

THE JEWISH  
OBSERVER

CHESHVAN 5728 / NOVEMBER 1967  
VOLUME 4, NUMBER 8  
FIFTY CENTS

Believing — In an Unbelieving World

*Don Yochanan' and Reb Leib' meet:*  
The Challenge of Jewish Survival

Past and Present in the  
Teaching of Jewish History

*Again the Rabbi:*  
The Ultimate Illusion  
Who Is a Rabbi?  
It Is Too Soon...

*Second Looks:*  
"Editorial Tyranny" of *The Times*  
*Dialoguers Talk Out of School*

***A Letter to Gateshead***

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

THE JEWISH OBSERVER is published monthly, except July and August, by the Agudath Israel of America, 5 Beekman Street, New York, N. Y. 10038. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y. Subscription: \$5.00 per year; Canada and overseas: \$6.00; single copy: 50¢. Printed in the U.S.A.

## Editorial Board

DR. ERNST L. BODENHEIMER  
*Chairman*

RABBI NATHAN BULMAN

RABBI JOSEPH ELIAS

JOSEPH FRIEDENSON

RABBI MOSHE SHERER

Advertising Manager

RABBI SYSHE HESCHEL

Managing Editor

RABBI YAAKOV JACOBS

THE JEWISH OBSERVER does not assume responsibility for the Kashrus of any product or service advertised in its pages.

NOV. 1967 VOL. IV, No. 8



## In this issue...

- WE EXAMINE the traditional Jewish approach to belief in G-d, from the perspective of disbelief which prevails in our society.  
BELIEVING—IN AN UNBELIEVING WORLD, *Yaakov Jacobs* 3
- AN ATLANTA RABBI, who spent a year in Israel and was there during the fighting, shares with us his personal reflections.  
IT IS TOO SOON, *Emanuel Feldman* ..... 6
- COMBINING TORAH principles with historical insights, a historian reaches into the past to plot a path for Jewry's future.  
THE CHALLENGE OF JEWISH SURVIVAL,  
*Raphael S. Weinberg* ..... 8
- THE Inter-relationships of the Rabbi and the Ben Torah continue to interest our contributors (see: Letters to the Editor).  
A RABBI and educator proposes the revival of the office of *dayan*, as a solution to the threat of mediocrity.  
THE ULTIMATE ILLUSION, *Meir Belsky* ..... 12
- DOES THE pulpit make the Rabbi, and the shiur the Rosh Yeshiva?—these questions shed light on the problem.  
WHO IS A RABBI?, *Yacov Lipschutz* ..... 14
- A LETTER OF application to a girl's seminary in England, turns out to be a revealing documentation of contemporary history.  
A LETTER TO GATESHEAD, *Anonymous* ..... 16
- WRITING HISTORY is a challenge—writing Jewish history for the Orthodox reader is a greater challenge. A review article evaluates the success of such an attempt in a 4-volume text.  
PAST AND PRESENT IN TEACHING JEWISH HISTORY,  
*Joseph Elias* ..... 18
- SECOND LOOKS AT THE JEWISH SCENE:  
"EDITORIAL TYRANNY" OF THE TIMES ..... 24  
DIALOGUERS TALK OUT OF SCHOOL ..... 25  
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ..... 28

Yaakov Jacobs

# Believing — in an Unbelieving World

How do we confront the new challenges to our belief?  
What is the traditional response to failure to believe?  
The Rambam writes that it is a mitzva to believe —  
But what of those who insist that they cannot?

Believing in G-d has always been a uniquely Jewish experience. The first Jew lived in a world in which men worshipped idols. While it is popularly believed that the Western world has accepted the monotheism of the Jew—the belief in one G-d—philosophy and theology texts still list a large variety of beliefs in a variety of deities, most of which fall short of being the G-d of Israel.

The Jew's belief in G-d, and in G-d's Torah, has always been challenged, even in the glorious days when we dwelt in our Land and were governed by kings and priests who were servants of G-d. Whatever degree of insulation separated us from alien beliefs, these beliefs somehow managed to find adherents among our own people.

In our age, the amazing growth of knowledge of the physical world has, in the minds of many, removed the element of mystery which in the past had inclined man to seek spiritual or religious explanations for natural phenomenon. The crash of thunder and the flash of lightning apparently no longer strike fear in man's heart—he knows that lightning is “a sudden flash of light caused by the discharge of atmospheric electricity between electrified regions of cloud,” and that thunder is “the sound that accompanies lightning, caused by sudden heating and expansion of the air along the path of the electrical discharge”<sup>\*</sup>—and he isn't frightened. Yet the believing Jew stubbornly insists on saying a *brocha* when he hears thunder and sees lightning, attributing these phenomena to the Master of the Universe. The expansion of man's knowledge of human behavior, has led some to believe that even man himself is no longer a mystery—his actions in any given circumstance can be explained by psychological rules,

and perhaps, as some would have it—by his specific body chemistry.

Those who had postulated G-d in order to fill the gaps in man's ignorance of himself and the world in which he lives, have filled these gaps with scientific knowledge, some of which has already been attained, and the rest of which they believe must ultimately yield itself to further research. The Jew, on the other hand, who was commanded from the beginning to “rule over the earth and master it,” suffers no disillusion when man achieves greater mastery of the world in which he lives. He has always experienced his G-d through the fulfillment of mitzvohs. He felt no great need to confront idolatry and disbelief on a philosophical level. He recognized disbelief as man's attempt to relieve himself of the burden of responsibility which belief in G-d would impose upon him. The Sages embodied this principle in the axiomatic declaration:

*Jews who succumbed to the practice of idolatry, did so in order to justify their unethical and immoral behavior.*

It is undisputable, tragically so, that in our time Jews in huge numbers have defected from the traditional belief in G-d and His Torah. Nowhere is this more evident than among our youth, particularly on the college campuses where they are exposed to the highly sophisticated disbelief which the academician proudly proclaims.

Many Jews, loyal to Torah, faithful to their G-d, and firm in their belief, have become convinced that we can only meet this challenge on the level at which it is thrust upon us. They maintain that we dare not dismiss disbelief, no matter how obnoxious we find it; that we must arm ourselves with a firm knowledge of the scholarship which leads to this belief, and demonstrate to the young Jewish minds, the fallacies of

<sup>\*</sup> *Standard College Dictionary*, FUNK & WAGNALLS, New York, 1966.

this disbelief. In their opinion, this is the only way in which we can hope to reclaim our youth—a youth that has already showed signs of searching for values, of yearning for belief, but unable to find it in the formality of religion, even among non-Orthodoxy which has made so many concessions to win back the alienated Jew. Is this really so? To answer this question we should take a closer look at the substance, the dynamics of traditional Jewish belief in G-d, and—from a more pragmatic position—examine what our contemporary experience has been in winning back those alienated young Jews who *have* found their way back to Torah. THERE IS A FASCINATING, and puzzling dispute among traditional Torah scholars who engaged in constructing listings of the mitzvohs of the Torah (*minyān ha'mitzvohs*). The Rambam declares that the very first mitzva of the Torah commands the Jew to believe in G-d. Others raise what appears to be a most damaging objection to the Rambam's listing of belief in G-d as a specific mitzva. The concept of mitzva, they rightly declare, implies a *me'tzaveh*: one who commands. If one has already accepted belief in this *me'tzaveh*, he need not be commanded to believe. If he has not—what good does it do to *command* him to believe? On this basis, they reject the Rambam's listing of belief in G-d as a mitzva.

R' Elchanan Wasserman, in his classic *Ma'amar al Emunah*\* raises still more questions which arise from the Rambam's listing of belief in G-d as a mitzva. Belief is apparently something which comes to a person . . . or eludes him; how then can we command a person to believe, if he cannot, and then castigate him for his failure to believe?

A further question: If belief is to be understood as a mitzva, then like all other mitzvos, it becomes binding on a Jewish child when he reaches his majority at the age of thirteen, which presents still another difficulty. The Rambam himself writes that the Greek philosopher Aristotle, by virtue of his own wisdom, achieved such heights of understanding, that it was only his lack of *ruach hakodesh*, of actual divine inspiration, that kept him from achieving the ultimate of wisdom. Yet, the Rambam himself maintains that Aristotle stumbled and did not achieve true belief, in spite of his vast wisdom. And when a Jewish boy reaches his thirteenth year, he is asked—he is commanded—to believe in G-d with a certainty and a depth that Aristotle failed to achieve, at a stage in the boy's life when he is normally only beginning to approach wisdom and understanding.

Further, a ben Noach (a non-Jew) is commanded to believe that G-d created the world and to live his life in accordance with this belief. Imagine, says R' Elchanan, a non-Jew who lives his life as a peasant, unexposed to Torah, or to any sort of philosophical

encounter, appearing at the end of his life before the Heavenly Court, and being asked, "Why did you not believe with perfect faith?" The man will shrug his shoulders and ask, "How was I expected to achieve this belief you demand of me?"—apparently a most legitimate defense.

### *The Substance of Belief*

To many, the Rambam appears to have been the rationalist par excellence: the brilliant Torah scholar who confronted the philosophers with a dazzling defense of Torah by meeting them on their own ground. Yet, in his insistence that the Jew—in the first mitzva of the Torah—is *commanded* to believe, he reveals to us the true substance of belief.

Belief is not a function of the intellect; if it were it would not have eluded Aristotle, and other men blessed with phenomenal intellectual capacities. Belief is the natural state of Man—it is to be expected that Man created by G-d will recognize his Maker. Such belief is demanded of the youngster on his thirteenth birthday; it is demanded of the illiterate peasant; it is demanded of every man created by G-d. The intellect can enhance that belief; it can broaden its scope; it can elevate it to higher and higher spheres—but *it can also destroy it*. The *Chovos Halevovos* puts it this way:

*There are people who maintain that the world came into being by accident, and I find it difficult to understand how such a thought can arise in a man's mind. If someone came upon a ditch filled with water, with a channel leading into a field to irrigate it, and he were to deny the obvious effort of some agent, he would be looked upon as being deranged. . . . Were someone to present us with a piece of paper with writing on its surface, and maintain that it resulted simply from ink poured on the paper, he would be the subject of ridicule. How then can anyone maintain that the world came into being without a Maker, when every step we take reveals to us infinite wisdom . . . The Medrash embodies this axiom in the following: A min (non-believer) came to R' Akiva and asked, "Who created the world?" "The Ribono Shel Olom," R' Akiva answered. "Prove it," the min demanded. "Who wove your coat?" R' Akiva asked. "A weaver," the min replied. "Prove it," R' Akiva demanded. He turned to his students and said, "Just as the coat testifies to the weaver; the door testifies to the carpenter; and the house testifies to the builder, so too does the world testify that Hakodosh Baruch Hu has created it.*

IF BELIEF IS SO SIMPLE a matter; if it is in a sense a mechanism built into every human being, why is it often so elusive? What makes it possible for a human

\* Much of what follows is loosely adapted from this essay.

being to say "I don't believe," or, as many young Jews say today, "I would like to believe; I just can't?"

The Torah tells us: "You must not take a bribe, because a bribe makes blind the eyes of the wise." The halachic measure of a bribe is the value of a single pruta or more, and the injunction against taking a bribe applies to *all* men—the most wise and the most righteous. Is it conceivable, for example, that a man like Moshe Rabbenu, were he to accept a pruta offered as a bribe, would no longer be able to be an objective judge—that the pruta should actually blind him to the truth? Yet the Torah assures us that this is the case, and thereby lays down not only an injunction against the acceptance of any sort of bribe, but also an axiom of human behavior: that man's desire influences his intellect, and in proportion to the intensity of his desire, his mind will be distorted to believe what he would not believe in the absence of that desire. The Sages saw this axiom not only as an abstract principle, they applied it as a basis of law. If a litigant leaned over and removed a piece of lint from the judge's coat, the judge disqualified himself: even so minor a gesture was deemed to seriously affect the judge's objectivity.

In this light, it is understandable that men of great intellect, men of profound depth and understanding, could so be swayed by their desires, that they could no longer see the simplest truth. Only that person can discover a simple truth, whose desires are not a major component of his search for that truth. Only that man, regardless of his intellectual capacity, who is prepared to see things as they are in their utter simplicity, who is ready to mould his desires on the basis of simple truth, can achieve belief in G-d. Whoever takes with him in his search for G-d, an overlay of pre-conceived notions of what he wants out of life, will to that extent be blinded to even the simplest of all truths.

When the Torah commands the Jew to believe in G-d, of course it is assumed that he already accepts the Being and the authority of the *metzaveh*, but the Torah makes clear to us that belief in G-d, while it is a simple truth, is not a static condition which man achieves and then maintains throughout his lifetime. The Creator of man tells us that our belief is subject to strains and pressures; with the blink of an eye, it can wither and die, and it is part of the life's work of the Jew to nurture that belief always, and to maintain an awareness of G-d of such intensity, that the untold number of factors which can divert the Jew from belief, will find him always prepared to resist them, so that his belief will remain firm and complete.

And if a Jew at any time finds himself doubting G-d, he is held accountable for the failure of his belief, because he allowed his belief to wither; he permitted his desires and inclinations—perhaps over a long period of time, perhaps in the subtlest of ways—to overcome

his inherent intelligence, to chew away at his belief. And when he declares: "I do not believe," or "I cannot believe," it is not an intellectual decision but rather a subversion of man's basic intelligence, a willingness to be distracted by temporal desires, from man's deepest and most real desire: to be close to his Maker and to serve Him. Herein lies the approach to a Torah confrontation of disbelief.

Many will argue that all this is simply too naive to appeal to the young Jewish intellectual of today; perhaps to some it will smack of anti-intellectualism—of a turning away from confrontation with what really disturbs the alienated Jew—a refusal to recognize the problems raised by the bible-critic, the philosopher, the scientist, the academics who mold young people's mind today. Let us look at what has been the actual experience in America today.

### *They Succumbed to Love*

THE PHENOMENAL growth of yeshivos and Torah learning in America is still a movement of the few; its intensity has yet to trickle down to the masses of Jews who continue to defect in large numbers from traditional belief and practice. Yet in every yeshiva today there are young men—and young women in the girl's schools—who might have gone along with the indifference of their parents, but for one factor: the interest and the influence of an individual rabbi, yeshiva student, or lay person, who managed to convince them of the eternal truth of Torah. Many are there because of the efforts of organized youth groups sponsored by Orthodoxy. But all have this in common, that they succumbed to the warmth and love extended to them by a fellow Jew who was willing to make the effort to salvage a Jewish soul. If there are among this group, any young Jews who were nurtured by a diet of counter-bible-criticism, or esoteric philosophic dissertation, we have not heard of any, and they are likely small in number. Of course, there will always be Orthodox scholars who will devote themselves to this area of Torah apologetics, and their work is valuable—but it is the purity of belief in the Almighty and His Torah which remains our most effective approach to salvaging souls.

What of those of us who are convinced, believing, Orthodox Jews—can we afford to assume that our believe in G-d, firm as it may be, is forever secure? The Torah itself, as the Rambam indicates, provides the mechanics for nurturing and maintaining our belief, and we will return to this area in a subsequent article.

In an era where Orthodox disunity continues to plague us, it is heartening to note that we are all united, not only in our belief in G-d and His Torah, but in our desire and willingness to share this belief with all Jews who are willing to listen to us. □

---

*Emanuel Feldman*

# It Is Too Soon...

## *Some personal reflections on the Six Day War*

*Were you really in Israel for a whole year?*

*Yes.*

*Were you there during the war too?*

*Yes.*

*Really! That must have been a real experience.*

*Yes.*

*What was it like?*

*(Silence.)*

*Really, I mean . . . what was it really like to be there and to see it all. It must have been great.*

*Yes.*

*You must come over and tell us all about it one night.*

*Yes.*

BUT IT IS TOO SOON. Too soon to tell of what happened, to interpret, to give whys and wherefores, to pose as an expert, to write knowing articles and give inspirational speeches.

IT IS TOO SOON to accept speaking engagements, to

---

RABBI FELDMAN is the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Jacob in Atlanta, Georgia. He recently returned from a year's sabbatical in Israel where he taught at Bar Ilan University. He is book editor of TRADITION.

participate in panels, to discuss, to analyze, to evaluate, to speak glibly of miracles and let the name of G-d slide easily off the tongue.

It will be too soon ten years hence, and a hundred. Maybe in a thousand years we will begin to perceive why this generation alone among fifty previous generations in the past two thousand years was found worthy to witness the fulfillment of G-d's glory and to see with its own eyes the *Shechinah* descending upon the Kosel Hamaaravi.

BUT THE WORLD IS HUNGRY and wants to know how and why, and wants to know quickly, and wants to know now. But it is too soon. I do not know how and why. No one knows how and why. I must wait. I must think. It must settle within me. The mind does not yet perceive what the eyes have seen; the heart does not yet realize what the hands have touched, or where the feet have trod.

OF COURSE IT WOULD BE EASY. You are, after all, something of a hero. You were there, and they were here. Americans love heroes, they create them every day, so why not you? You were there. No matter if you could do little to help the war effort—you were there and they were not. You lived through the crisis and they did not. So why not?—be a hero, and give a suitably modest and self-effacing account of your exploits.

---

Tell them about the tensions and the fears; describe the knots of people whispering at shul, at the kiosks, in the classrooms, and around the little radios. Tell them about the sand-bagging, the preparing of the shelters. Tell them the color of the sky the morning the war came, and about how you felt when you heard the first air-raid siren go off. Tell them about the shelling and bombing, and the orange brightness that suddenly flashed into the night. Tell them about the children in the air-raid shelter; how you wondered if there was an alternate way out should a bomb block the entrance. You were there, you saw it all. Why not tell them?

TELL THEM ABOUT the mobilization, about the Tehillim, about the Shabbos when the call-up took place. About Birchas Kohanim in the middle of an air-raid alarm on the morning of June 6; how no one flinched; how the all-clear sounded just as the Kohanim chanted a piercing *Shaaalom!* Tell about your first visit to the Kosel Hamaaravi on the fourth day of the war; about the Mount of Olives, Bethlehem, Hebron, Jericho.

BETTER YET: describe how it felt to go through the Mandelbaum Gate for the first time; how it was to look back into Israel through the Mandelbaum Gate from the Jordanian side. You might describe the gently rolling hills to the east of Jerusalem, turning into desert as you go down to the Jordan River and Jericho. Jericho itself would be worthwhile. Jericho, Joshua, the Jordan. It could be very interesting.

OR MAYBE about the people: the look in the eyes of the Arab shopkeepers in Old Jerusalem, as compared to those in Hebron. Didn't you find the Hebronites more hostile? Didn't you see more hate in their eyes? Hebron, after all, was the home of so many of the El-Fatah raiders who wrought so much havoc over the

years. It would make a nice talk, a provocative article, certainly a good conversation piece.

PERHAPS THE GEOGRAPHY. Compare the terrain of New Jerusalem with the Old City. Didn't you find the Old City more typically biblical than the New City? (You might even explain what a "biblical" look is.) And the hills themselves: isn't it true that the hills of the Old City are softer, a bit more graceful than the new?

AND MIRACLES: why not tell them something about the miracles. You were there, after all. You heard the stories, you know they occurred. Tell them the miracles. It would make fascinating listening, wonderful reading. They will love you for it.

BUT IT IS TOO SOON. Too soon to tell of what happened, to interpret, to give whys and wherefores, to pose as an expert, to write knowing articles and give inspirational speeches. Too soon to accept speaking engagements, to participate in panels, to discuss, to analyze, to evaluate, to speak glibly of miracles and let the name of G-d slide easily off the tongue.

*Were you really in Israel for a whole year?*

*Yes.*

*Were you there during the war too?*

*Yes.*

*Really! That must have been a real experience.*

*Yes.*

*What was it like?*

*(Silence.)*

*Really, I mean . . . what was it really like to be there and to see it all. It must have been great.*

*Yes.*

*You must come over and tell us all about it one night.*

*Yes.*

# The Challenge of Jewish Survival

It is most unfashionable today — even in Orthodox circles, to propose that the Jew should isolate himself from non-Jewish society in order to survive. A historian here examines the response to the challenge to survival, as typified in the lives of 'Don Yochanan' — a Spanish Jew living in the Golden Age, and 'Reb Leib' — an East European Jew. He suggests a parallel to the condition of American Orthodoxy today.

"History" people say, "repeats itself"; but while this folk-saying is the postulate of some historians, it is also the target of others, and it is the variable element in the theories of still others. That history repeats itself is a basic Jewish concept, sanctified by the Sages in the words: *מעשה אבות סימן לבנים*. *The deeds of the fathers [the Patriarchs] are signs for the children.* A classic illustration of this concept appears in the Torah in the twelfth chapter of Genesis. A close examination of this section offers us insight into the principle of historical repetition and will also lead to greater clarity in understanding the situation of the Jew today.

*Avram is called to leave his birthplace and go to the land of Canaan . . . Just as he is settling down, a famine in the Promised Land forces him to journey to Egypt with his wife Sarai . . . Sarai, a beautiful woman, is taken by Pharaoh . . . G-d afflicts Pharaoh . . . Sarai is returned to her husband, and they return together to Canaan.*

Why does the Torah record this lengthy episode, which appears to be unrelated to any previous or succeeding narrative? The reason becomes evident by a comparison of Avram's relationship with the Egyptian monarch, with that of his descendants when they became the subjects of a latter-day Pharaoh.

Avram went down to Egypt because of a 'great famine' — *the Tribes went down for the same reason.* Sarai was subject to a Pharaoh's whims—*so too were the Tribes of Israel centuries later.* Avram feared he might be murdered while his wife would live—*Pharaoh decreed death to the male Jewish children, while the female children were spared.* Avram's adversary was afflicted by G-d—*Israel's adversaries were the victims of His plagues.* Avram left Egypt with riches—the Israelites 'despoiled Egypt'. Pharaoh was anxious for Avram to leave in a hurry—*the Israelites dough had*

*no time to sour.* Avram's destination when he left Egypt was "the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent formerly stood"—*when the Jews entered Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, their immediate objective was that very same area.* Avram who entered from the south, and Joshua who arrived from the east, were both directed to the Bethel-Ai area.

These parallels—there are more—can hardly be ascribed to chance, and the theory here proposed is that the Author of history was here introducing the Jew to the axiom of history repeating itself—at the very moment when a father had been designated for the Chosen People. The Jew was told: When similar causes give rise to similar actions or reactions, the results will be predictably the same.

THROUGH THE AGES, the Jew in the Diaspora has faced the cardinal challenge of Jewish survival: maintaining Jewish identity in a non-Jewish environ. There have been two basic responses to this challenge—at opposite poles—the 'isolationist' and the 'assimilationist',\* with various degrees in between. In our time, the problem has been posed within the 'isolationist' camp: How do we deal with the assimilationist—do we isolate ourselves from him as from the non-Jew; or do we assimilate with the assimilationist? We will return to this modern dilemma after a look at some other periods in Jewish history.

In the 'old days' such matters were less complex. The two approaches to Jewish survival are conveniently exemplified by two communities: the Jews living in

\*Assimilationist' is here used to describe the Jew who believes he can assimilate some aspects of the culture of the society in which he lives without losing his identity—not in the usual sense of one who deliberately seeks to shake off his Jewishness.—Ed.



Spain during the 'Golden Age,' and the East European Jew. The Eastern Jew did not feel himself to be a guest in someone else's house, ever sensitive to the ways and mores of his host. He closed himself up in his shtetl. The Spanish Jew, by contrast, was a Spaniard. He affected his country and was affected by his adopted country.

### *A Test of the Theory*

There were many reasons why 'Reb Leib' of Poland chose the isolationist course, while 'Don Yochanan' decided to avail himself of Spanish mores, the prime reason probably being that Spain had so much more to offer than Poland. The city of Cordova in the eleventh century, for example, boasted one hundred and thirteen thousand homes, twenty-one suburbs, seventy libraries and numerous bookshops, mosques and palaces. There were miles of paved streets illuminated by lights, whereas seven hundred years later there was not yet a single street lamp in London, and after a rainy day in Paris, a Frenchman stepped from his house into ankle-deep mud. The Jew was impressed—so impressed that soon he blended into Spanish society much as most Jews in America cast themselves into the melting pot. The similarities between the Spanish Jew and the American Jew are *so striking*, that we probably have in these two groups a valid and worthwhile test of the theory of historical repetition.

TO RESTATE THE PROBLEM: In many places Judaism seemed to be losing ground; the social, moral, economic, religious, philosophical attitudes of the host society were of goliath-magnitude and little wide-eyed David was being chewed up and spat out.

How did 'Don Yochanan' cope with this situation? Certain characteristics of Spanish Jewry emerge to answer us. ● Spain was noted for its Jewish statesmen. Hasdai ibn Shaprut was, for all practical purposes, the chief diplomatic adviser of two caliphs. Samuel ha-Nagid was viceroy of the king; his son Joseph became his successor. The Moslem rulers, who overnight became world statesmen due to the lightning-swift capture of Spain, needed intelligent council, and the Jew served their purpose well, leading to their acquisition of political power. ● The calif Al-Hakam II (961-76) patronized learning. He granted bounties to scholars and established twenty-seven free schools in the capital. Hasdai, probably in like manner, surrounded himself with scholars and he and his father were the first famous Jewish 'Patrons.' ● The Spanish Jews borrowed the Moslem zeal for Grammar (and the Moslem grammatical system as well). Menahem ben Saruk, Dunash

ben Labrat, Judah Hayyij, all famous grammarians, were all Spanish. ● Hebrew poetry and poets flourished in Spain: Judah haLevi, Solomon ibn Gabirol, Moses ibn Ezra, Abraham ibn Ezra. ● The Spanish Jew excelled in philosophy: Judah haLevi, Bahya ibn Pakuda, Maimonides, Hasdai Crescas, Yosef Albo, and others. ● Ibn Shaprut, Judah haLevi, and Maimonides were also physicians. ● Spanish Jews adopted the language and dress of the Moslem. ● Many major works were originally written in Arabic and later translated into Hebrew by a new type of scholar, the professional translator (such as the famous Ibn Tibon). ● Spanish Jews became business tycoons and consorted with royalty.

The following excerpt from the pen of Ibn Daud,\* a Jewish historian of Spanish descent, gives us a picture of the Jewish businessman, and some insight into his tribulations in climbing the ladder of success:

There were two brothers, merchants and manufacturers of silk, Jacob ibn Jau and his brother Joseph. They once happened to enter the courtyard of one of the king's eunuchs . . . at a time when the Muslim elders of the territory under his charge had come to register a complaint against the officer he had appointed over them. They had also brought him a gift of two thousand Ja'afaria gold pieces. No sooner did they begin to speak than the minister issued an order to humiliate them, beat them with clubs, and have them hustled off to prison. Now in the entrance to the palace there were a number of tortuous recesses into one of which the two thousand gold pieces fell. Although they protested vigorously, no one paid them any attention. However immediately afterwards, Jacob ibn Jau and his brother Joseph entered the palace, found the gold pieces and went off. Once they had arrived home, they took counsel on the matter, saying: 'Since we have discovered this money in the royal palace, let us make a solemn agreement to return it there, coupled with gifts and offerings. Perhaps we shall be able in that way to rid ourselves of the abuse of our enemies and gain the support of the king.' So they did just that, and they became successful in the silk business, making clothing of high quality and pennants that are placed at the tops of standards—of such high quality as was not duplicated in all of Spain.

This episode has all the flavor of a typical 'Arabian Nights' tale—with Jews as the characters. In another passage Ibn Daud testifies to the foreign pomp that had seeped into the Beis Medrash when he writes: "Every day there used to go out of Cordova to the city of al-Zahra [the royal city] seven hundred Jews in seven hundred carriages, each of them attired in royal garb and wearing the head-dress of Muslim officials, all of them escorting the Rabbi."

This was what is popularly known as the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry. But what of talmudic scholarship? Without any question it suffered from the encroachments of all the other scholarly and gentlemanly pursuits that were dear to the heart of 'Don Yochanan.'

RABBI RAPHAEL S. WEINBERG is Assistant Professor of History at the Stern College for Women of Yeshiva University.

\**Proceedings of American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. XXIX, 1960-61.

Even apart from Alfasi, who only came to Spain in his later years, and Maimonides, whose major works were written after he left Spain, there were great talmudic authorities, but Spanish Jewry clearly lacked the single-minded concentration on Talmud and its popular mastery, that characterized other historical Jewish centers.

These characteristics of Spanish Jewry may be simply explained. The Spanish Jew was very much involved in Spanish affairs; but he also possessed a Jewish heritage that stressed Jewish scholarship—Torah scholarship. Now to become a great talmudist demands complete devotion to Torah with little time for the niceties of life, for the frivolities and intrigues of court life. The Spanish Jew therefore chose a middle road—continuing his normal routine of life while becoming erudite in some less-taxing field of scholarship. The greats of philosophy, grammar, poetry, and even medicine, reflect a general trend toward those fields, and our mythical 'Don Yochanan,' by following this trend, had time for business and for court intrigues and could still be considered a true student of some phase of Judaism, and therefore a man of Jewish letters.

### *Potent Judaism*

The Spanish Jew assimilated himself into the Spanish milieu but still managed to keep his identity. This is how he solved the problem. But did he? There is one characteristic of his situation yet to be considered. The Spanish Jew, both during the Moslem period and the later Christian monarchy, reacted to the horror of pogrom and forced conversion by becoming a marrano, but the Jew of 12th and 13th Century Germany and France preferred death for "the Sanctification of the Name." *His Judaism was obviously more potent.*

The Spanish pattern parallels to a great extent the period of the Enlightenment in Western Europe. No one can doubt the sincerity of Moses Mendelssohn. He analyzed the situation of the Jew in his day and concluded that self-exclusion did not offer the Jew a decent life. He was convinced that the Jew had to be led from the 'ghetto' of his mind into the world of general culture, and he assumed that this 'enlightenment' would in no way damage the specifically Jewish culture. The rest of the story is simple text-book prose. The Jews became interested in politics, in study of language, in philosophy, in poetry, in "A Society for the Culture and Knowledge of Judaism," in "*Wissenschaft des Judentums*," and of course Torah was buried under this cultural heap. But that was not all. Mendelssohn preached the acceptance of the general culture, eventually leading to the complete abandonment of Jewish culture. Conversion to Christianity ultimately plagued his own house. Jews in Spain and Western Europe shared similar problems; they attempted similar solutions; and in the end, the results were similar.

DOES THE SIMILARITY extend any further? Possibly across the Atlantic, past the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. The Jew coming to America found an acceptable, warm culture. He adopted that culture. He strove for and attained the highest positions in government. He climbed to the ivory tower of knowledge and reached the pinnacle. He became the literary genius, the scientist, the humanist, the philosopher. He harvested fortunes and he sowed philanthropic seeds. Every field of human endeavor profited from his touch. But what of his Judaism? What of Torah? What of the future? Will Schwartz become Blake? Will Epstein yield Ipston—Smolinsky evolve into Smith? History indicates that the assimilationist approach was not able to stay within the bounds prescribed by its founders and ideologists. *And only the isolationist, with all of his limitations, survived.*

The isolationist, who we must in retrospect label as 'Orthodox,' was always faced with another problem: He knew his cause to be true, but he was fully aware that it would not be popular. He knew that the assimilationist philosophy—at best—would leave a Jewish people without Judaism. But many Orthodox intellectuals also realized that strict isolationism, unpalatable to the masses, might lead to Judaism without many Jews. And so the isolationist camp splintered into at least three factions: 1) those who chose to remain isolated from the non-Jew and from any Jew who was not of their mold; 2) those who remained isolated from the non-Jew; in no way altered their values, but worked to "bring back" the assimilated Jew; 3) those who remained partially isolated from the non-Jew but freely assimilated with the assimilated Jew. Just as the 'assimilationist' approach is more popular than the isolationist, so too the third faction of the isolationist camp is the most popular. There is an ecumenical grumbling that has become quite vocal from within the Orthodox group (for our purpose we consider Orthodox anyone who says that he is) accusing the 'old guard' of clannishness, separatism, lack of regard for the concept of Klal Yisroel, and other platitudes. In short, many Orthodox thinkers today perceive the same decay seen by Mendelssohn in his day. Mendelssohn was sincere and they are sincere. Mendelssohn was Orthodox and they are Orthodox. Mendelssohn evolved a partial, well-defined 'assimilation' and they envision the same. But it takes a truly great man to tread the path of the golden mean. And even if Mendelssohn himself walked straight, he failed to realize that his clear path would be strewn with stumbling-blocks for others. Aside from this, the assumptions and preoccupations of these Orthodox leaders may not be entirely valid; they are preoccupied with numbers and with power; they are preoccupied with the concept of Klal Yisroel. They are preoccupied with formulating new philosophies and rationales. They are convinced that the talmudic giants of the 'Right,' are not aware of, and cannot fully un-

---

*“He wanted to bring the Jew up to Sinai —*

*he never sought to lower Sinai*

*to bring it in reach of the Jew.”*

---

derstand the problems the Jew faces in modern society. These beliefs are open to serious question. Judaism always considered itself a religion of a unique people living among other peoples. We were chosen to live a special kind of life in a world where a Noachite (בן נח) could be a righteous person without the obligation of the Jews. We were not meant to Judaize the rest of the world. We were always a minority. And there were times when even within the ranks, the Jew who chose complete allegiance to G-d, found himself in the minority. When we survey the panorama of Jewish history from the beginning till the present, we do not find a consistent pattern of extreme piety. The Prophets wrestled with the masses; Matisyahu battled

the Hellenists; Pharisees were oppressed by the Sadducees—and both by the early Christians—many of whom were—let us remember—Jews. The Geonim were rebuked by the Karaites; the Rabbis were mocked by the Maskilim—and so it goes.

Many who wish to demonstrate love and concern for Klal Yisroel, invariably invoke the name of that great tzadik, Rav Kook, זכרונו לברכה. But have you ever seen a picture of Rav Kook without a shtreimel? He loved Jews, all Jews—even religious Jews. His heart went out to the alienated masses, but not at the price of sacrificing personal convictions. He wanted to bring the Jew up to Sinai; he never sought to lower Sinai to bring it in reach of the Jew. His true followers are those who manifest love and devotion for all Jews without compromising Torah—they are truly concerned with Klal Yisroel.

And of course, as to the ‘innocence’ and ‘naivete’ of the Torah giants—that is debatable on many grounds. Most every great Rosh Yeshiva today is in constant touch with his musmachim in the field; they turn to him with the problems that daily plague the American rabbi. It may very well be that they have a more fundamental grasp of the practical aspects of American Jewish communal life, than their acculturated critics whose experience is often limited to a single community. Add to that their daily involvement in meeting their yeshiva’s budget; their close relationships with lay communal leaders—and the myth of their cloistered naivete goes up in smoke. It is, to say the least, unfair to attribute their opposition to certain trends in Orthodoxy to a lack of comprehension, rather than to basic and principled disagreement.

AND SO THE DILEMMA: some ‘assimilation,’ some cultural interaction, is inevitable—it is even healthy, it is Jewish, and it is needed. But every step outward bound can lead to a reckless, harmful jump. How do we meet this dilemma?—the best intentions have boomeranged in the past. Great leaders have miscalculated.

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים.

*Hadn't we better take heed.*



*A shammos in Eastern Europe waking Jews for prayer.*

Meir Belsky

# The Ultimate Illusion

*"Bad money drives out good money" — bad religion...*

WE ARE INDEBTED to economics for the Law of Supply and Demand. Being less than an exact science—based as it is upon human nature and human reaction—this law has many interesting implications. It is probably responsible for the by-law of the Shalosh Seudos Committee: *In time of want, herring may be considered fish.* No demonstrable demand can remain frustrated for long and some supply—real or synthetic—will be found to fill this need.

We are equally indebted to economics for a corollary to this law: *Bad money drives out good money.* Thus, the synthetic supply will always be of greater—and easier—availability, and the purveyors of herring will always do well!

In human terms, we may state the law: *The mediocre is the mortal enemy of the best.*

Though economics may be satisfied to merely define the dynamics of supply and demand, it falls far short of providing any suitable answers in the human realm. The disastrous results wrought by the synthetic supply upon public taste and cultural standards has yet to be completely told. One blanches at the possible effect herring has had upon the sanctity of the Shabbos at the holiest moment—its departure. Can one maintain the spirit of a seudoh based upon such a diet? What has happened to the food *roui l'shulchan melochim.*

We are all contemporaries of, and witness to, the heroic and incredibly successful campaigns that created in this country a broad demand for Jewish awareness, Jewish identity and Jewish scholarship. The Day School Movement, the Yavneh campus movement, and the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs (COLPA) are some of the unrelated (in a sense) manifestations of this demand, and serve to indicate how broad and deep is this demand. The seemingly sudden eruption of Yeshiva High Schools across America is eloquent answer to those who questioned the authenticity of the Jewish demands that would flow from the Day School Movement. (It is not too long ago that Day Schools were charged with "training members for Conservative Judaism.") The demand is real, and surges with enormous vitality and dynamism. The crucial test, now, is whether this authentic demand will be met with an equally authentic supply.

It is saddening to note that there is nothing in Jewish

history—or economics—that should give us cause for optimism. Of what avail is it to win the battle for tefilin, if we fail to battle for the *quality* of the tefilin. It is to mock the nobility and authenticity of the demand for tzitzis, if what is finally worn fails to meet halachic requirements. Coming to Schul in search of Avodoh and finding a Friday Night Service has destroyed the concept of tefiloh in the minds of many newly 'aware' Jews. And it is the supreme irony of all if the demand for Torah learning will result in the monstrous fraud called Adult Education led by people who don't—and can't—know what Torah is: *Shelo koru, velo shonu, velo shimshu.\**

For many years there has been a growing concern that the talmidei chachomim coming out of the yeshivos were not going into the rabbinate. This concern reflected not only a fear for the future of the smaller Jewish communities whose future depended, literally, upon the calibre of its rabbinic leadership. Of equal concern, an unhappy cycle began to develop: Since talmidei chachomim were not going into the rabbinate, then apparently *none should* go into the rabbinate. It takes only a short step to then hold the rabbinate in contempt, thus assuring that, for the foreseeable future no one with ambitions for a life of Torah and Avodah will enter the rabbinate. Those few who do find their way into rabbonus are looked upon with suspicion, and sometimes feel the need to strike back.

Though quite obvious for many years, this trend is becoming increasingly ominous. Not only is the existence of the smaller Jewish communities threatened by this cycle, but the widening gulf between baalebatim and bnei Torah bodes ill for the future of Torah. Obviously, it is only through the resources of bnai Torah that the enormous Jewish demands can be met, and this can only come about if these two groups can communicate easily and intimately with one another. Contempt is hardly a promising media of communication.

ALL IS NOT BLACK, HOWEVER. One major link has been cracked, if not completely smashed. No longer does

---

\* Loosely translated as one who has not learned and is not part of the masoretic chain of Torah communication from rebbi to talmud.

---

*A story has it that one chairman of a pulpit committee, whose knowledge of English was limited, approached the placement director {of the Rabbinical Assembly} with the plea: "Please don't send us an Orthodox-type rabbi, and we don't want one too liberal. Just send us a mediocre rabbi."*

— Today's American Jew, McGraw-Hill, 1967

---

'going out-of-town'—the provincial New Yorker's euphemism for all of America west of the Hudson River and north of the Bronx—carry the traumatic connotations of the recent past. Many bnei Torah, with beards and peiyos, with gartel and kapoteh, have made their way successfully 'out-of-town.' They are the young roshei yeshiva who staff the many yeshiva high schools, and who have found the *orei hasodeh* not completely inhospitable. This has enormous implications. If a 9th grader from Shreveport, Louisiana, sitting behind a desk, no longer poses a threat to the ben Torah, then it is not too much to hope that his father will cease being a threat sitting on a synagogue board. One is no greater a wasteland than the other—and both can be effectively worked with. But obviously, the frame of reference must be changed.

LET US FACE SOME FACTS of Jewish communal life. The 'kashrus' of many synagogues and synagogue practices are open to question. Many demands made upon the rabbi are in poor taste, and some are downright vulgar. Much time is spent in the rabbinate on that which is irrelevant, un-Jewish, and down-right juvenile. Baalebatim are, almost inherently, living contradictions—and always unpredictable. They want the rabbi to be a Torah scholar—always assume that he is—and their respect for the rabbi flows from their instinctive reverence for Torah learning. But they will resent any time taken for learning, and will seek solutions for synagogue problems in gimmickery rather than Halacha.

Though it may seem from this recitation of conditions that bnei Torah are right in shunning the rabbinate, it is equally apparent that they are wrong to shun the synagogue. It is the synagogue that represents the community, and it is idle to seek broad communication with the Jewish community—and Jews—except through the synagogue.

---

RABBI MEIR BELSKY is Director of the Hebrew Academy of Memphis.

*The Jewish Observer* / November, 1967

To shun the rabbinate need only mean that bnei Torah refuse the challenges of the position. It dare not mean that bnei Torah reject masses of Jews. The mere statistics are enough to indicate who represents *rov minyan* and *rov binyan*, of K'lal Yisroel. Though American communal life has little in common with the European shtetl, it is apparent that a somewhat similar problem must have existed among European Jewry also. Most European Jewish communities provided for two positions of rabbinic leadership. One was the *rav*, known in this country as the rabbi. The other was the *dayan*, who dealt with developing the Halacha as it related to the everyday problems of Jewish life. Through an unhappy quirk of history, only the position of rabbi survived the ocean-crossing to America. But there is nothing in this country that precludes the position of *dayan*. It is true that much clarification is needed, and many technical details need working out on local levels, but the position of *dayan* may be the vehicle that will bring bnei Torah into the synagogues. As *dayan*, they will have to learn, and delve into the intricacies of Halacha. Most important, they will become part of the Jewish community as projected by the synagogue. Instead of being looked upon with suspicion as an outsider, the ben Torah will be welcomed aboard as one of the synagogue family. Throughout, this position will protect them from those practices which they consider demeaning.

We have come a long way in the past twenty years. But the easy communication between bnei Torah and baalebatim, so evident in past generations, does not exist today. This, then, is the challenge of our times. It will become the ultimate illusion if we succeed in creating "demanding Jews," "seeking" and "searching" Jews, and fail to build the bridge for these Jews to the bnei Torah who can meet their needs. Many have labored long and hard to develop an authentic Jewish appetite. Shall the herring peddlers be the ones who now preempt the market—and shall fervor take the place of authenticity? □

Yacov Lipschutz

# WHO IS A RABBI?

## *A Closer Look at the Development of Torah Leadership*

In any discussion of their inter-relationship, it is axiomatic that it is not the pulpit which makes the rabbi, nor the shiur the rosh yeshiva, nor the classroom a melamed—nor does being in business make one simply a layman. Were this not so, we would have to classify the Gaon of Vilna—he did not occupy a pulpit—as a rosh yeshiva; Reb Yechezkel Landau (*Noda B'Yehuda*)—Rav of Prague—as a rabbi and posek; Reb Yosef Tumim, author of the halachic masterwork *Pri Megodim*—for many years a teacher of children—as a melamed. And, what of those who held no formal position: Reb Yisroel Meir Hacohen (*Chofetz Chaim*), Reb Avrohom Karelitz (*Chazon Ish*), or Reb Menachem Zemba—are they to be regarded simply as having been scholarly laymen?

It is clear that historically a man's occupation did not limit the position he occupied in Torah life. The *Chachmei Hatalmud* whose surnames testified to their occupations—*sandler* (cobbler) or *nafcha* (blacksmith)—in no way compromised their stature as Torah luminaries. The only proper determinant of a man's position in Torah life is his greatness, ability and performance, and by these criteria can we assess the rav, the rosh yeshiva and the layman.

It would be wise at the present to set aside the alleged rosh yeshiva-bnai Torah interloping, and assume that all parties are innocent of committing halachic intrusion. Let us take an objective look at the American Torah scene where we find that the Rav-Mora-D'asra is slowly vanishing.

It is readily admitted by all parties to the debate that something is lacking in the American rabbinate. The rabbi is no longer the scholar pre-eminent of past decades, the guiding hand of the yeshivos and bnai Torah. Whatever the reason, it is a fact that the bulk of bnai Torah look only to the rosh yeshiva for guidance and authority.

Speculating on the cause of this situation is now immaterial; of greater consequence is awareness of the long range effect of the disappearance of the rav,

---

RABBI YACOV LIPSCHUTZ is a musmach of the Kollel, Beth Medrash Elyon, and a Magid Shiur in Poskim at the Mesivta Rabbi Samson R. Hirsch.

not on the American Rabbinate, but on the yeshivos and bnai Torah who can no longer find leadership in the pulpit rabbi. They are apparently unaware that they are the greatest victims of the city without a rav.

### *"Where is your rebbe from?"*

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD of the East European hamlets: Dolginev, Cituvyan, Luban, Kazimirov, Vaskai? Probably not. Now think of the leading roshei yeshiva and poskim of today, and ask their students, "Where is your Rebbe from?" They will probably reply, "Mir," "Brisk," "Telsh," "Slabodka," etc. But these students hardly realize that the many years spent by their rosh yeshiva in a yeshiva was only the first phase of their development. Unknown and forgotten are the above-mentioned villages where the men who are today's Torah authorities first served as Rav-Mora-D'asro. Great Torah figures could not and were not graduated from the yeshiva or kollel to the stature of gedolim in one leap. In between were years of exacting pressure, precise and responsible decision-making, study and practice in the Dolginevs and Kazimirovs of Europe. It was *there* that they mastered *Shas*, *Horoah* and the meaning of dedicated leadership. With their increasing ability, their fame spread from the obscure hamlets to the positions of authority they hold today. The knowledge acquired under the pressures of leadership was based upon years of learning in the yeshivos—*yet unattainable in academic confines alone.*

This was rabbonus, a real life training- and proving-ground for Torah excellence. It's existence was fundamental in creating the climate necessary to produce the Torah-scholar-leader.

The Cituvyans and Lubans, though small, and offering little in the way of material reward were nonetheless demanding. The premium they placed on expertise pushed the young rav to the limits of his capacities. Remember their names—they have been destroyed—but the gedolim who served and were nurtured in these small towns are very much alive and with us today.

In the era in which these towns flourished, bnai Torah were very much aware that the profundity of their learning would be sought, recognized and nurtured. The idea that there was a place for his Torah,

be it a small impoverished village, was enough to stir his ambition with an undeterable drive. The biographies of the Gaonim of the past century, the lives of the present Gaonim, fully bear this out.

America, five thousand seven hundred and twenty eight, enjoys no such climate. We enjoy limitless political freedom, suffer none of the physical hardships of the shtetel, yet we are at a loss to produce the promise of fulfillment once held forth in Kazimirov or Vaskai. Our inability to provide the training ground for realizing Torah potential, steadily takes its toll, sapping the fire of ambition from the heart of the American ben yeshiva.

### No "Farm System"

In every field of endeavor, America makes use of a graded "farm system," encouraging, developing and building resources for the future. The Torah student is not fortunate enough to benefit from such a system; even if he feels the 'call' from within, there are none who call for his talents from the villages and communities across the land. Lost for the American ben yeshiva is the opportunity and once-proud stature of Rav-Mora-D'asro, and lost with it is the stimulus that decades ago filled the halls of the Beis Hamedrash.

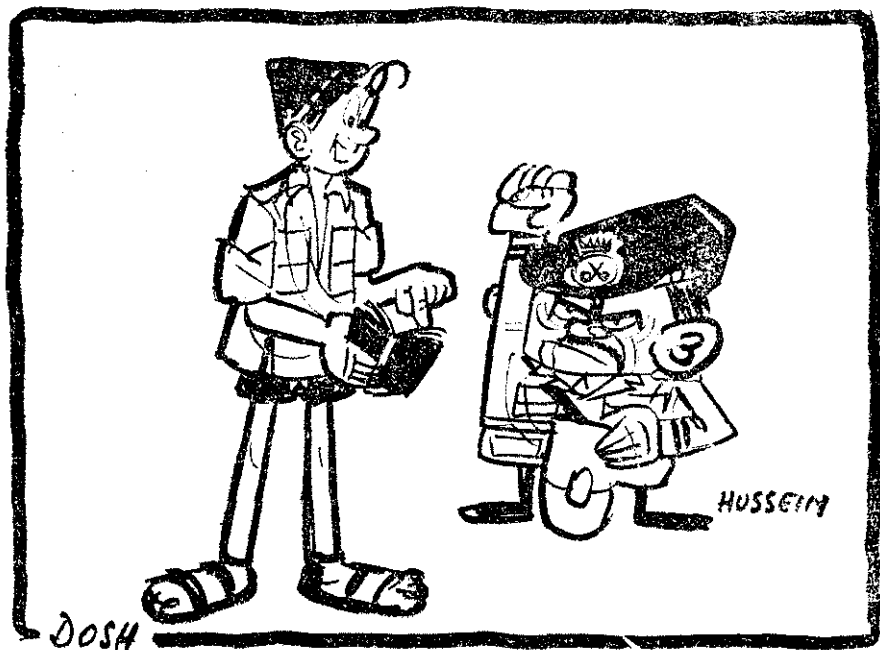
Fifty-seven years ago a teshuva (halachic response) was published in a Torah monthly contesting the valid-

ity of a *get* (divorce). The author, a great posek today and a world-famous authority on matters of Gittin was then the young Rav of a Russian village—no older than the average American chaver-kollel. Can we in any way compare the force which was guiding the then-young Rav through Shas and Poskim, to the motivations of his present-day counterpart struggling "to remain by learning"? America's young scholars know full well the small chance that their Torah mastery has to reach its potential. Fifty-seven years ago an unknown young Rav was writing his first teshuvos, steadily improving, gaining experience, eventually to become a Posek Hador (Torah authority of the era); the chaver-kollel of today is denied this opportunity. His ladder shakily rests on his goal "to remain by learning"—a ladder he will find difficult to climb.

A most revered Torah authority once expressed to me his amazement at the high levels yeshiva students today actually attain—purely on their love for learning. "Imagine," he sighed, "what we would achieve if we had the visible goals of my days coupled with the freedom and golden blessings of America."

The dilemma of our inverted Torah atmosphere defies the simple solution of a well-intentioned seminar and inspiring talk. It awaits the creation of a new, invigorating climate which will make possible the growth of Rav, Rosh Yeshiva, and Bnai Torah. □

*It's very simple —  
Say:  
"If I forget thee,  
O Jerusalem . . ."  
And repeat it  
for 2,000 years.*



(Ma'ariv)

---

## **A Letter to Gateshead**

*The following letter, written by a young lady applying for admission to the Gateshead Seminary in England, is the testimony of a Jewish soul, caught up in indifference to Judaism, finding the way to Torah by a circuitous and painful path.*

Dear Mr. Kohn:

*I realize that it is already quite late in the year to be writing to you; however, due to certain circumstances . . . it could not have been at an earlier time. I hope that it is not too late to be applying for admission to Gateshead Seminary for the coming year. I understand that there is a limited number of places available and you therefore must choose only those girls who you feel would benefit most. I hope it will be possible for me to be among those chosen. Fortunately I am able to pay the required tuition which, I believe, is \$1,200 per year. I also am planning to stay for the entire program of three years.*

*It is only fitting for you to want to know a little about my background and my present activities as well as my reasons for wishing to come to Gateshead.*

*I was born and raised in — — —, California and attended public school there. My family belonged to the only functioning synagogue in the town which was the Reform and I went to Hebrew School three times a week. Outside of this, the only religious instruction I received was at home. My mother, having come from an Orthodox home, implanted in each of us certain ideals — we all knew Shabbos was a special day and should be observed as such. I had a Bas-Mitzvah and I realized that I knew very little about Judaism — for Judaism to exist for so many thousands of years there had to be more to it than the Reform movement encompassed; I became aware of its inadequacies and decided I wanted to probe and learn as much of a traditional outlook of Judaism as was possible. Since I had no background or knowledge in the tefilos for Shabbos . . . I decided to go to the Conservative synagogue in the neighboring town . . . I went every Shabbos with my mother and I went with my brother . . . who was studying at that time for his Bar Mitzvah. About a year later I decided to stop riding on Shabbos and to be Shomer Shabbos as much as possible. Also at this time an ordained Orthodox rabbi came to a shul in a nearby town . . . that had not been functioning for quite sometime. For a long time I felt it was important to have a permanent tie with Judaism so that every day I would be aware I was a Jew, not just on Shabbos. After speaking with my parents at length they agreed to keep a kosher home. With the help of the new rabbi, just before Shevuos of 1963 we became 'kosher.' With this tie I began to search more into the philosophy of Judaism and I studied*



---

with the rabbi . . . For the next two years I had inner conflicts as to my relationship to my non-Jewish friends, and, unfortunately, since I had no one for moral support or with whom I could discuss my feelings or gain direction I just existed as an entity unto myself.

Upon graduating from high school I went to Israel for a year (last year) with the youth group Young Judea, in which I had been very active for the past eight years. It is not a religious group but it did help me realize that there was more to Judaism than the Reform movement. Also where I live we respected and tried to observe the laws of kashrus and Shabbos to an extent. By observing Shabbos in the Young Judea Camp every summer and by participating each morning in the short davening it gave me a stronger feeling and a will to look into Judaism then and now. Ever since I was a young child I dreamt of the day I could go to Eretz Yisroel, my country. Finally I had the chance and although I didn't really feel that the Young Judea one-year course would offer me such a positive religious experience, I did not know of any other program I could go on. I had almost no connections with the religious community in Israel the first half of the year; my convictions to be observant became stronger. I was in Jerusalem, along with fifty-six of my companions from the States, studying in an ulpan set up only for my group. The second part of the year I was in a completely religious atmosphere because I was on a religious moshav, for a month, and a kibbutz (also religious) for three months. It was the first time I was living in a total religious atmosphere and with people who believe in the ideals of Torah and work to fulfill those goals.

While I was in Israel I realized I could not go back to California if I wanted to further my religious development . . .

I have chosen Gateshead above any Seminary here in the States and above one in Israel for a variety of reasons. I have heard that it is on a very high level of learning, that the teachers are very dedicated people who are sincere in what they teach and show every day mesiras nefesh for Torah. It seems to be the type of institution which is able to take in girls who unfortunately did not have the opportunity at an earlier age to get a solid foundation in Judaism. An additional advantage is that it is entirely secluded and one can sit and study without having to face the distractions and conflicts of the secular world. Besides this, after three years one has a very solid foundation from which one can draw strength and courage for the rest of one's life.

I want to stress once again my readiness to pay your full tuition, and, in awareness of your policy, my intention with the help of G-d, to remain for the full three-year program. This decision, on my part, I feel can prove to be the most important in my life; I anxiously await its outcome in your response. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

EDITOR'S NOTE: THE YOUNG LADY IS NOW STUDYING IN GATESHEAD.

---

# Past and Present in the Teaching of Jewish History

*Remember the days of the world,  
consider the years of each generation.*

(DEVORIM 32,7)

*'And you shall teach them to your son'—  
the words of the Torah should be  
spoken clearly.*

(KIDDUSHIN 30A)

Judaism has been called the "religion of history." The loyalty of the Jew to his faith, and his certainty about its truth, are neither drawn from blind emotional gropings, nor from abstract philosophical reasoning, but from the historical experiences of the Jewish people. The survival of the Jew from the dawn of human history to our days, has made him—by his very existence—the witness to G-d's rule over the world, and to the teachings of the Torah; those who would want to challenge Judaism have been forced to invent the legend of Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, or the modern-day myth that the Jew is a "fossil."

The basic lessons of our past are, of course, embodied in the great events that marked the early history of our people; the Torah—through its account of these events as well as through the mitzvos that commemorate them—conveys these lessons to us. But the later history of the Jew can help most significantly toward a proper understanding of our sacred heritage and of our duty here and now. Through it we can convey to our youth the principles which underline and emerge from our past, and their application to the problems and issues of our time. Let it be well understood however: *we must see the present in the light of the past and not, reversely, project the passing ideas of the day, its confusions and uncertainties, into the past.*

What are some of the guiding principles that emerge

---

RABBI JOSEPH ELIAS is a member of the Editorial Board of *The Jewish Observer* and has written extensively on Jewish history. He is the author of *The Spirit of Jewish History* (Jewish Pocket Books, New York, 1949). He also contributed a biography of Reb Yisroel Salanter to Leo Jung's Jewish Library.

from a study of our past? The awareness of G-d as the Master of human destinies, purposefully guiding them from behind the scenes or, when He so chooses, openly through miracles. The conviction that not man's capabilities and practical endeavors but his obedience to G-d's will determine his fate. The realization that the Jewish people was chosen to demonstrate these facts, through its birth and survival contrary to all rules of nature, united into a nation solely by its common loyalty to G-d's will. The acceptance of the Torah as the divine revelation of this will, given *in toto*—written and oral, "ethical" and "ceremonial" parts—at Sinai (except where the Torah itself allowed and provided for later elaboration). The view of the Prophets and Rabbis as the teachers of the Torah, appointed to lead the Jewish people on the right path. The conviction, finally, that the destruction of the two Jewish commonwealths was the result of our shortcomings as the "people of the Torah," and that our redemption will be marked by our living up to this sacred role.

TO THE TORAH JEW these concepts represent obvious and fundamental truths. And yet—without exception—they have come under violent attack by modern secularism which conceives of man as functioning in a world moved by the mechanistic forces of nature, and seeks to explain away whatever does not fit in with its approach. Moreover, the Torah principles lead to conclusions that are not easy for us to accept; they dictate a reaction to the problems of life, individual and communal, which is as demanding as it is unpopular. As a result, there has emerged, even in the ranks of Jews loyal to Torah, a tendency to separate past and present, to see in the past one set of principles and to follow in practice a different set. Even more dangerous for us—occasionally the past is misinterpreted to fit our current ideas. Since this is usually not a conscious process, it is particularly important to draw attention to it.

As an example of these tendencies at work in the writing and teaching of Jewish history, let us examine a textbook series designed for our children, carrying a warm endorsement by Dr. Samuel Belkin, and widely

used in Orthodox schools: *The Story of the Jewish People*, by Gilbert and Lillian Klaperman (4 volumes, published 1956-1961 by Behrman House, New York). This is the only work on Jewish history for school use, covering the whole of our past, which seeks to give the Torah perspective—the sincere desire of the authors to succeed in this, comes across very clearly throughout the four volumes. Also, they have endeavored to meet all the manifold requirements of a well-designed textbook: a style appropriate to each age level; time charts, maps, and drawings; even fictional episodes in the first volume to make the events described more concrete; and review-questions and projects to stimulate the pupils. One would like to give enthusiastic approval to this work; unfortunately, it is most unsatisfactory.

There are a large number of mistakes in the four volumes.\* But they could easily be remedied; the real shortcomings of this work lie in the basic approach of the authors—an inner inconsistency besetting it. The authors in many places clearly spell out the basic principles underlying Jewish history which I enumerated above; it would therefore be logical to expect them to evaluate *all* the events and personalities of the Jewish past and present in the light of Torah principles—*positively*, if they measure up by Torah standards, and *negatively* if they do not. This, however, the authors do not seem able to do, for they are also committed to some other criteria in modern Jewish life. Torah is, in effect, joined by concepts of Jewish nationalism and language; humanism and social democracy are normative values—all leading to the confusion of thought pointed out many years ago by Rabbi Amiel, when he criticized Mizrahi education for being “built on the principle that we have a people *and* that

---

\* Some are merely the result of an obvious effort to be concise (thus the statement, vol. I, p. 175, that Gedalya was king); others due to poor editing (thus, contradictions on who the Samaritans were, I, 184, and II, 20; or who presided over the Sanhedrin in the time of the Procurators, II, 101 and 107). There are obvious historical errors (e.g. that it was Alexander Jannai who converted the Idumeans, II, 82; that Abaye and Rave continued Rav Ashi's work, II, 186; or that the Nuremberg Laws provided for the wearing of the Yellow Badge, IV, 199). Others are due to unfamiliarity with talmudic sources (e.g. the statement that Saul was anointed from a horn, I, 103; the view, which had originated with the Bible Critics, that the scroll found in Josiah's days was only *Devorim*, I, 170; or that Alexander Jannai *carelessly* violated a holy law and was stoned with *esrogim* and *lulovim*, II, 82). Some mistakes show a lack of perception (e.g. when the authors explain that the Kabbalists of Safed were pleased with the Shulchan Aruch because “they no longer needed to study the long and difficult pages of the Talmud to find a law . . . Moreover, it gave them extra time” for the study of Kabbalah, III, 137); and some, a strange educational ineptness (thus, when the authors speak of “the Siddur that you use every Sabbath,” II, 178, or ask in connection with Sabbatai Tzvi: “Do you think anyone could announce himself as Messiah today and be received by the Jews of the world? Give reasons for your answer.” III, 185)

we have a Torah; but he who thinks this way has not really understood our fundamental belief: ‘*Our people is a people only through the Torah*’” (Hatzofeh, June 16, 1944). Caught in a dualism of values, the authors waver between Torah traditionalism and modern rationalist secularism in their evaluation of some of the major aspects of the Jewish present—and project it ever so often into the past. In discussing matters of the spirit they stress the role of Torah; but when it comes to the realm of practical application, time and again a rationalist note is struck.

1. The authors unequivocally detail the great miracles that marked the beginning of our history and proclaimed that the Jews' fate depended upon G-d. What, then, prompted them to write: “As they wandered through the wilderness, the Israelites stopped wherever there was a patch of green grass or a trickle of fresh water to rest and refresh themselves” (I, 57)? Is this a correct description of the desert pilgrimage, or should not our children be told that the Jews existed in the desert by daily miracles only?\*

Rationalizing the workings of Jewish history leads all too easily to a philosophy of “*my strength and the power of my hands.*” The reader may merely find it an odd comment when the authors complain in connection with the crossing of the Red Sea: “They had been slaves for so long, they could not think as free men. They did not even think of fighting for their freedom,” I, 41; our Sages actually mention that one faction among the Jews wanted to fight. However, at a later point, as we shall see, they make quite explicit their impatience with those who pray for redemption rather than helping themselves.

The fictional episode describing the blessings accruing to the Jewish people from King David's rule (I, 117-8) lists all the political, social and military advantages obtained (“Now we are like the other peoples, with a king and a government and a capital city.”); there is no mention at all of the unique Jewish character of his kingship, so eloquently described by our Sages.

---

\* Some other examples of the author's rationalizations: “*Moses realized* (through the episode of the spies) that the people still did not have the complete faith that G-d could help them . . . Because of this, the Jews had to continue their wanderings” (I, 57-8) — was this really Moses' decision? Or, is it correct, in the same vein, to say that “from that time on, Samuel knew that Saul would not obey G-d's will . . . Samuel *realized* that because of this Saul could not found a dynasty. . . . And so the prophet began to search for another king . . .” (I, 106)? Why not spell out G-d's direct instructions?

Sometimes the ambiguity becomes absurd: “*It is said in Israel* that there never was nor would there ever be a prophet as great as Moses to whom the Lord spoke face to face. *The Rabbis tell us* that G-d caused Moses' burial place to be hidden forever . . .” (I, 60). Again, the specific statement of the Torah is repeated thus (I, 141): “From his day on, he was regarded as the greatest prophet in the history of Israel.”

By dividing spiritual concerns and practical attainments, the authors are able to find some kind words for the Sadducees ("helped make the nation of Judea wealthy and prosperous," II, 81) and for the Hasmonean dynasty ("had helped make Judea an established and secure kingdom," II, 84)—without spelling out that the rejection of the Torah by the former, and the power-seeking of the latter ultimately destroyed kingdom and Temple!

On the other hand, the authors are most critical, at a later point in Jewish history, of the "many [who] simply hoped for a miracle to take place. They waited for G-d to bring them to the Promised Land. They were so broken in spirit and impoverished in physical possessions that they could not even imagine that they themselves could help this dream come true" (III, 241).

In contrast, the authors describe what they consider the correct solution: "The Jews began to realize that . . . having their own country was not only a practical answer to the problem of having a secure place to go to. It was a question of self-respect and world-respect as well." And they continue with evident approval: "The Maskilim taught a simple lesson: 'A people which does not possess a national home does not deserve to be called a people!'" (III, 241). For a solution of the misery and insecurity of Jewish life, "they turned to the teachings of the Torah for their answer, to the Promised Land . . . Together with religious Jews who had prayed for a return to Zion from the earliest days they prepared the way for the blessed idea of Zionism" (III, 238).

2. It is at this point that the inner contradiction in the authors' approach fully emerges. They state, quite unambiguously, that "one was not a Jew because he lived in the land of the Jews, or had a specific type of Jewish literature, or wore the uniform of a Jewish army. He was a Jew because he practiced the Jewish religion" (IV, 91); and they emphasize that "the Jewish religion could keep Judaism alive. This was the only way Jews would survive . . . Judaism could exist even without the Temple if the people maintained their religion and historic culture" (II, 143). *Yet, when the authors deal with the ancient dream of return to the Promised Land, and its realization today, we find a thoroughly secularized approach; there is not one mention of the specific prophetic vision of a nation gathered around, and governed by, Torah.* How can the authors square their original premises about the origin and nature of Jewish nationhood with their approval of modern secularist trends? The answer lies in a remarkable "broadening" or "reinterpretation" of Torah:

"Under the pressure of hate and discrimination was hammered out a stronger commitment to Torah and the Jewish heritage. This first took the form in an intensive flowering of Halacha and religious practice. Later it expressed itself in the growth of the Haskalah

and the nationalism that culminated in Zionism and in the rebuilding of the Jewish homeland" (III, preface).

### *The Nationalist Emphasis*

The nationalist emphasis is formed quite early in the work: "Passover was Akiba's favorite holiday, because Passover is the holiday of freedom. He would spend all night of Passover sitting with his pupils . . ." (II, 157). Quite logically, the authors link the martyrdom of Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiba (II, 163), stating that on Lag B'Omer "in Israel large bonfires are lit in memory of Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiba" (II, 164). In place of the traditional explanation, that refers to secret Torah study, they declare that "children play [on Lag B'Omer] with bows and arrows as a remembrance of the time when the Jews practiced archery in preparation for their revolt against the Romans" (II, 164).

In the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry the authors point out "the beginnings of Zionism, the desire for a homeland once again . . . Judah Halevi may be called the first Zionist" (III, 37-8). There is no indication, here, of the distinctive religious basis of Yehudah Halevi's longing for the Holy Land—note the authors' pale description of "his dream of a return to the homeland, to Palestine, where his people could once again live together as a people, in dignity and respect, without suffering and pain" (III, 34). Not surprisingly, we find the authors compartmentalizing Halevi's mind: "Just as he was moved by a love for G-d and a love for the land of Israel, Halevi was also (*sic!*) deeply devoted to the religion and practices of Judaism" (III, 35).

The secularization of Jewish nationhood is paralleled by the authors' high valuation of the emergence of secular Jewish culture—for instance in Spanish Jewry's Golden Age which "saw the start of a new type of Jewish literature . . . Now, for the first time, Jews began to write personal poetry on both religious and secular themes . . . about nature, about love and pretty maidens, about life in general" (III, 37).

BUT THE AUTHORS' OUTLOOK emerges most clearly when they reach the modern era. "Despite the fact that the Maskilim used Hebrew to try to change Judaism, they did manage to bring about a good result as well. They caused a strong revival of the Hebrew language . . . A new Hebrew literature flourished, the like of which had not been since the Golden Age of Spain. An entire new study, called 'Jewish science,' also came into being . . ." (III, 210). The authors, to be sure, criticize the assimilationist motives of the German Maskilim; but "fortunately, the Haskalah in Russia did not bring about a wholesale movement away from Judaism . . . Instead, the Russian Haskalah brought forth great new poets, profound historians, thinkers and philosophers. And furthermore, for the first time in Jewish history,

real novels appeared" (III, 233). "Maskilim wrote books and articles, poems and essays on . . . life as it was seen throughout the world. Soon this idea took hold of the people. They were ready to be 'enlightened!' They sought the Haskalah and its leaders . . . The literature of the Haskalah not only awakened the Jews to the other cultures around them, it became itself a rich, warm literature, describing the lives of the Jews, telling it with love and understanding" (III, 234). "From the Haskalah a new dignity came to both the Yiddish and the Hebrew languages" (III, 236). Such blindness to the real meaning and impact of the Haskalah explains the authors' regret at the passing of the American Yiddish theatre (IV, 149), or their unqualified admiration for Judah Leib Gordon (III, 236).

They close their discussion of Jewish emancipation by asking the students: "The Russian Haskalah differed from the German Haskalah in many ways. Which, in your opinion, represents the true answer to the way Jews should live in modern society? Why?" They seem to have no doubt that one *was* the right answer; the only problem apparently remaining they pose in the next question: "Write the diary of a *Yeshiva bocher* who has turned to the Haskalah. Will he keep his beliefs secret? Will his Rabbi agree with him?" (III, 238-9).

The great goal of the Russian Maskilim was "a land governed by Jews, where each man would be free and able to live his life" (III, 288). This "dream has become a reality . . . the promise made to our forefather Abraham has been fulfilled once again. Our people are now in the Holy Land, tilling its soil, building its cities, and reestablishing it as a nation among nations" (IV, 217). This idea is reiterated time and again—"the 2,000 year old hope had at last come true. The United Nations had authorized the establishment of a Jewish state" (IV, 240)—and there is not even a hint that the realities of the Jewish state leave anything to be desired or changed, as far as the Torah ideal of a Jewish commonwealth is concerned.

"The . . . Sabras are proud and unafraid. They have shown what Jews can be who are not brought up in the shadow of fear . . . With its great institutions of secular learning, with its widespread yeshivoh for the study of Torah, Israel is becoming the center of Jewish study and thinking" (IV, 280). The Hebrew University, the Weizman Institute and the Technion are "at the summit of a growing network of schools . . . every aspect of national culture was developing at an amazing rate" (IV, 219). "Israel is the only country in the world whose presidents have been intellectuals and scholars . . . They, in their lives, have upheld the Jewish tradition for learning and knowledge" (IV, 264). " REGARD for brotherhood, for the principles of righteousness . . . has been the attribute of the Jewish people throughout the ages. In Israel, it is reaching its full expression" (IV, 267).

The only reference to the place of Torah in the Jew-

ish state is an expression of satisfaction at the attainments of the religious parties in this respect; an example given is that "most city buses do not operate on the Sabbath" (IV, 278). Problems still to be resolved? There is a remarkable reference to the fact that "Israel is also unhappy about the splitting of Jerusalem. The old city, where the Temple stood and through which passes the road to the famous Hadassah Hospital and the Hebrew University, is in the hands of Jordan" (IV, 249). The erosion of feeling evident in this passage, and the failure to see the problem of a secular Jewish state, leads of course to a complete inability to understand—and present—the real reasons for any opposition by Torah Jews to Zionism (III, 241, IV, 182, 253).

3. It is important to note that the authors' linking of Torah and modern Jewish nationalism is paralleled by their association of Torah with modern social democracy.

From the teeming background of Eastern European Jewish life there rose (in the USA) organizers of labor and welfare workers, masters of finance and industry . . . There were liberal idealists, who led the Socialist movement, and religious idealists, who led the Zionist movement. There were athletes and entertainers, poets and dramatists . . . Devoted to the ideals of freedom and democracy, and imbued with the spirit of G-d and of Torah, they would make an invaluable contribution to American Jewish life (IV, 130; see also 146).

In fact, starting with the premise that "we believe that . . . every man is entitled to his beliefs and way of life, provided he leads a decent and humanitarian existence" (II, 123)—a premise that certainly does not come to grips with the Torah's demands upon a Jew, or even a non-Jew, the authors readily conclude that the writers of the Talmud believed in democracy (II, 194). "Both Israel and America have been guided by the principles of human liberty, equality, and justice . . . The two countries share in their great dedication to human rights and democracy . . . We have also seen the common influence of the Biblical heritage on the American and Israeli forms of government. All these ties have their roots in G-d and in the Torah" (IV, 267).

It is significant, in this context that the authors severely criticize "Geiger [who] emphasized the ethical side of religion. He taught that the ideals of the prophets, the ethical ideas were most important," in contrast to "the mitzvoh of the Torah" (III, 213). They point out, very correctly, that all Torah laws must be equally accepted. Yet, surprisingly, we find them juxtapose, time and again, "the laws of Moses and the teachings of the prophets" (II, 20); "the Torah gave [the Jews] laws to live by . . . and the prophets gave them lofty principles and high ideals, inspired by the word of

G-d" (i, 143). The Jews "not only had a moral code of laws which taught them how to behave towards each other, but they had other mitzvot, law, which taught them how to behave towards G-d. The Sabbath and the Sholosh Regolim, for example, were mitzvot of behavior towards G-d. The moral laws were taught by the prophets . . ." (ii, 15). Somehow, the idea, so very much cultivated by the Reform movement, that the prophetic teachings represent a later and higher ethical ideal than the mitzvos of the Pentateuch, seems to be echoed here—with the implication that to live by the Torah means to accept and live by the *ethical* teachings of our heritage. "The Jews were the first to believe in the Bible. In later centuries, many other nations also accepted its teachings . . . People who live by the Bible are guided by the greatest and highest rules—they are good, kind, generous, honest, freedom-loving, peaceful and happy" (ii, 39-40). "We Jews believe that as the 'chosen people' of G-d we are to bring the message of brotherhood, love, and goodness, to teach the Ten Commandments and the Torah" (ii, 123). The Ten Commandments, "the most important" of G-d's laws given to the Jews (*an emphasis utterly in conflict with Jewish tradition*) "have been accepted as a code of living by many people all over the world . . . One of the greatest teachings of the Ten Commandments is the idea of a Sabbath day . . . a day of rest when man can interrupt his busy schedule to think about G-d . . ." (i, 56). "The Ten Commandments have raised a standard of behavior for the world. The Ten Commandments finally must guide all nations in their relations with each other just as they guide individual people" (ii, 39). Meanwhile, "the teachings of the prophets calling for righteousness and honesty are gradually being fulfilled in America today" (iv, 13).

4. A consequence of the authors' approach is their attitude toward Jewish leaders, movements and institutions, which reveals a strangely uncritical approach to those not committed to Torah, in the true sense, and an equally strange blindness toward those that are committed. Even men whose scholarly teachings we consider utterly wrong are held up as "a great scholar" (Geiger, iii, 213) or "a great scholar and writer" (Dr. Louis Finkelstein, iv, 286). Herzl, whose completely secular concept of Zionism is nowhere criticized, is described, in Nordau's words, as one of the greatest Jews of all times because he showed Jews the path to take (iv, 184). As for Ben Gurion, he "is one of the most remarkable men on the Jewish scene, a great orator and profound thinker and philosopher . . . Even though he is far from a religious man, Ben Gurion responded (to the question of how to defend Jerusalem): 'I believe in miracles'" (iv, 256).

The authors warmly praise the work of organizations clearly not committed to Torah standards, such as the Hillel Foundation, the Jewish Welfare Board, or the Jewish Education Committee, without even a word

of qualification. They laud the Jewish Publication Society, with its very mixed book list and much criticized Bible translation (they incidentally, also send the pupil frequently for reference to the Jewish Encyclopedia). The phrase, "people of the book," which has always referred to the Torah, has—according to the authors—gained an added meaning by the publishing of so many books by such companies as Bloch, Behrman, and the Jewish Publication Society (iv, 291). One would at least have wanted to see a reference to the great resurgence in the publishing of Talmudic and Rabbinic literature in this country!

### *The World of Torah*

There is, however, an extraordinary paucity of information about the world of Torah in the last 150 years. To be sure, the Vilner Gaon is discussed ("his mind sought religious and secular learning," iii, 198) and, at a later point, Rabbi S. R. Hirsch—he "believed that no teaching of philosophy or science was in conflict with Judaism," in the authors' view, and started an Orthodox trend "which embraced a belief in Jewish science and all sciences as well as in religion," iii, 215-6—a complete misunderstanding of Hirsch's position. But none of the other giants of modern European Torah Jewry—men like the Chasam Sofer, Reb Yisroel Salanter, or the Chofetz Chayim—are mentioned; nor are the development of the modern Yeshivah, Mussar, or the Beth Jacob movement mentioned at all.

This could perhaps be ascribed to the unproportionate space and emphasis the authors have given to American and Eretz Yisroel history. But we find the same inadequacy there. The Chief Rabbis of Israel are mentioned, and so is Chief Chaplain Goren ("one of the greatest Talmudic scholars in Israel," iv, 274), but neither the Chazon Ish nor any of the outstanding Torah personalities of this or the previous generation. Bar Ilan University is referred to by name, but none of the yeshivos, such as Ponivesh, which have had such an impact.

On the American scene, the rise and role of Yeshiva University ("one of the leading universities in the country, iv, 287) are given a number of pages; the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago is allotted one paragraph; and a few other yeshivos are named—Lakewood and Ner Israel in Baltimore, do not appear at all. The question, "Who are the leaders of Orthodoxy?," is answered solely by reference to Rabbi Belkin and Rabbi Soloveitchik (iv, 288). Dr. Revel is discussed at length, as "one of the most profound Talmudic scholars and thinkers in the Orthodox movement" (iv, 139). The role, on the American scene, of Rabbi Shrage Feivel Mendlowitz, or later, of Rabbi Aaron Kotler; the work of Torah Umesorah, or the growth of Kollelim—all these are passed over in silence. The "three arms of Orthodoxy in the U.S." (iv, 144).

---

*The Torah historian is subject to an iron law which he can only disregard at his own peril . . . He must be quite clear about the fundamental principles, the *Ikrei Emunoh*, of the Torah, as they are taught to us by the awesome events of our earliest past and the towering personalities who were the guardians of our sacred heritage; and he must — without fear or favor — apply these principles to the evaluation of the world in which we live, the experiences we undergo, the ideas we encounter. If he reverses the process, if he permits his values and judgements to be subject to the influence of his age, he will arrive at a distorted picture of both the Torah world and the secular world — and he will even project these distortions into that past from which he could have learned the truth.*

---

for the authors, are Y.U., the R.C.A., and the UOJCA (“speaks for Orthodoxy on the national scene, representing the wishes of orthodox Jews,” IV, 142). In short, the vibrant vitality of a Torah Orthodoxy not associated with Haskalah in Europe, with religious Zionism in Eretz Yisroel, or with Yeshiva University in this country, is simply not given recognition by the authors (one exception: a reference to Lubavitch, as the only “strong and important movement” left in Hasidism, III, 196-7).

There are other aspects of this work which merit discussion.\* But enough has been cited to establish the point we have tried to make: the Torah historian is subject to an iron law which he can only disregard at his own peril and at the peril of his readers—in this

---

\* Above all, there is the puzzling question why the authors rendered the thirteen principles of faith in such a free form as to rob some of them of their distinctive meaning (III, 43): they speak of the belief “that G-d revealed the Torah to Moses” (instead of: that the Torah which we have is the one revealed to Moses), or “that G-d rewards those who are good” (instead of: those who keep His mitzvos). There are a number of questions raised by the author’s apparent implication that the concepts of Messiah and the Resurrection emerged only gradually. Their dating of Ezra, of the Purim story, of the emergence of Sanhedrin and courts, all deserve examination, as do some other details concerning the development of the Oral Law.

case the pliable minds of children. He must be quite clear about the fundamental principles, the *Ikrei Emunoh*, of the Torah, as they are taught to us by the awesome events of our earliest past and the towering personalities who were the guardians of our sacred heritage; and he must—without fear or favor—apply these principles to the evaluation of the world in which we live, the experiences we undergo, the ideas we encounter. If he reverses the process, if he permits his values and judgements to be subject to the influence of his age, he will arrive at a distorted picture of both the Torah world and the secular world—and he will even project these distortions into that past from which he could have learned the truth.

It is not easy, then, to write, or to teach Jewish history—the pitfalls are considerable. But so are the rewards—for it is just by drawing upon the lessons of the past that we can explain to our children the meaning of the present. The challenge of modern Jewish nationalism and the State of Israel; assimilation and Jewish “sectarianism”; the emergence of a democratic and humanitarian West; the horror of Nazi murder and Communist tyranny; they all need sensitive and perceptive treatment that will give our children an understanding of these events—but only a treatment that is based *totally* upon the authentic teachings of the Torah will provide a *true* understanding. □

# second looks at the jewish scene

## "Editorial Tyranny" of the Times

What this city needs more desperately than anything else is an Ombudsman against the editorial tyranny of *The New York Times*. There are, I warrant far fewer cases of brutality inflicted by the police of this city on its clients than by the editorial writers of that journal on its readers. — William F. Buckley, Jr., addressing a Conservative Party Dinner, (as reprinted in *The New York Times*, October 16, 1966). —Quoted in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, Fall, 1966.

We have on numerous occasions painfully noted the "editorial tyranny of *The New York Times*" as it is manifest in the reporting of Jewish affairs. (See: *What Makes News 'Fit to Print'* in *The New York Times*, J.O. Feb. '66). This tyranny has many faces; it is perhaps most severe in what *The Times* chooses not to print—a less obvious

and therefore more insidious form of censorship. It is also apparent in the garbled reports concerning Orthodox Jewry, "ultra-Orthodox Jews" and "Hasidim," and the stubborn refusal of *The Times* to correct these distortions when called to their attention.

Should you have raised your eyebrow at our invoking the authority of William Buckley, who has his own Conservative Party axe to grind, the *Columbia Review* (Summer 1967) cites a critique of American newspapers—which they understand to be directed at *The Times* as well—written by A. H. Raskin, a highly respected journalist. Raskin proposes, in the words of the *Review*, "that newspapers establish 'Departments of Internal Criticism' to serve as independent checks on the newspaper's fairness and adequacy—an *ombudsman* for

the readers. . . ."

For those who may not recognize the name, A. H. Raskin is assistant editor of *The New York Times*, and his article, *What's Wrong With American Newspapers?* appeared—to their credit—in *The New York Times Magazine*, June 11, 1967.

Having experienced *The Times'* editorial tyranny at first hand, we look forward to their adoption of Mr. Raskin's—and Mr. Buckley's—suggestion. We'd also like to reserve a place on the long line which will form at the ombudsman's door. □

P. Feldheim now has a limited number of copies of a rare classic. **MAGICIANS, THEOLOGIANS AND DOCTORS** by Dr. H. J. Zimmels, (Jews' College, London). A contribution to Jewish Folk-Lore and Folk-Medicine derived from the Responsa of the 12th-19th centuries. A real gem of this interesting subject which was out of stock for a long time with extensive notes and Bibliography. 302 pages .....\$6.95  
(See our listing on p. 31)

## The Art Scroll Mark of Elegance

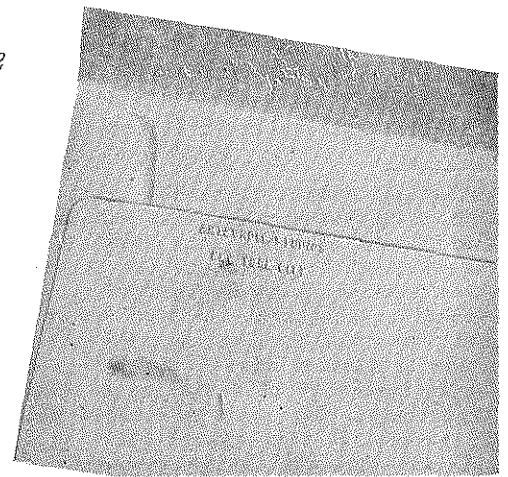
LOOK FOR IT UNDER THE FLAP OF THE INNER ENVELOPE OF MORE DISTINCTIVE WEDDING AND BAR MITZVAH INVITATIONS. IT IS YOUR ASSURANCE THAT THE INVITATION REFLECTS THE ELEGANCE OF THE OCCASION.  
NOT ALL INVITATIONS COME FROM ARTSCROLL, BUT THE CREATIVE ONES DO.

Write for our free brochure

### ARTSCROLL STUDIOS

156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10010 • Tel. (212) 989-4114

NOTE: The proper time to place your order is 10 weeks before the affair





## Dialoguers Talk Out of School

IN OUR September issue we reported the defection of Jacob Neusner from the religious-dialogue camp. Neusner, who writes frequently on Jewish affairs and had been a fervent proponent of Jewish-Christian dialogue, wrote a letter to the journal *Judaism* in which he said, in essence, that the apathy of Christian leadership when Israel was faced with a threat of genocide, had led him to complete disillusionment with the dialogue movement. His recantation, we noted, was to his credit.

A while later, the *National Jewish Post & Opinion* headlined Neusner's defection on their front page, attributing the story to us. Still later, the American Jewish Congress, which publishes *Judaism*, 'discovered' the story and distributed a release announcing Neusner's defection. (*There is a lesson here about Jewish journalism, but we leave it for another time.*)

Now, Arthur J. Lelyveld, president of the American Jewish Congress, writing in *Congress bi-Weekly* (Nov. 6, '67), rakes Neusner over the coals—with a critical aside to those who hailed his "chotosi ('I have sinned') . . . as courageous because it has the character of a public confession of error . . ." Neusner, he writes, "sounds like a small boy who put his nickel in the slot machine and didn't get his candy." What did he expect, Lelyveld asks, that after a few sessions of dialogue, there would be "a rush of support for the Jewish cause in the moment of Israel's crisis?" "We should be able to recognize," Lelyveld writes, "that the dilemma of the Christian community was not a simple one. I have talked with several of my colleagues in Cleveland, with whom I have had a happy working relationship in civil rights and in other struggles for social justice and social action—men that I know to be thinking men, deeply committed to their so-

cial ideals, and who were silent. *I was able to obtain only some twelve names for the Protestant Declaration of Conscience on Israel in the city of Cleveland*" (our emphasis). He ends with a pious note—"Judaism teaches us to do right for its own sake . . . not to be loved in return."

Lelyveld makes a good case—against Neusner, who expected to get a candy bar for his nickel. But, he has nothing to say to the Orthodox contention that dialogue is a dangerous path for Judaism since the Church has not relaxed its objective of converting the Jew, and that dialogue is a new approach to this objective.

PROFESSOR Joshua Heschel has been a proponent of Jewish-Christian dialogue; he was active in the Jewish lobbying at the Vatican Councils. But, he wavers at times; when the first draft of the decree on the Jews was watered down, he called it a "diabolical" act. In an interview (*Theologians at Work*, Macmillan, New York, 1967) he declares:

*We are now at the beginning of a new period in the history of religious cooperation between Christians and Jews. . . . However, I have one complaint. Give up the idea of the mission to the Jews, the idea of converting the Jews.*

In an article in *Conservative Judaism* (Spring, 1967) Heschel again warns:

*We must insist that giving up the idea of mission to the Jews be accepted as a pre-condition for entering a dialogue . . . however . . . our Christian friends are hardly aware . . . that mission is an attack on the very existence of the Jews, a call to self-extinction.*

Yet, without any assurances that the Church has indeed given up the mission to the Jew, Heschel con-

tinues to be involved in dialogue, and his Conservative and Reform colleagues continue to berate Orthodoxy for its opposition to dialogue. (It is interesting that Prof. Heschel, as far as we can tell, has had nothing to say about dialogue since June 5th. Jewish dialoguers generally have been "cooling it" since June, and our file of press releases and clippings on dialogue for recent months is quite thin. This morning's mail *did* bring a release reporting that Arthur Gilbert, "a national leader in Jewish-Christian dialogue, was presented an honorary doctor of divinity degree by Iowa Wesleyan College . . . in a convocation Saturday, October 28 [where he had come] to participate in an Interfaith Dialogue in celebration of Reformation Sunday . . ." Gilbert recently resigned from Bnai Brith to work for the Reconstructionist Foundation, but this move

WINES,  
CHAMPAGNES  
& LIQUORS

with an  
Israeli  
Soul



Certified Strictly  
Kosher by the  
Chief Rabbinate  
of Israel

Chief Rabbi Yehudah  
'sser Unterman  
Chief Rabbi  
Yitzchak Nissim

**CARMEL**

Imported by  
CARMEL WINE CO., INC.  
114 E. 40th St., N. Y., N. Y. 10016

does not appear to have cooled his ecumenical ardor.)

THIS BRINGS US TO an article, *Reflections on Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, written by a Catholic priest, which appeared in the *Reconstructionist* (Oct. 20, '67) which is amazing, to say the least. The writer lists among the problems evident in Jewish-Christian dialogue: "Christian-Jewish dialogue must of necessity consist of several stages. This is a most important point, since a too-hasty transition from one stage to another could very well deal the death blow to the entire movement." The first step is "informal

meetings on the parish-temple and other levels. The second step is "in-depth education."

The third step—we went back and reread the words—"will involve facing squarely the basic issues that divide us with the hope that perhaps *some type of genuine union might possibly result.*" Again . . . the third step in Jewish-Christian dialogue has as its goal . . . SOME TYPE OF GENUINE UNION. But he warns, "As Christians we must root out any idea that THE PRESENT STAGE of dialogue aims at conversion" (our emphasis).

How does the writer propose that such a union will be possible?—

"The current task is to understand both what caused a split in biblical times and how ensuing developments in each tradition deepened the separation."

IN NOVEMBER, 1964, we pointed out in these pages that ecumenism was essentially a movement to bring together some of the 200-odd splinter groups in American Protestantism. Only in recent years has the Catholic Church—which wanted nothing to do with ecumenism in the past—become part of the movement to bring together the "separated brethren." We noted then, before the large-scale Jewish invol-

vement of today, that ecumenism simply had nothing to do with Jews, and that Jewish involvement could only lead to confusion and conversion. Jewish apologists, and church spokesmen, have assured us that their objective in dialogue was simply understanding—getting to know each other better . . . and now . . . a Catholic priest writes in a Jewish magazine, that the ultimate objective of dialogue is to seek out the causes which divided Jews from Christians "in biblical times" so that we may eradicate these causes, and bring the separated brothers together in "some type of genuine union." To paraphrase: Some two thousands years ago, 'we' had a brotherly falling-out over some minor disagreement. Those who came after—on both sides—exaggerated the dispute all out of proportion. But, if we come to realize the silliness of our differences, we can achieve "genuine union," and we will again be religious brothers. Is this not a call for *shmad*—for what Heschel so eloquently describes as "a call to self-extinction"?

While dialoguers have been "cooling it" on the verbal level, "literary dialogue" continues in full force. Among the many books\* recently published on the subject, is *The*

# KOSHER

—but strictly!



Cleaned, Fresh-Eviscerated  
Soaked & Salted  
**READY-TO-COOK**  
Fresh and Fresh-Frozen

**U** Supervised and endorsed by The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. Inspected for wholesomeness by the U.S. Dept. Agriculture.

SOLD COAST-TO-COAST

*The Most Trusted Name  
in Kosher Poultry*

Empire Kosher Poultry, Inc., Millintown, Pa. 17059

**BERKOWITZ'S**  
*Coronet* HOTEL  
ON THE OCEAN AT 20th to 21st STS., MIAMI BEACH

Early  
RESERVATIONS  
Suggested

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ANY 2 WEEKS</b> Nov. 23 to Dec. 19</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$55*</b> PER WEEK per person double occ.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">INCLUDING STRICTLY KOSHER MEALS &amp; DELUXE ACCOMMODATIONS *25 of 185 rooms</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$850*</b> daily per person double occ.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HOLIDAY PACKAGES AVAILABLE</b> 10 &amp; 14 DAY SPECIALS—Attractive Family Rates on Request.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ALL THIS FREE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full Block of Private Beach</li> <li>• Olympic Salt Water Pool</li> <li>• Chaise Lounges &amp; Mats</li> <li>• Ample Parking on Premises</li> <li>• Mid-Day Fruit Drinks at Poolside</li> <li>• TV in Every Room</li> <li>• Oceanfront Dining Room</li> <li>• Strictly KOSHER Meals under <b>U</b> Supervision</li> <li>• <b>GLATT MEALS ONLY</b></li> <li>• Daily Synagogue Services</li> <li>• Planned Entertainment &amp; Activities from DAWN to YAWN. Supervised by our Social Hostess &amp; Staff.</li> </ul>
--	--

**Your Host the  
BERKOWITZ FAMILY**

**N. Y. OFFICE: PL 7-7491 • MIAMI BEACH: 305 - JE 1-0761**

*Jews: Views and Counterviews* (Newman Press, 1967), an actual record of a dialogue between a French Jesuit and Andre Chourai, a deputy mayor of Jerusalem. Their argumentation would interest only the specialist, but throughout the book, the priest returns to the theme that "Israel has its place in the universal Church . . . and I hope that one day it will find it," a recurring theme in most all of the dialogue literature.

Catholic spokesmen—while denying that conversion of Jews is the goal of dialogue—make it crystal clear that they want to remove the differences which separate Jews from Christians; that Israel has a place in the Church; that the final goal of dialogue—we must not rush it—is "some type of genuine union"; and Jewish leaders ask for assurance that conversion is out, while others believe they already have such assurance. Prof. Heschel is right: ". . . mission is an attack on the very existence of the Jews." Why must Jews support this attack?

\* An interesting volume, *Five in Search of Wisdom* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1967) is a reprint of a work by a Jewish convert to Catholicism, John M. Oesterreicher. The book was originally published in 1952 under the title, *Walls Are Crumbling*, and contained essays on seven Jewish thinkers who had found their way to Catholicism. In 1952, when ecumenism was still a purely Christian concern, and conversion of Jews was not soft-pedalled, Oesterreicher spoke freely of crumbling walls and Jews discovering Christianity. In his preface to the new edition, he admits that he made a mistake in his emphasis. "If it had been possible," he continues, to make changes in the text of this book, I would have seen to it that not a single letter or stroke remain that could be misunderstood (sic). But since it has to appear in its original form, I feel impelled to ask the reader to interpret every reference to things Jewish in the light of the Conciliar Statement on the Church's bond to the Jewish people . . ." In other words: for *conversion* read *understanding*.

*The Jewish Observer / November, 1967*



one of  
AMERICA'S LEADING  
CAMERA STORES  
**Wall Street  
Camera Exchange**

120 Wall Street  
New York, N. Y.  
Telephone: WH 4-0001

**Complete Line of  
Cameras, Projectors  
and Photo Supplies**

Closed Saturday  
Open Sunday — 10-2:30

Wholesale — Retail  
Mail Order

For  
Service and Savings  
on your  
General Insurance  
Mutual Funds  
and  
**LIFE**  
call



189 Montague Street  
Brooklyn, N. Y. UL 2-8200

**Employment**

**SHOMER SHABBOS JOBS**

LOOKING FOR A JOB?  
NEED OFFICE HELP?

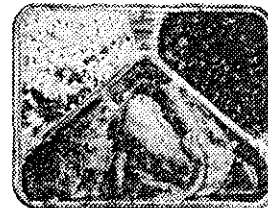
Contact:

**TRADITION PERSONNEL**

NOTE NEW ADDRESS:  
147 West 42nd St., New York, N. Y.  
Room 1111 ☐ Tel. 563-3994

**HOSPITALS, HOTELS  
and AIRLINES  
ARE NOW SERVING  
Schreiber  
KOSHER MEALS**

When you travel...where you  
stay...on Land, Sea or in the  
Air be sure to ask for Schreiber  
Frozen Foods...



Available in a fine variety, ready  
for heating and serving.

Home-recipes prepared by a  
famous name in catering his-  
tory. Distributed in more than  
50 areas in the U.S. and also  
in international service...

**GLATT KOSHER**

Under strict Rabbinical  
Supervision of the Union of  
Orthodox congregations of America...  
Government Inspected.



for information call or write

**Schreiber**

**CATERERS, INC.**  
9024 Foster Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11236  
Phone: 212 272-9184

**Auto Service**

16th AVENUE GARAGE CO. ☐ Expert  
Repairs, Free Road Service ☐ Big Discount  
on Tires ☐ Plaid Stamps with Every Sale  
1602 — 62nd Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11204  
☐ DE 1-0229, BE 2-9513 ☐ GULF GAS

**Real Estate**

LOFTS-FACTORIES To Rent or Buy ☐  
All Areas ☐ EARL H. SPERO ☐ 33 West  
42nd Street, New York, N. Y. 10036 ☐  
BR 9-1539

---

# Letters to the Editor

---

## The Rabbi and Ben Torah

---

To the Editor:

I read the rejoinder to my article (Tishrai-Oct.) with great interest, but at times I wondered whether the author had read my presentation thoroughly and understood some of the major points I was trying to convey. There is a tendency among many to defuse any telling and explosive argument by calling it 'sermonic.' There is also apparent in his arguments an abysmal lack of knowledge regarding the true status of many Orthodox rabbis today and the positions they hold in various communities. A number of items I presented in my article are based upon actualities, whereas so much of the rejoinder is rooted in theories and formulas, which reflect a lack of understanding of many facets of the facts of life in the American Rabbinate today.

When one theorizes he also agonizes in a philosophical and admonitory fashion. On the other hand, when one discusses real problems, which confront him and his colleagues as a real person, then no amount of rhetoric or polemics will alter the facts. If b'nai Torah and roshei yeshiva are singled out, it is not because they are convenient scapegoats, but on the contrary, *because they are the only hope for the future*, and a cry for help should not be misconstrued as a snarl of bitter accusation and harsh indictment. The climate in which an article is read is most important. The best climate is usually the one in which it has been written.

LET US TAKE a few specific points. First and foremost, one must realize that the rabbi must deal with many different kinds of Jews who are of different backgrounds; whose commitment to Torah Judaism is of varied degrees whereas the rosh yeshiva functions within his own sympathetic and obedient circle. The accusation of 'compromiser' leveled against the rabbi, while one points with pride to the staunch courageous stand

of the rosh yeshiva, is unfair since the only way we could compare the integrity and courage of both would be to subject them to the same tests under the same circumstances. It is well to consider also that the ben-Torah-balebos who is so hasty in criticizing the rabbi for not withstanding HIS *nisyonos* is himself guilty of an inability to withstand his own *nisayon*, namely, that of being a *balebos*.

Although the differentiation drawn between the community rabbi and the congregation rabbi seems valid, it is quite fallacious. In the framework of the American Jewish community countless rabbis who are not community rabbis, but spiritual leaders of congregations have used their position as a base of operation, which may be limited in one sense, but his sphere of influence, inspiration and accomplishment is unlimited. Certainly the writer is aware of many men in the Rabbinate who have built yeshivos, mikvoas, and brought order out of chaos in the kashrut field, who have been *only* rabbis of congregations. Indeed, any intelligent observer of the American Jewish scene is aware that in today's kehilah the source and reservoir of Torah strength and support for all Torah institutions comes from the various Orthodox synagogues. To suggest that the rabbis of these synagogues are any less rabbis of the community than were their predecessors of the European school is misleading. It is also disquieting to realize that our b'nai Torah somehow equate the phrase 'guardian of Torah' only with the rosh yeshiva and not the rabbi, in spite of the excellent record established by so many of their former schoolmates in establishing Torah communities and strengthening Torah institutions throughout the United States.

To claim, as does the Rejoinder in point 6, that the young Orthodox rabbi is, too often, but a traditional counterpart of his deviationist colleague and is himself responsible for giving equal status to Reform and Conservative rabbis is unfair, unfeeling and unkind. There are indeed such so-called Orthodox rabbis, but what of the countless rabonim who have dedicated their lives to shoring up the crumbling walls of the U. S. Torah fortress, who have established Torah institutions in the arid, wasteland of dying Jewish communities; and the hundreds of others who have resisted the dubious honor, but real advantage, of belonging to mixed rabbinic groups? These Orthodox rabbis have consistently demonstrated their commitment and courage by retaining their position of independence, with integrity, in spite of intimidation and pressures. . . .

How strange and how sad to observe for whom b'nai Torah have *derech erez*: usually far more for the *musmach* who, fearful of being contaminated by

his environment flees the rabbinate for the safe harbor of chinuch, the organizational field, or the business world, than for the pulpit rabbi who confronts the challenges of his community, struggling with the paramount problems of our time and ekes out, in his glorious loneliness, victories which so few recognize or appreciate. Who evokes one's admiration and respect, is the best index of a person's own standards and values, hence not only how sad and strange but also how tragic, the scale of values too many of our b'nai Torah possess.

LET ME CLARIFY my position in a positive manner by briefly suggesting the following for the sake of elevating the *kovod harabonus* and hopefully healing the breach between the forces in our Torah community.

1) There must be a positive approach in yeshivos toward rabonim and the rabbinate. When was the last time a Rosh Yeshiva gave a *shmuess* to his pupils praising the work of rabonim in this country? Indeed, when was the last time a rosh yeshiva encouraged his *better* students to enter rabonus?

2) The involvement of b'nai Torah in the synagogue must not be minimized. An earnest effort to help, to be part of the shul, to be *mekarev* other laymen is of extreme importance. Their presence must have its effect upon the stature of the shul, the sermons and shiurim of the rabbi and the future trend of synagogues and communities in our country.

3) The title 'rabbi' must become more selective. It is the considered opinion of this writer, after two and a half decades in the rabbinate, that the indiscriminate use of this title has helped in demeaning *derech erez* for the rav and has given far too many the illusion of being the equal of the rav. The wise man is the one, our Sages tell us, who recognizes his place, but this wisdom does not necessarily come as an automatic bonus to everyone who once attended a yeshiva.

The question of how we shall re-establish the *kovod* of the rabbinate, strengthen the position of the rabbi in his community, bridge the gap which exists between the Synagogue world and the Yeshiva world, does not lend itself to a simple and quick answer. It is told that one of the Gedolim was asked by a pupil how to chart his course in *rabonus*. He answered indirectly, but most tellingly, "many people have travelled the oceans for thousands of years but none have made a road as yet." The same, of course, is true of *rabonus* and of the relationship of the rabbi to the rosh yeshiva and the ben Torah. There is no set formula, there are no easy answers, but this much we know: there is a great reservoir of talent in our country which can strengthen both the rabbinate and the lay community. To draw from this reservoir demands from

us a high degree of maturity, a sense of responsibility and an understanding of one another. I am hopeful that the discussions in these pages have helped to bring us a little closer to the uniting of our forces for the sake of Torah in the United States.

RABBI RALPH PELCOVITZ  
Far Rockaway, New York

*The writer replies:*

An author usually feels that whoever disagrees with him has not adequately understood his viewpoint, lacks knowledge of the subject, and engages in theoretical polemics. Ultimately it is the reader who has to judge between author and critic, and we are content to leave the decision to him. As for Rabbi Pelcovitz's specific points, they all seem to be based on the idea that we were concerned with painting the American rabbi in pitch-black colors, and that he therefore has to rise to the defense of the rabbi's courage and devotion. Actually, we were not interested in moralizing about the American rabbi, but in evaluating the problems that he faces and the pitfalls to which he is subject.

Thus — on Rabbi Pelcovitz's "first and foremost" point — we did *not* denigrate the courage of the rabbi, as compared to that of the rosh yeshiva; we pointed out the unbelievable pressures operating on the rabbi and the fact that such compromises as he may make are usually due to the loftiest motivations. But all these considerations, while they enhance our respect for the rabbi's personal integrity, do not undo the harsh fact that he all *too* often *is* forced into compromise, and will therefore neither convince the bnai Torah that they should enter the rabbinate under present conditions, nor that their local rabbi is a better source of guidance than their rosh yeshiva. (Incidentally, the American rosh yeshiva is well aware of the problems of the wider Jewish world, and indeed greatly exposed to its pressures; but even if it were not so, we must reject any implication that his teachings are molded by his "functioning in a sympathetic and obedient circle" or that his integrity and courage, as a result, have not been established by the test of circumstances.)

SIMILARLY, in drawing a distinction between community rabbi and congregational rabbi, we were not concerned with belittling anybody; certainly there are many, many men in the rabbinate who have achieved a great deal — but it is still the case that the obstacles in the way of the congregational rabbi are so much greater, and his authority and sphere of operation so much more circumscribed. The field of Kashrus, for

instance, is being almost totally pre-empted by national organizations, and Torah-*chinuch* is *not* congregation-centered either; for that reason, whether we like it or not, the roshai yeshiva are the "guardians of Torah" par excellence today.

Since we were concerned with analyzing the difficulties and image of the Orthodox rabbinate, we had to draw attention to the harm done to that image by those Orthodox rabbis and rabbinic organizations who have joined mixed rabbinic groups. Of course there have been very, very many Orthodox rabbis who have preserved their independence — but that does not alter the fact that their less staunch colleagues have greatly helped to rob the rabbinate — as a whole — of a great deal of its prestige.

Without belittling or overlooking the devoted and successful work of so many Orthodox rabbis, the purpose of our analysis was to point out that the rabbinate today encounters such deep-seated difficulties, and, as a result, is so often caught in frustration and failure, that more is needed than just a *Mussar shmuess* by roshai yeshiva to raise its prestige or to get bnai Torah to become rabbis. There are truly no simple and quick answers. Perhaps, however, the key to the strengthening of the American rabbinate, as we tried to suggest, lies in its developing its own closer ties with, and greater dependence upon, the Gedolei Torah at the helm of our yeshivos.

To the Editor:

Though it doesn't really matter, there is precedence for an editor of a publication writing "a letter to the editor." Like many of our readers, I have been stimulated by the articles in our October issue on the inter-relationships between rabbis and b'nei Torah.

I've been on both sides of the fence — as a yeshiva bochur, snickering at the rabbis who visited our Beis Medrash with their upturned brims, or Homburgs, and with their round Stephen-Wise-like

tones of speech. I also spent twelve years in rabbonus, where *I* was the target, and must, therefore, admit to some bias, or at least *mitgefuel*, in favor of the rabbi. The issues have been adequately aired, with both sides, we feel, eloquently presented, but it appears that one element of the problem has been ignored.

No doubt everyone agrees that this problem is a direct result of undreamed of growth of Torah in America: the problem simply didn't exist in Colonial America, in the 19th century—not even forty years ago. But this doesn't make it merely a matter of "growing pains." Of course, any new situation in life which involves groups of people, requires a period of adjustment, and during this period there is bound to be misunderstanding and recrimination. In a Torah context, the confusion must ultimately be resolved by Torah axioms and Torah values.

There are inherent in the relationship between the rabbi and the ben Torah certain specific pitfalls. The rabbi is confronted with problems—not of his making—which require of him tact and diplomacy, and the reconciliation of conflicting views among his congregants. The ben Torah—as it should be—sees things with the purity of *daas Torah*. It is inevitable, given the imperfection of human behavior, that there should arise areas of disagreement between the two. When this is the case, both rabbi and ben Torah must avoid the pitfalls of lack of mutual respect. The ben Torah, for example, who walks out when the rabbi speaks, or uses the occasion to bury his head in a sefer, undermines the respect for the rabbi which he needs to exercise Torah leadership. The rabbi, for example, who in one way or another, ignores the ben Torah in his congregation, deprives himself of the support of the ben Torah.

The pulpit rabbi, it should be remembered, is himself a ben Torah; as Rabbi Pelcovitz observes he is—in many cases —loyal to, and subservient to the higher authority of his own rebbe, and other

**SCHECHTER & HIRSCH'S** **CARIBBEAN**

♥ is a Great Kosher Hotel ♥

**-you'll love it!**

<p>RATES AS LOW AS</p> <p><b>\$10*</b> daily per person dbl. occ.</p> <p>TO DECEMBER 19 *25 of 155 rooms INCLUDING MEALS</p>	<p>Write Dept. A for FREE Brochure and Booklet</p> <p>For Reservations Phone: (305) 531-0061</p> <p>N.Y. PL 7-4238 • Eves. &amp; Sun. FA 7-1742</p>
--	---

On the Oceanfront • 37th to 38th St., Miami Beach, Fla.

gedolim. Unlike the ben Torah who has eschewed the pulpit—with the best of reasons—he has chosen to expose himself to fire under most undesirable conditions. He is exposed to the fire of his balebatim who want him to “ease up” so that their congregation can compete with the non-Orthodox groups in their community. It is self-defeating of the mutual goals of the rabbi and the ben Torah, to expose the rabbi to the crossfire of the ben Torah, thus making him more vulnerable to the whims of the less observant members of the congregation.

(Incidentally, when such a situation confronts a rabbi or a ben Torah, is it not sufficient cause for him to seek instruction from his rebbe—any less so than when he has any other *shayle*?)

Let us discuss this problem, let us act on it. But if it is our supposition that our major concern is the glory of Torah, then let us behave like b'nei Torah.

YAAKOV JACOBS

### Torah and Relevance

To the Editor:

In your issue for September, 1967 you carry an article by Dr. Leo Levi on *Torah and Relevance*.

Dr. Levi seems to contradict himself in this article. He poses the question as to why there is no mitzvah commanding us to admonish . . . non-Jews. His answer . . . is that we are to serve only in the capacity of teachers by example. From this, then, follows that exile represents our failure to be teachers by example and also implies that our mission to serve as teachers by example is temporarily suspended. He then goes on to say that this temporary suspension of mission is the solution to “a serious historical mystery,” that none of our great leaders have addressed unsolicited admonishment to the gentile world. But if this is so, then when Israel is not in exile there should be such admonishment, which contradicts his basic premise that we are never commanded to admonish the gentile world.

The mission of being a beacon to the nations is to be understood as an expression of the Divine plan. It is not a commandment of action. The commandments are only *Taryag*.

Even if there were an active commandment to teach the gentiles this would not automatically necessitate a commandment of admonition. Admonition to the Jew is not a corollary of teaching Torah, but rather of *Ahavas Yisroel*—the love for a fellow Jew. (Rambam *Deos* VI)

It seems apparent from Rambam that the Jew is obligated actively to teach the Noahide mitzvos to the gentiles, and to impose their observance upon them.

(Rambam, *Melachim* VIII, 10-11.) There is no mention whatsoever in Rambam that this obligation ceases with exile. The power of imposition does, naturally cease with exile.

B. SRULOVITZ

Dr. Levi replies:

1) The apparent contradiction in my article may readily be resolved on hand of a brief citation from it, concerning the “historic mystery”:

*It all becomes clear as soon as we understand . . . only by example are we to teach and only as a successful nation can we hope to guide. . . .*

Clearly both factors contribute to explaining the mystery. Incidentally, I did not mean to imply that we should not explain the Noahide laws to non-Jews—only that the primary teaching method is to be by example.

2) In the second point the reader implies that our obligations number only 613. This is somewhat of an over-simplification.

(a) There are many disputes concerning what is to be counted as a commandment, even in instances where the authorities agree that both alternatives are binding, e.g., neither Rambam, nor Ramban, count “You shall be holy.” (Lev. 19, 2); “You shall know this day and return it to your heart that G-d is the Lord.” (Deut. 4,39); “And you shall choose life.” (Deut. 30,19); although, presumably they agree that these commands are binding. (Other authorities do count them; see *Sepher Hacharedim*.) *Ba'al Halakhoth G'doloth* does not even count belief in G-d as a mitzvah, although it is certainly required— even prerequisite to every other mitzvah.

It should not surprise us if the various *monai hamitzvoth* counted only specific obligations which apply to individuals, but not general obligations, and obligations resting on the nation as such.

(b) I did not state, or mean to imply, that there is a mitzvah to teach the non-Jews. (Cf. *Sepher Chasidim* (Edition M'kitzei Nidramim, Ch. 1).

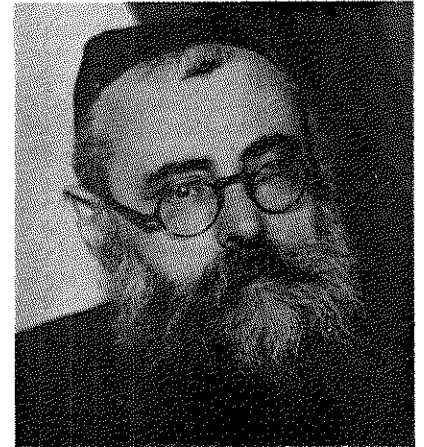
3) The reader states that, according to Rambam, the obligation to admonish flows from our obligation to love a fellow Jew. I have not seen this stated by the Rambam—the Rambam only says that we should not hate the offender silently—and, indeed, it is open to question. Rambam states in connection with this obligation that “one who could interdict (a sinner) and fails to do so—he is punished for the transgression.” (De'oth 6,7). Clearly he is punished for his passive contribution to the transgression, not merely for a lack of love.

4) To clarify the point concerning Rambam, M'lakhim 8, 10, let me quote the passage in translation:


“Similarly — on divine order — Mosheh Rabbenu commanded [us] to force all people to accept the mitzvot that the sons of Noach were commanded; and that every-one who does not accept them is to be killed.”

May the reader judge for himself whether this could be meant to obligate us while in exile.

### WORLD ORTHODOX LEADER NOW VISITING AMERICA



RABBI YITZCHOK MEIR LEVIN, world leader of Agudath Israel, and president of Agudath Israel of Israel, is now visiting in this country in conjunction with the Forty-Fifth Convention of Agudath Israel of America. □



UNITED

## Chevra Kadisha

D'chasidim • Har Hamnuchot  
Founded 1856

**BURIAL IN JERUSALEM**  
AND ALL CEMETERIES IN ISRAEL

### maalin Bakodesh SOCIETY

44 CANAL ST.  
NEW YORK CITY 1002  
Nr. E. Broadway Sta. “D” Train

Day & Nite Phone  
**WA 5-2277**

The Jewish Observer / November, 1967

Have you renewed  
your subscription?  
Do it now!

**STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (Act of October 23, 1962; Section 4369, Title 39, United States Code)**

1. Date of Filing: October 1, 1967
2. Title of Publication: The Jewish Observer
3. Frequency of Issue: Monthly, except July and August
4. Location of Known Office of Publication: 5 Beekman Street, New York, N. Y. 10038
5. Location of the Headquarters or General Business Office of the Publishers (Not Printers): 5 Beekman Street, New York, N. Y. 10038
6. Names and Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher—Agudath Israel of America; Chr. Editorial Board—Dr. Ernst L. Bodenheimer, 5 Beekman Street, N.Y.C.; Managing Editor—Rabbi Yaakov Jacobs, 5 Beekman Street, N.Y.C. 10038
7. Owner: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual must be given.) Agudath Israel of America, 5 Beekman Street, New York, N. Y. 10038
8. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or other Securities: None
9. Paragraphs 7 and 8 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than of a bona fide owner. Names and addresses of individuals who are stockholders of a corporation which itself is a stockholder or holder of bonds, mortgages or other securities of the publishing corporation have been included in paragraphs 7 and 8 when the interests of such individuals are equivalent to 1 percent or more of the total amount of the stock or securities of the publishing corporation.
10. This item must be completed for all publications except those which do not carry advertising other than the publisher's own and which are named in sections 132,231, 132,232, and 132,233, Postal Manual. (Sections 4355a, 4355b, and 4356 of Title 39, United States Code). A. Total No. Copies printed (Net Press Run): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 16,500; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 16,500 B. Paid Circulation 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 500; single issue nearest to filing date, 500. 2. Mail subscriptions: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months 15,500 single issue nearest to filing date, 15,500. C. Total paid circulation, 16,000. D. Free distribution (including samples) by mail, carrier or other means: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 250; single issue nearest to filing date, 250. E. Total distribution (Sum of C & D): average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 16,250; Single issue nearest to filing date, 16,250. F. Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 250; Single issue nearest to filing date, 250. G. Total (Sum of E & F—should equal net press run shown in A), average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 16,500; single issue nearest to filing date, 16,500. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Agudath Israel of America  
Rabbi Morris Sherer, Executive Vice-Pres.

# New Feldheim Publications

- MAIMONIDES AND THE GEONITES** by Dr. Meir Havazelet. Hebrew text with an English Introduction. .....\$4.50
- THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT** by Rabbi Abraham Travitzky. A collection of reasons, aims, and purposes of the mitzvoh. ....\$2.50
- TARYAG** by Abraham Hirsch Rabinowitz. A Study of the origin and historical development from the earliest times to the present day of the tradition that the written Torah contains six hundred and thirteen mitzvoh. ....\$3.75
- HEAR MY SON.** A collection of aphorisms by Shraga Silverstein. ....\$3.75
- MEN OF SPIRIT.** Edited by Rabbi Leo Jung. A monumental volume containing thirty-one essays summing up the teachings and life-work of the great religious leaders who have guided the Jewish people during the last three centuries. The learned writers of these essays record and analyse the magnificent contributions the great sages have made to modern Jewish life. 752 pages .....\$8.50
- JEWS IN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES.** Jubilee volume of the Jewish Academy of Arts and Sciences. ....\$6.00
- THE WORKS OF EDGAR FRANK: TALMUDIC AND RABBINICAL CHRONOLOGY:** The Systems of counting years in Jewish Literature. ....\$3.50
- ZEMANIM.** Time tables for the entire world for the observance of daily mitzvoh. ....\$4.00
- BAR MITZVAH CALENDAR.** Bar Mitzvah Calendar till 1983. Sidroth — Haftoroth. ....\$2.25
- SHABBOTH.** The Time of its Beginning and Termination. A Halachic — Astronomic Investigation. ....\$2.50
- THE GOLDEN HERITAGE** by David M. Hausdorff. An unusual one-volume tree of knowledge containing significant excerpts from thirty-five centuries of traditional literature, as well as original articles on matters of current interest and concern. All written in language intelligible and understandable to today's earnest seeker of information and knowledge. Clothbound 260 pp. ....\$5.95
- THE BOOK OF HANUKKAH.** The Story of the Maccabees. Incorporating an Album of Illustrations in full color by Siegmund Forst. Large de-luxe edition. \$6.00
- THE COMMENTARY OF IBN EZRA ON ISAIAH.** Edited from

mss. and translated with a biography of Ibn Ezra, notes and indexes by Michael Friedlander. This is a reprint of a classic which was out of print for many years. 2 parts in one vol. ....\$7.50

**THE ITINERARY OF BENJAMIN OF TUDELA.** Hebrew text, English translation and commentary by Marcus Nathan Adler. The Classic edition of the famous ספר מסעות של ר' בנימין ז"ל .....\$6.00

**תולדות תנאים ואמוראים  
מאת הרב אהרן היימאן**

- comprising biographies of the Rabbis and other personalities mentioned in Rabbinic literature. Compiled from Talmudic and Midrashic sources and arranged alphabetically. 3 vols. ....\$17.50
- UNIVERSAL JEWISH HISTORY** by Rabbi Dr. Philip Biberfeld. Vol. I: Ancient Jewish Heritage Vol. II: The Patriarchal Age. The most elaborately annotated work of this era in which Dr. Biberfeld continues his researches on the origins of Judaism, as opposed to the higher critics who consider the faith a mere borrowing from surrounding races. A pious, scholarly and provocative work. Vol. I — \$2.75 Vol. II — \$4.75
- RAMBAN.** His Life and Teachings by Rabbi Charles B. Chavel. A biography of one of the greatest Jewish, spiritual giants — plus an exposition, in modern terms of his main teachings and principles. With Index .....\$3.50
- THESE AND THOSE.** A frank dialogue dealing with the subject of Torah and secular education. An objective evaluation by Rav Simon Schwab. Paper — \$1.40
- JEWISH IDENTITY.** A documentary compilation by Baruch Litvin, edited by Dr. Sidney B. Hoenig. The replies of 45 rabbis, scholars and philosophers to the question "Who is a Jew?" .....\$6.75
- WHAT THE JEWISH COLLEGE STUDENT THINKS.** The attitudes of the Jewish College Student toward his religion as reflected in two reference groups by Rabbi David Stavsky. ....\$4.00

**PHILIPP FELDHEIM, Inc.**

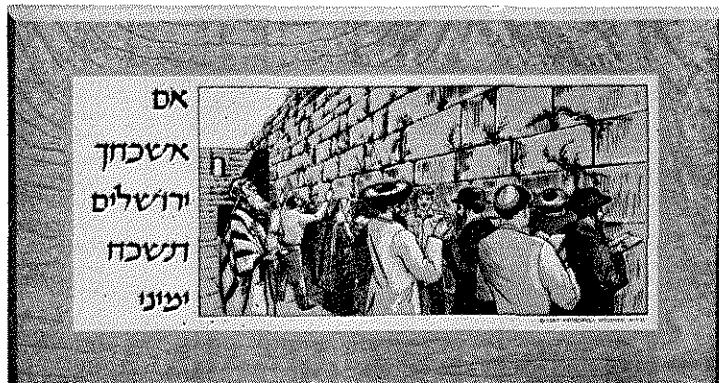
*The House of the Jewish Book*

**96 EAST BROADWAY  
New York, N. Y. 10002  
Tel. WA 5-3180**

give a gift ...  
 get a gift  
**free**

*it's very simple — no gimmicks*

*for every gift subscription you give  
 we will show our appreciation by sending to you  
 this beautiful plaque that will grace your home*



*(richly laminated, with built-in hanger, 11" x 6"  
 — created by ARTSCROLL STUDIOS)*

\*\*\* GIFT CERTIFICATE \*\*\*

Start a gift subscription for:

Name.....  
 Address.....

Rush your free gift to:

Name.....  
 Address.....

\$5.00 is enclosed

\*\*\* GIFT CERTIFICATE \*\*\*

Start a gift subscription for:

Name.....  
 Address.....

Rush your free gift to:

Name.....  
 Address.....

\$5.00 is enclosed

\*\*\* GIFT CERTIFICATE \*\*\*

Start a gift subscription for:

Name.....  
 Address.....

Rush your free gift to:

Name.....  
 Address.....

\$5.00 is enclosed

\*\*\* GIFT CERTIFICATE \*\*\*

Start a gift subscription for:

Name.....  
 Address.....

Rush your free gift to:

Name.....  
 Address.....

\$5.00 is enclosed

Write: Gift Dept. / THE JEWISH OBSERVER / 5 Beekman St., N. Y., N. Y. 10038