the one and only correct understanding of the passage in *Baba Kamah*, and to ascribe the institution of this practice to Ezra is wrong—particularly since this inadvertently, gives support to those who like to present Ezra as the great initiator and reformer, at the expense of the Sinaitic tradition.

Above all, however, I am baffled by Mr. Hausdorff's defense of Mendelssohn. His view that Mendelssohn should be included among the few "Prominent Jewish Scholars" for whom such an anthology has space, and that it was only mistaken followers who misinterpreted his views for certain nefarious purposes, runs contrary to the views of all Torah authorities. The *Chasam Sofer* forbade the reading of Mendelssohn's works because—whatever the author's good intentions—they were utterly in contradiction to authentic Torah thought—and even those historians not partial to traditional Judaism agree that Mendelssohn's approach was revolutionary. He was never accepted as an exponent of Torah, and should not be so presented.

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