

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

VOL. 2 No. 9  
SEPTEMBER 1965 / ELUL 57.  
FIFTY CENTS



*Siegmund Forst*

Soviet Jewry and Jewish Responsibility

Education: The Step-child of Jewish Budgeting

The Utilitarian View of the Yeshiva — A Complaint

Is the Jew Losing His Identity?

# 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; single copy: 50¢. Printed in the U.S.A.

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SEPT. 1965 VOL. II, No. 9



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*A drawing for a wood-cut by Siegmund Forst.*

# Soviet Jewry and Jewish Responsibility

## *The Historical and Torah Dimensions of the Problem*

One of the most serious ailments which plagues American Jewry is the notion—unspoken, but always evident—that the many problems facing the Jew today arose the day before yesterday. Assimilation, intermarriage, holding on to our youth—these basic Jewish problems are viewed, discussed and hotly debated, as though the Jewish past had nothing to tell us about them.

As we scan our daily newspapers and read of the growing interest and concern with Soviet Jewry, it becomes evident that here too Jews and Jewish leaders appear to be coming to grips with a new problem that has suddenly appeared on the Jewish horizon. But it is not a new problem, neither from the perspective of the historic hostility for the Jew, nor from the perspective of the history of Jews living in Czarist Russia and the Soviet Union. If we are to be intelligently concerned, at least a sprinkling of historical data is necessary to save us from the pitfalls of a purely emotional response to a most complex and delicate problem.

### *Constant Persecution*

As early as the thirteenth century, Jews from western Europe began to migrate to Poland where they ultimately created the glory that was Polish Jewry. Following a series of partitions of Poland which came to a climax in 1795, the bulk of Europe's Jewry, perhaps of world Jewry, lived in Czarist Russia, a nation that had always been most reluctant to admit Jews into its borders. The period from 1795 to 1917 was one of constant persecution, confining Jews to the infamous *Pale of Settlement* and inflicting upon them a reign of terror, discrimination and bloodshed.

As the pace of persecution quickened, millions of Jews found refuge in other parts of the world—over two-thirds of the Jewish immigrants who came to the United States between 1880 and 1920 were fleeing Czarist brutality and inhumanity. Yet strangely, in spite of their suppression, Russian Jewry continued to be the crown of the Jewish people. Most of the Torah leaders of today are products of the great East-European yeshivos, or the scions of the chassidic dynasties

that flourished at the very height of Czarist brutality.

World War I changed all this. More than one half of Russian Jewry found themselves in the newly established states that dotted the map of Eastern Europe in the period between the two World Wars. The remainder were citizens of the Soviet Union.

### *Antisemitism Made a Crime*

Following the revolution which gave birth to the Soviet Union, Bolshevik leaders tried to remove the poison of antisemitism which the Romanov rulers had injected into the hearts and minds of the Russian people. Antisemitism was made a crime, and it should be no surprise then, that numbers of Jews became enthusiastic fighters for the ideals of social justice which the new regime proclaimed.

There was another side to the picture: The militant atheists of the New Russia unleashed a violent campaign against organized religion, reacting to the disreputable role played by the official Greek-Orthodox Church during the last years of the Czars, and Judaism too was subjected to intensive attacks and vilification. While the struggle against all other religions gradually abated, the campaign against the Jewish religion became more intense. Though this campaign had official sanction, its greatest thrust came from the unholy enthusiasm of the *Yevsekcia*, the Jewish section of the Communist party. They carried on the war against Judaism with greater fervor than their non-Jewish brethren, because it expressed their own deep-felt hostility to Torah and Jewish tradition.

The campaign had a large measure of success; the once-flourishing spiritual life of the Jewish community steadily declined; voluntary or enforced assimilation threatened to silence the centuries-old voice of Russia's Jewry.

Yet for several decades up to the end of the rule of Stalin, world Jewry, led by many of the secular leaders who today have become the defenders of Soviet Jewry, had nothing to say about their decline. During all these years the lamentations and cautious protests of religious Jewry were a lonely voice. Jewish "culture"—theatre, Yiddishist literature—was not disturbed and at times encouraged by the government; it was only

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Torah that was the target of suppression. Those who believed that such cultural manifestations could assure the survival of Soviet Jewry saw no threat in the hostile attitude to the Jewish religion. They found the attacks by the *Yevsekcia* to be more or less consistent with their own desire to emancipate the Jew from the chains of tradition and to make of him a "free and equal" citizen of the world. Some of the secular Jewish leaders subscribed completely to the *Yevsekcia* ideology, and when there was disagreement it was only in degree. It all came down to the question: Should Jews assimilate completely, thereby resolving forever the "Jewish Problem," or should they replace the heritage of Sinai with a secular Jewish nationalism? It was only when cultural activities were curtailed and a previously latent antisemitism came to the surface that the secular Jewish leadership became alarmed.

For a while they contented themselves with "quiet diplomacy," not unlike the efforts of religious Jewry, to alleviate the situation of Soviet Jewry by negotiation and understanding. But when they became disenchanted with "quiet diplomacy" they suddenly took up the cudgels for the religious needs of Soviet Jewry, bemoaning the lack of matzohs and siddurim and other religious articles in the Soviet Union.

### *Blowing the Shofar*

The decision to forsake quiet diplomacy and to enter the arena of world public opinion, loosened a flood of demonstrations and gimmicks. While the United States of America with its vast prestige and military might chooses to meet the Soviet Union at the quiet and secret conference table, or at worst in the councils of the United Nations, our self-styled leaders blew the *shofar* in the New York City street outside the building which houses the Soviet delegation to the U. N. A rash of public meetings and demonstrations has gained wide coverage in the American and Jewish press, but little thought or concern has been given to the possible harmful effects this hostile attitude would have on the Jews of the Soviet Union. Speakers, with an eye on the next day's headlines, went so far as to accuse the Soviet Union of genocide, a reckless charge which can only antagonize Soviet leaders and leave Jewry open to accusations of involvement in the "Cold War."

Torah Jewry, which alone can feel the intensity of the problem, has advocated and pursued the policy of caution and reason. The most responsible Torah leaders have warned against airing the problem of Soviet Jewry in the daily press and at mass demonstrations, only to be criticized for following the course of the *shtadlonim* of other days. Here again, Jewish leadership betrayed its ignorance of the Jewish past. *Shtadlonus* has been adopted into the lexicon of Jewish secularism as a dirty word, conjuring up images of the Ghetto, where Jews meekly accepted their fate and

attempted to head off attacks against them by humble appeals to the authorities. A cursory glance at the pages of Jewish history places *Shtadlonus* in a different light. Jewish leaders—they were all committed to the primacy of Torah in Jewish life and most often were the leading scholars of their day—recognized that the Jewish people were a defenseless minority subject to the caprice of government officials. With this in mind they sought to quietly influence these officials toward more favorable treatment of the Jews under their rule, at times achieving only a temporal stay of execution, at other times winning concessions that made possible thriving Jewish communities.

The present-day critics of *Shtadlonus* are not above using it themselves. How could one describe the constant stream of Jewish leaders to the back doors of the White House prior to the founding of the State of Israel, if not as acts of *Shtadlonus*? What is the function of the Presidents Conference of Major Jewish Organizations today, if not *Shtadlonus* on behalf of Israel? And yet, when Torah Jewry proposes this same approach to the needs of Soviet Jewry, it is described as a throwback to the ghetto mentality. Arthur Goldberg, the new American Ambassador to the U.N. is reported to be instituting a new approach in international diplomacy; he has rejected the formula of public debate and has instituted a policy of informal discussion with diplomatic representatives, a method which he believes will accomplish more for U. S. aims than angry charges in the open arena. *Shtadlonus*?

### *Secular Re-thinking*

Of late, there has been a stirring among certain secular leaders of American Jewry; a willingness to re-think their positions and to advocate the methodology proposed by Torah leaders. In June of this year Dr. Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Zionist Organization, told a news conference at his Park Avenue headquarters, that accusations against the Soviet Union over its treatment of Jews were "too often being distorted" and could "only delay the solution of the problem, and even harm Soviet Jewry." Goldmann's remarks, published on the front page of *The New York Times* (6/11/65) brought an immediate reaction from the Jewish leaders whose policy he was questioning. On June 14th the *Times* reported from Jerusalem that "The Jewish Agency for Israel has disavowed remarks made on Soviet Jews by Dr. Nahum Goldmann. . . ." His opinions, they said, were "personal and did not reflect the policies of the World Zionist Organization." So strong was the reaction against Goldmann, that he was forced to the verge of recanting, while pointing out that he had expressed his views on other occasions without being publicly denounced. He blamed *The New York Times* for playing up his statement and sullenly remarked that had the report appeared on a

back page rather than the front page, he would not have been so fiercely hit.

The truth is that Goldmann has long been critical of the policy of the Jewish Establishment on Soviet Jewry and he is not alone among secular leaders in his views. In March of this year, Philip Klutznick, past president of B'nai Brith and former U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations—a man with more diplomatic experience than those who espouse the “arena of public opinion” position—addressed a public meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, and declared that activities of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry might be “protest for the sake of protest. . . .” In considering a delicate proposition involving the lives of hundreds of thousands of human beings. . . . It is imperative,” Klutznick said, “that we use a sense of true perspective, and not inject false and fierce emotions or act on unreliable premises.” From Mr. Klutznick’s successor as

president of B'nai Brith came no reaction; just another press conference with charges of the very nature that Klutznick had cautioned against. M. Z. Frank, a *National Jewish Post and Opinion* columnist who rarely finds himself in support of Orthodox views, strongly supported Klutznick’s position (4/16/65) and chided American Jews whose “knowledge of the history of Jews in Russia is even poorer than [their] familiarity with Jewish history generally,” and whose “present line . . . demanding for the Jews in the U.S.S.R. the same, or nearly the same, rights that the Jews enjoy in the U.S.A. is not likely to bring about practical results.”

History indicates the efficacy of the quiet approach to so delicate a problem; the realities of world politics and modern diplomacy point toward the attitude of conciliation; and above all, *Daas Torah*, the combined wisdom of Torah learning and centuries of Jewish living, dictate the only proper path.

*Morris Sherer*

## Education: The Step-child of Jewish Budgeting

*Some Facts on “The Pursuit of Mediocrity” by the Establishment*

The Establishment which controls the purse-strings of Jewish community spending, always sensitive to new modes and vogues, has not caught the mood of the times regarding education:

ITEM: While America has embarked on a “pursuit of excellence,” striking out for exciting new goals in education, the Jewish community is straggling along in “a pursuit of mediocrity,” catering to the lowest common denominator in education.

ITEM: While the American federal budget has multiplied twenty-fold in the past ten years, the Jewish Federations’ allocations to education for the same period has increased at a snail’s pace by only 52 percent (for all: Orthodox, Conservative and Reform).

How ironic—we, “the People of the Book” who already in ancient times had proclaimed to the world the primacy of education, are in the 20th century taking

a back seat in our zeal for education while the world passes us by. America’s leaders, when the Sputnik and other developments alarmed them about the cultural failings in our country, reacted to the challenge with vigor and granted priority to education. Jewish leaders, on the other hand, refuse to see the hand-writing on the wall. Faced with the loss of the entire American Jewish community by intermarriage and indifference, they mouth platitudinous phrases about “Jewish survival” and “the primacy of education,” but in reality have relegated *chinuch* to the role of a step-child in communal concern and financing.

These were some of the thoughts that flashed through my mind while attending the White House Conference on Education last month, listening to addresses and reports, and assessing the tone of the gathering. A new era is opening in American education, with the educator soon to be placed on a prestigious pedestal with status he never before enjoyed. Unfortunately, Jewish education is lagging far behind in this respect.

U. S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel

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pinpointed the dramatic new interest in education in terms of dollars and cents: Ten years ago, in the fiscal year 1956, federal appropriations for the Office of Education were 166 million dollars. Constantly rising, they came to about 700 million dollars in 1964. "And then the federal effort *really* began," he declared. In fiscal 1965 appropriations more than doubled to almost 1.5 billion dollars. In the current fiscal 1966 they will more than double again to about \$3.3 billion. Thus, in a decade the concern for education as expressed in the tangible form of dollars skyrocketed by more than 2,000 percent!

### Some Disturbing Figures

Compare this radical change in outlook to the figures of the allocations to Jewish education by Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds (based upon *Jewish Communal Services*, published by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, in April, 1965). In 1963, the last year for which official figures are available, (but the 1965 figures are estimated to be approximately the same) the Jewish Federations received contributions of over 125 million dollars (excluding capital funds) and of this sum allocated 5½ million dollars for education in the U. S. A. This represents an increase of only 52 percent in the last decade, the period when the alarm bells were ringing with a warning of the danger of the extinction of the Jewish people.

The pattern of business as usual regarding education, emerges more clearly, when one contrasts this piddling sum with the Federations' grants to local recreational services (primarily Jewish Community Centers), which during the same period increased 59 percent, with allocations now totalling 13 million dollars for the year. What emerges is an evident tendency of the Establishment to solve the problem of "the vanishing Jew" not with education, the only effective solution, but by building more and bigger Jewish community centers; percentage-wise, the biggest boom in local community projects has been in this field. Total expenditure by these Centers in the last ten years more than doubled to 28 million dollars per year, with the Federations footing almost half of the bill. This represents the largest domestic outlay by Federations; indeed a sad commentary on the philosophy of the Jewish community power-structure. In the light of the appalling lack of Jewish content in these Centers, only a sick Jewish society can give priority over *chinuch* to recreation programs, sterile lectures and social dancing.

### Community Relations

For community relations purposes, the Federations granted over 3½ million dollars in 1963, representing an increase in the past decade of 37 percent: \$2,633,830

were allocated to the national community relations agencies (such as the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, Jewish Labor Committee), and close to a million dollars to local activities to "improve intergroup relations." The thinking of the Jewish budgeters becomes even more obvious when we note that they granted only 2 million dollars more for children's education than for programs to enhance the public image of the Jew, to espouse civil rights causes, etc.

Even within this narrow framework of concern for Jewish education, the emphasis varies widely amongst the communities. In a comparison study of funds allocated for Jewish education in 12 major cities (released by the CJFWF, 1960) the percentage of all funds raised ranged from a high of 8.09 percent in Detroit to 1.93 percent in San Francisco. Could there be a correlation between the niggardly 1.93 percent spent for Jewish education in San Francisco in 1959, with the fact that 17 percent of husbands and wives in San Francisco (in a 1959 survey) had a non-Jewish spouse?

The figures of the amounts spent for Jewish education are in a sense deceiving, because even these crumbs thrown to *chinuch* primarily feed the non-Orthodox education agencies and schools, which the non-Orthodox educators candidly admit is only "a mile wide but only one inch deep." The tragedy is compounded by this concentration on help to an educational system whose hallmark is mediocrity, while the Yeshivos, which are the sole resources of educational excellence, are treated like step-children. Of the 5½ million dollars spent for education, only \$633,131 was allocated to Yeshivos (according to figures compiled by *Torah Umesorah*). Even this minuscule sum does not portray the true state of this shocking situation: Of this total, \$256,000 was allocated in two cities: Chicago and Cleveland. The hundreds of Yeshivos in all other communities in the United States received the "staggering" sum of \$368,131. . . .

### Saving the "Lost Generation"

The myopia of the Jewish power structure is indeed frightening. Shouldn't the following sampling of statistics, which they surely are aware of, serve as a shock treatment to compel them to toss out their horse-and-buggy methods of saving the "lost generation" with bigger and better swimming pools at Jewish Community Centers:

- A study among 400 Jewish freshmen at three different colleges showed that only 17 percent could identify Chanukah and only 14 percent could name three Hebrew prophets.
- A survey by research expert Prof. Eric Rosenthal found that 17.9 percent of the Jews in Washington,

"Jewish education [secular educators admit] . . . is 'a mile wide but only one inch deep'. . . Of the \$5,500,000 spent for education, only \$633,131 was allocated to Yeshivos . . . Of this total, \$256,000 was allocated in two cities: Chicago and Cleveland. The hundreds of Yeshivos in all other communities in the United States received the 'staggering' sum of \$368,131 . . ."

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D.C. entered mixed-marriages and that a college education increased this intermarriage rate to 37 percent.

- Statistics compiled by the State Board of Health in Indiana showed that almost one out of every two Jews who married in that State in the four years up to 1963 married non-Jewish partners.

- A Harris Poll on religion in the U. S. released in August, 1965 found that "the sharpest degree of reported fall-off from parental (religious) practice comes among Negroes and Jews."

What is most strange is that for the past few years these so-called Jewish leaders have themselves been quoting similar statistics and beating the warning drums about "Jewish assimilation." Dr. Nahum Goldmann, the most powerful figure in the Jewish power structure in the Diaspora, earlier this year declared, in speaking about the threat of assimilation in this country: "*This process, if not halted and reversed, threatens Jewish survival more than persecution, inquisition, pogroms and mass-murder of Jews in the past.*" Like all others in a position to do something concrete to remedy this situation, he too offers pious solutions about "the primacy of education," but *Imaaseh* condones the continued starvation-diet offered to the pale and sickly *chinuch* plant in the United States.

To top this anomaly, the financial aid which does trickle down to education is in inverse proportion to the standards and financial needs of the system involved: *The more intensive Torah-study institutions, weakened by financial crises, are the very last to benefit from Federation aid.*

In New York City, the treatment accorded Jewish education, and especially Yeshivos, is even more shocking. Of the \$20 million raised by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies (*excluding* the much larger sum listed for building funds) only 4 percent—approximately \$800,000—is allocated for education. This paltry sum is given to a Reform-Conservative-Orthodox service agency, the Jewish Education Committee, whose contribution to meaningful Jewish education is at best questionable, and by Torah standards completely ob-

jectionable. Not one cent is allocated to help the large number of Yeshivos in New York City struggling against the most difficult of odds to keep their doors open to provide over 50,000 children with a Torah education.

The time has come for thinking Jews, regardless of their ideological leanings, to put an end to the conspiracy of silence which has enabled such a distressing situation to exist. Jewish community leadership must be compelled by an outraged public opinion to reappraise its entire system of budgeting and priorities. Included in this long hard look at the situation should be second thoughts about the advisability of the Federations spending so much of the Jewish charity dollar on projects no longer primarily serving the Jewish people, such as hospitals in those neighborhoods where their maintenance costs really belong to the general community. The new Federal welfare programs and the new social service programs which the government is now shouldering in increasing amounts should also free some of the Jewish charity dollar to serve our basic need of saving our children for a Jewish future.

Perhaps the beginning should be made in New York City, the largest community, with the largest number of Torah institutions desperately needing help. To rectify the injustice, the Federation should, as a first step, allocate a minimum of 5 percent of its regular income to Yeshiva education: one million dollars per year to maintain and expand Torah schools to guarantee Jewish existence. I know that a number of abortive attempts have been made in the past to sway the heads of the Federation to alter their policy towards Yeshivos. This should not deter new efforts in this direction by a dynamic informed Jewry. Are there not 100 Jews in the City of New York who would form a "Committee of 100" with the objective of launching such an historic project to help swing the pendulum of Jewish survival in this community?

The new climate in America fostering education should help create a more favorable consensus for *Chinuch* within the Jewish community. If not *now—when?*

# THE MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

## *Some of the Practical Perils of Coexistence*

The debate surrounding the participation of Orthodox bodies in national agencies which also include non-Orthodox religious groups has focused mainly on theoretical considerations and the long-range consequences of recognition of Reform and Conservative "Judaism" and their "rabbis." Strangely, there has been hardly any discussion of one area in American life where this coexistence intimately affects the daily lives of Orthodox Jews and creates numerous practical difficulties. The chaplaincy offers us an opportunity to examine what actually happens when Orthodoxy allows itself to function on an even level with Reform and Conservatism, and provides us with insights into the larger problem of coexistence in American Jewish life.

The Commission on Jewish Chaplaincy of the National Jewish Welfare Board, which is the government-recognized agency for the Jewish Chaplaincy in the Armed Services, consists of twenty-five rabbis, seven representing each "branch" and four serving at-large. This commission, with a working executive, directs the procurement and endorsement of military chaplains; provides kosher food to supplement the diet of those servicemen who do not eat in the regular military mess facilities, and also publishes and distributes pamphlets on various aspects of "Judaism." The commission also provides religious articles used in the military chapels and food for *Sedarim* held on *Pesach* at military installations.

In the military, discipline is a vital aspect of daily life. Authority is unquestioned, and any deviation from the norm is looked upon unfavorably, to say the least. For the new soldier the first weeks in the military are most difficult. The impact of the transition from civilian life to military life is hardest during the period of basic training; the days are long and hard and the recruit has limited mobility and communication with the world he has left behind him. The Jewish chaplain carries the responsibility of encouraging religious observance and assisting the recruit who has problems with Shabbos and Kashrus and whatever other conflicts may arise between his religious conviction and the military authority imposed upon him. Since the Jewish

chaplain represents Jewish authority, regardless of whether he is Orthodox, Reform or Conservative, the observant recruit is at the mercy of the chaplain's personal judgment as to what Jewish religious demands are and how they are to be met.

Following the period of basic training, the enlisted man is still required by military discipline, though to a lesser degree, to accept the religious authority of the chaplain. Even the commissioned-officer who is observant, is dependent on the Jewish chaplain—unless he is stationed close to an Orthodox community—for his basic religious needs; the Jewish chaplain who may have no sensitivity to Shabbos or Kashrus—not to speak of his own behavior—must certify the authenticity of the religious observance of the Orthodox officer as well as enlisted man.

### *Easy Prey*

It goes without saying that problems of religious observance will arise almost exclusively among Orthodox servicemen. The non-Orthodox Jew who has been given license by his spiritual leaders to disregard the fundamental practices of Jewish life, will rarely find himself in conflict with the demands made upon him by his superiors. The young man from an observant home who comes into the service with traditional Jewish feelings, but uncertain of how much of them he wants to retain, is easy prey for the non-Orthodox chaplain who will discourage standards of religious behavior which he himself does not maintain. Added to the military and social pressures the uncertain recruit encounters, the dispensations glibly offered by the chaplain can easily destroy the young man's Jewish sensitivity, not only during the period of his military service, but for the rest of his life. Those who are firm in their religious belief, and stubborn in their desire to live a Jewish life in the military, must still overcome the indifference, the neglect, or the outright hostility of the Jewish chaplain.

The problem is compounded, since the non-Orthodox chaplain speaks not as a Reform or Conservative "rabbi" but as the military representative of the "total Jewish community" who has been designated by a non-partisan board, including Orthodox representatives, who have vouched for the integrity and the credentials of their rabbinic colleague. Unlike any conceivable ex-

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“... the non-Orthodox chaplain speaks not as a Reform or Conservative ‘rabbi’ but as the military representative of the ‘total Jewish community’ who has been designated by a non-partisan board, including Orthodox representatives, who have vouched for the integrity and the credentials of their rabbinic colleagues. Unlike any conceivable experience in civilian life, an Orthodox Jew who is in the service of his country, must accept, without question, the religious authority of a man who denies *Torah MiSinai*, who mocks the name *rabbi* and whose personal behavior is the total negation of what he falsely represents.”

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perience in civilian life, an Orthodox Jew who is in the service of his country, must accept, without question, the religious authority of a man who denies *Torah MiSinai*, who mocks the name *rabbi* and whose personal behavior is the total negation of what he falsely represents.

Every Orthodox Jew who has served in the military can cite examples of the abuses heaped upon him by members of the Jewish chaplaincy, yet for the record we would do well to look at some recent experiences.

On a military base, the chaplain, who is supposedly obligated to conduct a service which is acceptable to all Jews, refused to permit *Krias Hatorah*. When a separate *minyan* was organized, it was denounced as a “divisive influence.” The same charge was hurled at attempts to arrange a Shabbos afternoon *minyan* and a class in *Chumash*.

An Orthodox soldier, who asked to be relieved of certain duties on Shabbos, a right granted by Army regulations, was refused assistance by the chaplain in securing this right.

Various food products of questionable *kashrus* and others most certainly *traif* were served at the Jewish chapel.

Orthodox men who sought the sanctuary of the chapel on Shabbos, were forced to participate in services which did violence to their religious beliefs.

Civilian members of a nearby-community were shocked when the chaplain drove up to the chapel on Shabbos and put on the lights, but the servicemen could express no criticism of the man who is their official spiritual leader.

The height of absurdity was reached during “Religious Emphasis Week,” an official army observance. The guest speaker, a Reform colleague of the Reform chaplain, found it necessary, in observance of “religious emphasis” to draw a parallel between worship today and that of ancient man. The latter, he told his captive audience, “worshipped fire because it was an unknown, and so we worship god.” Attempting to ex-

plain away the singularity of the Jewish people, the speaker declared that monotheism was borrowed by the Jew from an obscure Egyptian king, and he consigned other Jewish practices to the influence of paganism. While this may be considered proper fare in a Reform temple, it seems hardly fair to foist this self-hatred on a group of soldiers from varying backgrounds who are supposed to be the recipients of a Jewish ecumenicism.

When complaints are raised by the handful of individuals who want to maintain their patterns of religious behavior, the spirit of coexistence and democratic procedure provides a ready reply: Surely the needs of four or five men cannot override the wishes of forty or fifty men who have no need for *Krias Hatorah* or a Shabbos afternoon *minyan*.

The examples cited, in varying degrees, are typical of what confronts the Orthodox serviceman who is subject to the authority of a Jewish chaplain who bears the title “rabbi” bestowed upon him not only by his mentors at the Hebrew Union College or the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, but by his Orthodox rabbinical colleagues who sit on a joint chaplaincy commission, and certify him for religious service to all Jewish men at the post he is assigned to.

Until now, we have met the problem on a piece-meal basis, reacting to specific situations, begging and cajoling for what is a basic American and human right. Somehow, an independent Orthodox chaplaincy must be created, if we are to stop the abuse of Orthodox Jews by non-Orthodox clergy, and the destruction of Jewish belief of young men in the service of their country, whatever the number may be.

So long as non-Orthodox chaplains carry the credentials of their Orthodox colleagues, we shall continue to be powerless to meet the challenge of the Jewish chaplain who is hostile to all things Jewish. The chaplaincy provides us with a laboratory study of Jewish life under joint Jewish auspices. It also provides one more compelling reason for the creation of an independent Orthodoxy, responsible to *Daas Torah* alone and tied only to the G-d of our fathers.

# ONE VOICE

## *A Seductive Slogan Befuddles American Jewry*

American Jewry is plagued by America's love for slogans. Of course slogans are not of necessity dishonest or misleading. They can be used with integrity. But slogans more often, are substitutes for thinking, attempting to by-pass man's ability to discriminate. Often they raise unanswerable questions.

One of the most seductive slogans, which is now experiencing a revival, is the call for unity in American Jewish life, and the catchword is: ONE VOICE. Latest exponent of the thesis that American Jewry must speak "with one voice" is Dr. Max Nussbaum, past president of the Zionist Organization of America, who issued his call at the recent meeting of the World Jewish Congress in France.

Should American Jewry achieve this utopian goal of "one voice," it is commonly believed, many of the problems which plague us would be easily solved. Professor Jacob Neusner of the Dartmouth University Department of Religion, who is emerging as an articulate spokesman for the non-Orthodox-secularist axis, has suggested that "one voice" already exists in the Synagogue Council of America which needs merely to be beefed up by "a strong Constitution which permits action by majorities" which will give birth to "a more perfect union of American Judaism than has heretofore existed." (*The Intermountain Jewish News*, 7/16/65)

### *Majority Rule?*

The proponents of "one voice" ignore a simple historic fact: Judaism was not born on the shores of the North American continent; it came into being when *Avraham Ovinu* chose to serve the One G-d, and it reached its fruition when his children stood around *Har Sinai* and accepted G-d's Torah. This is the only "majority" that the authentic Jew can recognize; this is the one "show of hands" which has validity in Jewish life. Of course by the nature of the Free Will which G-d has granted all men, a single Jew or a community of Jews may choose to reject the experience of Sinai, but they thereby reject their Jewishness. While it is clear that they remain Jews, *Yisroel af al pi shechatah*, *Yisroel hu*, it is equally clear that they have cut themselves off from the Destiny of Sinai. That Jews whose very being is bound to Sinai should join with the forces who reject Sinai, in the hope that when

the hands are counted some remnant of Torah ideals will have survived, is unthinkable.

It is well in this context, that we take a look at the origins of the Synagogue Council of America. The idea of a council was born, according to a pamphlet on the subject published by SCA, in June 1924 at the annual meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform) when the president of that group called for: "cooperative endeavor among the diverse religious elements in American Jewry. There are problems in American Israel that need for their solution a united Israel. We need a unity based on religion . . . The Synagogue is greater than any congregation or group of congregations. Among the problems that such a body would deal with he mentioned marriage and divorce." He proposed a resolution calling for the formation of such a group which was enthusiastically—and of course unanimously—endorsed by his "American Rabbi" colleagues. "As a result"—we quote again from the official SCA history—"letters were sent to the USA (United Synagogue of America—Conservative) the RAA (Rabbinical Assembly—Conservative) the UOJC (Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations), and the Union of Orthodox Rabbis (Agudas Harabbonim), asking them to send delegates to confer with representatives of the UAHC (Union of American Hebrew Congregations-Reform) and CCAR. The meeting was held at the Harmonie Club in New York City on June 9, 1925."

Following a period of negotiations, the first formal meeting was held and the group adopted a name—the Synagogue Council of America—and a constitution that provided: "Every decision of the Council shall require the unanimous approval of the constituent organizations," i.e., that no action could be taken if even one constituent voted against it.

Creation of the SCA split the Orthodox community. The Agudas Harabbonim refused to participate and in the words of the official history of SCA, "Instead, the recently formed Rabbinical Council of the UOJC (later the RCA) became the constituent representing the Orthodox Rabbinate."

### *"The Voice of American Jewry"*

The section of Orthodoxy which was such a willing partner to "unity based on religion," and accepted the notion that "there are problems in American Israel"

“... Were Spinoza alive today, he would, at very least, be lecturing regularly to Jewish audiences on such subjects as Judaism and philosophy, or Judaism and the alienated intellectuals. He would undoubtedly be a contributor to Jewish learned journals, encyclopedias and the like. Even the Orthodox would sit with him on some scholarly and public service committees . . .

Arthur Hertzberg

which could only be solved in collaboration with Reform and Conservatism, that Orthodoxy acted from weakness and out of serious doubt that it could itself survive. The Orthodoxy which to this day maintains these relations is stronger in faith and in fact, but it justifies itself with the myth that SCA does not speak for Jewish religion—which they agree would be wrong—but simply addresses itself to the American community as the voice of American Jewry. This rationale, or its basis, is questioned by the SCA historian, himself a past-president—who notes that, “The line between internal and external affairs cannot, indeed, be drawn sharply.” It is even more open to question by the fact that the line, sharply drawn or otherwise, has been crossed many times, to the embarrassment of the Orthodox constituents and the Torah community.

The crux of the opposition by Torah leaders to membership in the Synagogue Council—we repeat this position on the eve of the new year when the “one voice” cry will be often heard—lies in the recognition it offers to non-Orthodoxy as a bona fide adaptation of Judaism. UOJCA and RCA leaders deny that this recognition is implied but reading Reform and Conservative publications certainly indicates that they take this recognition seriously. The recent criticism expressed at the convention of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly, and their threats to leave the SCA because their liberal Orthodox colleagues opposed recognition of non-Orthodox rabbis in Israel, clearly indicates that the non-Orthodox expect, nay demand, this approval by the Orthodox rabbinate as their price for membership in SCA.

Recently, Arthur Hertzberg, a leading member of the Conservative rabbinate, wrote on “Orthodoxy and Reform” in a general series of articles published by the *London Jewish Chronicle* under the general title: GREAT CONTROVERSIES IN JUDAISM:

*In the last century or so a great change has come about [in Jewish reaction to heresy]. The Jewish community has been rent by heresies as profound as those which appeared earlier, but the heretics have remained within the structure of the Jewish community, and in reality, of the Jewish religion . . .*

*The great revolution in Jewish life in the last century or so has amounted to a new definition of Jewish identity, to which religious heresy is irrelevant.*

Hertzberg cautions that:

*This new notion cannot be pushed to the absurd, that is, so far as to maintain that even apostasy to another religion does not remove a Jew from the Jewish community . . . [however] any less drastic denial of the Jewish tradition—such as atheism—does not disqualify a Jew from his share in the Jewish community.*

*. . . Were Spinoza alive today, he would, at very least, be lecturing regularly to Jewish audiences on such subjects as Judaism and philosophy, or Judaism and the alienated intellectuals. He would undoubtedly be a contributor to Jewish learned journals, encyclopedias and the like. Even the Orthodox would sit with him on some scholarly and public service committees. Do not Jewish scholars of various degrees of traditional faith and practice sit together today in the American committee now re-translating the Bible for the Jewish Publication Society?*

A sad example of the actual pitfalls of Orthodox collaboration with non-Orthodox groups was demonstrated this summer. On July 1, following the passage of the Federal aid to education law, the Synagogue Council of America and the National [Jewish] Community Relations Advisory Council submitted a set of guidelines to the United States Education Commissioner. The headline in the *Times* read: JEWISH UNITS ASK SCHOOL AID LIMITS with the sub-head: GIVE KEPPEL PROPOSALS FOR KEEPING PROGRAM SECULAR. The statement, couched in polite terms, was an attack on the provision of the law which provides for aid to religious schools and a warning to Federal officials to “prevent the flow of Federal funds to religiously controlled schools or to any institution that practices racial discrimination or segregation.” The lumping together of religiously controlled schools with institutions which practice racial discrimination is hardly an act that will build the kind of community relations these groups constantly espouse, but it is not the statement itself

that interests us at this time. The J.T.A. report listed groups associated with the SCA and the NCRAC, and strangely the listing omitted the Rabbinical Council of America but *included* the UOJCA. The Union had strongly supported the bill and joined in the rejoicing when it became the law of the land. It seemed strange that they should so suddenly reverse their position and join with those who fought against passage of the bill. Yet, we waited in vain for any disclaimer on the part of the Union. It was not until the *Joint Program Plan* of NCRAC appeared in August, with a dissenting statement by the Union that there was any indication that the SCA-NCRAC statement was not unanimously adopted. (Our letter to RCA asking for clarification of their position is to this date unanswered.) And so, as far as the public record is concerned—NCRAC publication are not as widely read as *The New York Times*—the Union stands in support of the warnings against the dire consequences of Federal aid to religious schools.

*The UOJCA disclaimer was finally released to the public on September 3, after this article was written, and two months following the SCA-NCRAC joint statement. Since the earlier statement was carried in newspapers throughout the country, the disclaimer is hardly likely to undo the damage done.*

The Rabbinical Council of America had its share of embarrassment too from its collaboration with the Conservative and Reform rabbinate. On August 4 the World Council of Churches announced that representatives of the Synagogue Council of America would meet for a week of deliberations with Christian theologians at an Ecumenical Institute to be held in Switzerland. Since participation in this type of meeting was clearly contrary to the position of the RCA, which at the insistence of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik was on record in opposition to inter-faith theological debates, the SCA hastened to announce the very next day that the

planned discussions would "under no circumstances" have a theological basis.

Five days later the Union of Orthodox Rabbis (Agudas Harabbonim) issued a sharp statement urging that no Jewish group participate in the conference called by the World Council of Churches. Shortly thereafter it was reported in the Yiddish press—without a word in *The New York Times*—that the RCA would not send a representative to the Ecumenical Institute. Again a similar situation—the public was led to believe that the Synagogue Council would participate in a church-sponsored conference without being told that the Orthodox constituent had disassociated itself from the SCA. In this instance the consequences were even worse, since non-Orthodox rabbis participated in the conference speaking for the American Jewish religious community including the Orthodox groups.

The Igud Harabbonim (Rabbinical Alliance of America) at its last convention renewed its call for an Orthodox Council which would speak for a united Torah community. The potential for Torah which lies in such a council should be obvious to every Orthodox Jew and it merits the support of every Orthodox group. But events of the past summer demonstrate over again that a united Orthodox council can not number among its constituents groups which will maintain their ties to the Synagogue Council and the NCRAC. What a horrible and confusing spectacle it would be if such groups were to join with a united Orthodoxy in affirming Torah positions, only to be listed as constituents of national Jewish bodies who take an opposing position.

In the days of Elul and on the eve of the new year, we renew our appeal to our Orthodox brothers to recognize their own strength; to break the chains that bind them to the enemies of Torah and to join those who seek the sanctification of G-d, His Torah and His people.

*Israel M. Kirzner*

# The Utilitarian View of the Yeshiva

## A Complaint

It has been a matter for casual observation that the place of the yeshiva—the seat of higher Torah learning has undergone a profound transformation on the American Jewish scene over the past quarter century. Operating throughout this period as the most powerful

among the factors contributing to the vigorous resurgence of Torah-true Yiddishkeit in this country, yeshivos have themselves enjoyed the first-fruits of this resurgence. The rejuvenation of genuine Jewish consciousness and practice that has been the most encouraging feature of Jewish life in this country in recent decades has—in its own turn—nourished the growth and proliferation of yeshivos to an extent hardly

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RABBI KIRZNER'S *The Jew and the Cult of Superficiality* appeared in the March, 1965 issue of THE JEWISH OBSERVER.

dreamed of here thirty years ago. Out of this mutually-sustaining partnership of Torah-conscious laity and Torah-academia there has evolved a climate in which the number of yeshivos and of their students has steadily grown, and in which the standard of Torah scholarship has climbed to a generally gratifying degree. Increasing numbers of our most promising young men are devoting themselves to a life of Torah study, with a spirit of dedication impervious to the blandishments of their pleasure-oriented environment. From their ranks are emerging a new generation of young Torah scholars who—in their growing maturity—are spearheading the continued expansion of yeshivos into what have hitherto been remote corners of American Jewish life.

Clearly this exhilarating dynamism in the world of yeshivos could not have been attained without a steady improvement in the attitudes of Orthodox laymen towards the yeshiva concept; antagonism and apathy have given way to enthusiastic support. The fact that this growth in yeshivos has occurred and is occurring, testifies to the growing willingness of parents to consider it a matter of course that their boys undergo the experience of years in the yeshiva; and of the community in general to generate the material support required to sustain our multiplying centers of Torah scholarship. This quiet revolution in attitudes has not only raised the prestige of Torah learning itself, *it has fostered its recognition as the sole basis for authentic Orthodoxy in all aspects of lay life*—truly a noteworthy advance.

### *All is Not Well*

And yet, all is by no means completely well with the lay attitude towards yeshivos. Though the changes that we have described certainly are gratifying, it will hardly come as a surprise that the general attitude towards yeshivos yet leaves something to be desired. Here we draw attention to what appears to be one important respect in which the typical view of yeshivos falls short of that needed to create the ideal substratum for their support.

Our complaint is with the tendency to see the yeshiva as something worthwhile *not so much for its own sake as for the sake of some further purposes to which it conduces*. The yeshiva is viewed as an educational institution whose function is the training of youth in preparation for their later lives. Its prime value is frequently seen not so much in its own activities, as in the sincerity, piety and warmth that it generates in the community at large. Immersion in Torah study for one's sons is looked upon with favor not because one recognizes that a regimen of such study itself provides the highest form of Jewish living—but often only because one (quite correctly) considers such training to be a sound preparation for the future Orthodox *baal habayis*. The public shoulders the heavy financial

burden of support for yeshivos not so much, at times, out of the desire to act as patrons of Torah scholarship, as out of the urge (highly laudable) to foster the continued infusion into the lay community of ex-yeshiva students for the enrichment of the level of general Jewish observance. It seems fair to say that while considerable recognition of the *innate* worthwhileness of the yeshiva has, *boruch Hashem*, always been with us, this has tended to manifest itself on the part of *individuals*, seldom at the level of the community as a whole.

### *"Results" Yeshivos Offer*

It is not difficult to understand how this *utilitarian* perception of the significance of the yeshiva has enjoyed such wide currency. In the first place the aspects of yeshivos in which this view discovers their greatest merit are certainly not of minor importance. These are the aspects which are most easily appreciated by devout Jews who are themselves unable to spend their lives in the *Bais Hamedrosh*. These aspects represent the most obviously tangible "results" that yeshivos have to offer; in the effort to gain general sympathy for their aims, it is these results to which yeshiva emissaries are able most convincingly to point with pride. Moreover, in the tough pragmatic environment in which we live, a world in which knowledge for its own sake—of any kind—is hardly appreciated, it is the most natural thing in the world to view the yeshiva as the counterpart, *l'havdil*, of the law school or barber school: The function of the yeshiva is to turn out a product.

Now, there can be no question that the growth of yeshivos in our midst is to be largely ascribed to this utilitarian view of the role of the *Mokom Torah*. Let us not fail to give credit where it is due. Probably the majority of the staunchest supporters of yeshivos in this country, who have shared in the revitalization of Torah by their willingness to bear the scorn of their fellows for their zeal in the cause of Torah had, at least to some extent, this pragmatic view of the role of the yeshiva. It was with their personal and financial sacrifices that Torah was planted on American soil; it is their sons who have responded enthusiastically to the timeless call of the world of *Abaya* and *Rovo*—of the *Kzos Hachoshen* and of *Rabi Akiva Eiger*; it is their daughters whose *m'siras nefesh* stretches out the years which their husbands are able to dedicate to further study in the *kollel*. Surely the mental attitude responsible for such a sacred harvest invites not a word of criticism.

And yet, again, is it not time for us to ask ourselves whether this utilitarian attitude towards yeshivos is indeed the highest peak towards which we, as a community, can strive? Has American Orthodoxy not perhaps matured sufficiently for us to begin to hope at least for significant elements of *community* recognition of the *innate* worthwhileness of the yeshiva—quite apart

"To see the yeshiva as no more than an institution producing a more or less immediately tangible result, is to miss the very meaning of Torah for Klal Yisroel; it is to overlook the role of Torah for its own sake as our *raison d'être*."

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from utilitarian considerations? Have not the yeshivos themselves yet fed into the stream of Orthodox lay life a sufficient number of *Bais-Medrosh*-conditioned men to exercise a perceptible change in the general orientation toward the yeshivos?

For even a cursory examination of the matter must convince one of the insufficiency of the utilitarian view of the yeshiva. Such an examination must, indeed, lead us to fear that such a view *not only does violence to the true nature of the yeshiva, but also brings in its train certain undesirable influences threatening the continued purity of the yeshiva concept*. The truth is, of course, that the role of the *Mokom Torah* in Jewish life far transcends any immediate educational or sociological objectives that it is able to promote. Just as the study of Torah for its own sake is the ultimate goal of the individual Jew, so is the study of Torah for its own sake the goal and purpose of *Klal Yisroel*. The yeshiva is the institution that comes closest to expressing this community ideal. It is not the essence of the *Mokom Torah* to be a training place for the young. It is quite the other way around, the best way of training the young is to permit them to soak up the atmosphere of the *Mokom Torah*. The *Mokom Torah* itself is a peaceful island in the turbulent ocean of life, an island in which the sublime concept of *תורתך קבץ*, of utter devotion to Torah study, can find expression in spite of the biting ocean winds and of the salt waves of surrounding mundaneness. (*The yeshiva is an island, not in the sense of keeping its benign results to itself, but in the sense of being able to produce these benign results with a measure of insulation from the howling gales that wreak havoc elsewhere.*) To see the yeshiva as no more than an institution producing a more or less immediately tangible result is to miss the very meaning of Torah for *Klal Yisroel*; it is to overlook the role of Torah for its own sake as our *raison d'être*.

To adopt the exclusively utilitarian view of the yeshiva ultimately implies, in fact, the complete subversion of the proper position that Torah occupies in the hierarchy of Jewish values. To Jews Torah is the ultimate end, a life of Torah study is the theoretical ideal—an ideal that indeed only rare individuals are able to reach in practice, but one which all yearn in their hearts to emulate. *The utilitarian view reduces Torah to a means*. To the Jew, Torah study is the only occupation exempt from all question of *WHY?*, FOR

WHAT PURPOSE? Torah study is its own justification and purpose. To plumb the Divine Will as expressed in the Torah's detailed instructions for the observance of the commandments, is to approach well-nigh as close to the Divine presence itself as is humanly possible; to permit one's own mind to trace through the paths of logic sanctified by the mind of the *Rambam* or *Rabbeinu Tam*, is to drink from the source of all life. The utilitarian view appraises Torah study strictly in terms of results, *other than itself*.

For *Klal Yisroel* the yeshiva is the institution through which the community expresses its solidarity with this ideal of Torah for its own sake, of Torah study as the final universal responsibility of all Jewry. Where a community treats its yeshivos as *auxiliary service institutions fulfilling specific assigned purposes*, it has failed to place the study of Torah in its rightful place of primacy; *as a community it has failed to perceive its own true nature*.

Now, even if the inadequacies in the public understanding of the yeshiva idea had no implications beyond themselves, this would be grounds enough for dissatisfaction. But surely the truth is that our yeshivos themselves cannot hope to be completely immune from the influences exercised consciously and unconsciously by the force of Orthodox public opinion. In a thousand almost imperceptible ways the yeshiva is under the pressure of the attitudes of its supporters, of the parents of its students, and of the public at large. The delicate threads that make up the web of which the yeshiva is textured show at all points the pulls and tugs of outside forces, well-meaning forces to be sure, but forces so often without full understanding of what the sacred term *yeshiva* stands for.

What is needed is the gradual infusion into general lay attitude towards yeshivos, of something of that relationship which the conscious individual Orthodox Jew feels towards Torah itself. Out of such an improved community attitude will come that spontaneous love for the *ben-yeshiva* on the part of the Orthodox *baal habayis* which was in other generations so typical, but which is in our own so typically absent. And, surely, out of such an attitude we can expect the continued flowering of our beloved yeshivos, *Rabbanon V'Talmideihon*, in a manner that shall worthily carry on the glorious traditions of Torah in Israel.

*In Witness Thereof...*

## A PLEA FOR THE USE OF CHOSHEN MISHPAT IN JEWISH LIFE

The *sheur* was on a *sugya* dealing with documentary evidence—notes of indebtedness or contract. The lawyer in the group—usually punctual—was late. When he walked in, he apologized and explained that he was delayed in the preparation of a contract—a *shtar* such as we were learning about in the *Gemara*. He added that it was really a *mitzvah* too, since the contract was drawn for the *Yeshiva*. The other party, it turned out later, was also an observant Jew.

Thus a lawyer—a *Ben Torah*, currently studying the *halochos* of contracts—wrote a contract between an institution of Torah and a Torah-true individual. Yet no one noticed any incongruity in the fact that the indenture was written in accordance with the provisions and specifications, not of the *Choshen Mishpat* but of the civil code of Ontario. Of course, it is a recognized principle of the Torah that the “law of the land is law” in monetary and commercial matters and, therefore, a contract drawn according to the laws of Ontario is also binding by Torah law. Yet, it is also true that the courts of Ontario would uphold the legality of a contract written in accordance with the *Shulchan Aruch*. Somehow, throughout the *sheur*, none of the questions and answers in the text nor in the commentators could obviate the *kashya* that kept gnawing away at me. “What has happened to the the *Choshen Mishpat* in our lives?”

I tried to re-assure myself. I recalled a recent case where, together with others, I had heard arguments in a dispute involving tens of thousands of dollars. The litigants wanted and accepted a *Din Torah*. Other instances came to my mind of *Din Torah* suits in my experience. Surely, that was the *Choshen Mishpat* in action!

Yet, on thinking back to those occasions, I was struck with the realization that all the relevant documents which we were called to rule upon, had indeed been drawn by lawyers without reference to Torah law. In fact, some of the causes of the disputes might have been avoided if the contracts involved had followed the Halacha. It was only after things had gone wrong, that the Torah was sought out to be consulted!

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And even at that, how frequently is a *Din Torah* preferred to a court hearing? Most rabbis in America have never sat on a *Din Torah*! Many are surprised that, except for issues between communal institutions, such things ever take place at all!

*What Happened to Kesubah?*

Not only the *Choshen Mishpat* has fared so poorly with us. Some years ago, it was dramatically brought home to me, how another part of the *Shulchan Aruch* has virtually gone out of our lives. The laws of *Kesubah* form one of the most difficult sections of the *Even Ha-Ezer* for the student. Yet, besides the routine procedure of filling in printed forms of the *Kesubah* for weddings and several isolated cases when a replacement *Kesubah* was needed for one that had been lost, there has been only one time in my career in the rabbinate when I was asked about the law of *Kesubah* not as a mere formality.

A Sephardi couple, originally from Syria, had settled in the small town I was then living in. Their domestic life was plagued by ceaseless rancor and finally the husband turned to the courts to demand a divorce. In accordance with the practice of the Syrian Jews, the *Kesubah* contained a provision for *Tosefet*, so that in the event of divorce, the wife was to receive a significant amount of money—in that particular case, the amount was specified as five thousand American dollars. When the concept of *Kesubah* was explained and its Aramaic text translated to them, the officials of the Domestic Court agreed that this was a binding obligation which the court would enforce.

Today, with the near-liquidation of many of the Sephardi communities outside of Israel, there are probably not too many places left in the Diaspora where the *Kesubah* is more than just a symbolic relic. Yet, even a cursory look at the laws relating to the property rights of husband and wife which often differ from state to state, might convince us that Torah law has much to offer our people and if properly presented would not only attract them to Torah values but would make the Torah a real and potent force in their lives.

American Orthodoxy has grown to impressive proportions in recent years. Torah is being studied more extensively as well as more intensively than ever before. Not only is an observant Jew no longer a rarity,

but thank G-d, we now have degrees of "extra" observance. Many are not satisfied with just fulfilling the letter of their obligations. They want to be *Mehadrin*.

### *Broadening Our Commitment*

Is it too much to hope that the time has come for broadening our Torah commitment to include also our financial and business procedures? Is it really too far-fetched to imagine that observant Jews will write contracts and other legal documents, not only for selling *Chometz*, but for their regular business, in the forms prescribed by the *Poskim*? Would not such procedures also help to insure the fulfillment of the many *mitzvos* governing business dealings? Granted that the exclusive use of Hebrew may be a handicap, is it not possible to use the English language, but to follow the provisions of Jewish legal practice?

Perhaps, a joint committee of rabbis and Orthodox lawyers could undertake the task of publishing a new *Nahlas Shivah*—to set forth the legal formulas and phraseology in English for standard-type documents. Certainly, communal organizations and rabbis might show the way by setting an example with their own contracts.

It is related in the name of a great *Gaon*, that he explained the prevalent custom of starting children on the Talmud with the tractates dealing with civil law and commerce rather than with those treating of ritual and festivals, for example, by pointing out that in this way we impress upon their minds that the Torah regulates their inter-personal dealings as well as their prayers, and their work-days no less than their Holy Seasons. Surely the time is ripe to put some of that learning to use and thus to make the Torah truly a Torah of life!

### *A Rosh Hashono Message*

## Is the Jew Losing His Identity?

*Chaim D. Keller*

היום הרת עולם ;  
היום יעמיד במשפט כל יצורי עולמים.  
אם כבנים, אם כעבדים ...

*This day the world was conceived; this day will He bring to judgment all the creatures of all the worlds whether as children or as subjects. . . . (Machzor for Rosh Hashono).*

On the day of Rosh Hashono the world attained fulfillment with the creation of Man. Therefore on this day each year Man must stand before the Divine bar of judgement to give an accounting of himself. It must be determined if he is that *Man* for which all of Creation was designed and who was its ultimate goal; or if he has fallen short of Divine expectations. And this judgement before which man must stand is two-fold. He stands judged as a *son* of the Almighty and as His *subject*.

The implications of his role as a subject (עבד)—involve man in the human establishment. He must serve as one cog in the great machine of Mankind

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which must subject itself in totality to the King of Kings, the Master of all the worlds. Just as a human king maintains his dominions by virtue of the myriads of his faithful servants, no single one of whom is indispensable to the royal scheme of things, so must each man find his proper place as a part of a greater community of mankind whose purpose is the glory of G-d.

Yet our Sages teach us that being a part (no matter how important) of an all-inclusive whole is not the sum of human experience and human responsibility. Man is something more than a soldier, more even than a general in the army of humanity which must be the army of the Lord. He is a *son*—and, in a sense an *only son*. Each child in a family, no matter how large it is, is not looked to by a wise father for what he will add to the family power or for what measure he may enhance the family prestige, but is considered as an end in himself.

A king may lose a soldier, a company, or even a division. He may feel sad at the loss, but the war has not been lost, the throne still stands. But if a father loses a child, there is little comfort in the fact that the family still remains; a *world* has been destroyed. This world that was the lost child has vanished, never to return. What comfort that there are other worlds?



לפיכך נברא אדם יחידי ללמדך שכל המאבד נפש אחת מישראל מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו איבד עולם מלא וכל המקיים נפש אחת מישראל מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו קיים עולם מלא וכו'. לפיכך כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר בשבילי נברא העולם.

*Therefore was Man created one to teach you that whoever destroys one Jewish soul, the Torah considers it as if he had destroyed a whole world, and whoever sustains one Jewish soul the Torah considers it as if he had sustained a whole world. . . . Therefore each person should say for me was the world created. (Mishna Sanhedrin 37a.)*

The whole human race descended from one man. Therefore it follows that not only does each man have the potential of reproducing a whole world, but in a truer sense each man *is* a whole world. I, with my psychological makeup, my intellectual capacity, my spiritual powers, am unique. There is no other quite like me. My world does not exist for another as his does not exist for me. Only to a certain extent is Man a "social animal." Up until a certain point is he one of many. But from that point on he is one—alone with his G-d.

It is in this inner, truer role as an inimitable individual that each of us must stand before the bar of Divine justice on Rosh Hashono—and give our accounting as *children* of the Almighty.

The secret of the truly great man lies in his ability to maintain that delicate balance between his responsibility toward his fellow man, as a member and leader of the community, and the responsibility to develop his own potential as an individual.

The contemporary scene boasts great organizations; great men, however, are all too scarce. In Jewish life the trend is toward *organized* philanthropy, *organized* social work, *organized* synagogue activities and *organized* education. The "leaders" are the executives—the organization men, who by dint of technical know-how and clever jockeying, can push themselves to the top of the heap, much as does any executive in any other American industry. Progress is measured in statistics—numbers of dollars raised, numbers of students enrolled, numbers of members, size of buildings.

We Jews have an old rule handed down to us by our Sages שבפרט אין בכלל אלא מה שבפרט which has been rendered freely: *There is no more in the group than there is in the individual.*

One thousand zeros will still equal zero—although they take up more space on paper.

Unless we Jews here in America wish to surrender our historic role as an עם אחד — a unique people — and assume the non-identity of a nameless mass of statistics, directed by a benevolent bureaucracy, we must concentrate on being men and not only members.

The Torah envisions Man as one who *personally* gives to the poor and feels their anguish and their

need; who helps his fellow *personally* and shares his burdens; who prays *personally* and feels the closeness of G-d; who learns *personally* and experiences the exhilaration which only Torah study can give to the earthbound soul.

It is the crying need of the hour to provide our Jewish youth with a frame of reference in which they can develop as useful members of the Jewish community and as loyal citizens of society at large without losing their identities as individuals with G-d given talents and propensities and the G-d-commanded duty to develop them.

When religion is removed from the heart and relegated to the synagogue; when *Tzedaka* becomes an organized industry; when the study of Torah is delegated to a small group; and when the rabbi ignores the individual spiritual needs of his congregants to devote himself to "social justice"—then we are in danger and it is time for rediscovering our individual self.

As we prepare ourselves to stand before the Heavenly bar of judgement on Rosh Hashono, let each of us reflect on himself as an individual so that he may clearly determine where he stands in his own relationship with G-d. Only out of this individual introspection can come the restoration of the glory of *Klal Yisroel*.

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# How Jewish History is Written

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Urban Civilization In Pre-Crusade Europe—by Dr. Irving Agus, Yeshiva University Press/1965

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A college professor of mine once said that history is the hospital record of mankind. As in the newspapers—wars, murders, disasters and triumphs make the headlines. The unspectacular day-to-day toil of the dutiful husband, the diligent scholar, or the pains-taking researcher are neither news nor history. If the general history of mankind has suffered from this distortion, Jewish history has suffered in spades. The theme of most books on Jewish history is that Jewish life from the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdosh* to the Emancipation was one unbroken vale of tears—filled with martyrs, poverty, persecution, pogroms and high-walled ghettos wherein broken-spirited Jews walked about bent over on their canes, or wailed their lamentations in musty synagogues and yeshivos. An exception is made for Islamic Spain which has been described as a "Golden Era" (another distortion).

A good example of this type of history is *The Jew in the Medieval World* by Jacob R. Marcus, a well known writer and historian of the Hebrew Union College. The sub-title of his book is *A Source Book 315—1791*. It is difficult to gainsay the objectivity of such a book because it contains so little interpretation. It purports to be merely a collection of documents gathered from over a millenia and a half, reflecting upon Jewish persecution: edicts of repression by Constantine, Justinian and the Visigoths, inimical church decrees, diaries of pogrom victims, descriptions of humiliating oath procedures, and the like. To persons nurtured on this sort of reading, a recently published two-volume work will come as a pleasant and illuminating surprise. Professor Irving Agus of Yeshiva University wrote these two volumes with the somewhat misleading title, *Urban Civilization in Pre-Crusade Europe*. On the surface, and except for a short but stimulating introduction, the body of the book consists of the texts of about three hundred responsa from the pens of *Rashi*, *Rabbenu Gershom* and other great Ashkenazic rabbinic authorities of the tenth and eleventh centuries. After each responsum, the author, with a combination of keen Talmudic exegesis and Sherlock Holmesian deductiveness, squeezes out all the possible implications of the

text for its social, political, economic and religious significance. These responsa are classified under the topics of: travel, security, trade, monopoly, business, money-lending, trades, real estate, community, family, education and relationships with non-Jews. The overall picture that emerges from these collected snapshots of raw life in the Rhineland and French communities of a millenia ago, reveals numerous interesting and unexpected details. The Jews appear as a small group of culturally and economically elite in the various European towns in which they were located. Ties of blood, religion and history bound them together as a cooperative unit extending over vast areas. All Jews found in every other Jewish community a fortress of trust and protection wherein Jewish law reigned supreme. Thus Jewish merchants and travelers, amidst a lawless and violence-ridden world, were assured of a wide network of stations wherein they could deposit their money and goods, make their deals, enforce their agreements and entrust the fate of their loved ones. Thus Jews created the economic blood-stream of the medieval world which the upper-class gentiles could tap by entering into a unique patron-client relationship with a local Jew known as *Maarifa*. This right of patronage could be the subject of inheritance or sale, which transfer the gentile client accepted without being consulted, indicating the strength of the Jews' monopolistic grip on the little commerce that did then exist. It seems that communities—which though numerically small could produce a profusion of intellectual giants on the order of *Rabbenu Gershom* and *Rashi*, in a short time—would necessarily possess a very high level of general intellectual development. This expectation is richly confirmed. Amidst a world of almost total illiteracy, the ordinary Jew appears to have spent a substantial part of his adult time in Talmudic study at a profound level—being largely a semi-leisured class.

Far from being cowed and beaten, the Jews of those centuries appear as doughty entrepreneurs—dealing with kings, barons, bishops, thieves, highway robbers and pirates, toe-to-toe and unafraid, living dangerously and courageously. Their unity was their strength and it was so strong that robbers were often compelled to go back to deal with their victims in order to dispose of their loot.

Professor Agus' work is a rich source of primary material for historians interested in the two centuries which he describes as "a veritable blank, a strange void that historians nimbly dismiss with two or three bland statements, or attempt to fill with various conj-

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MR. GROSS is a frequent contributor to THE JEWISH OBSERVER. His most recent article, *A New Look at Humane Slaughter*, appeared in May, 1965.

ectures not supported by concrete evidence." His example and technique, moreover, indicates that historians have hitherto overlooked rich mines of historical information as to other areas and places simply because of the lack of individuals who are both historians and Talmudists. It is especially regretful that this has been true of writers of Jewish history. How many books have been written on Jews and Jewish history by writers whose knowledge of the *Shulchan Aruch* or the *Mishne Torah* is second-hand!

WHAT HAS ALL THIS TO DO WITH THE BOOK'S TITLE? It is Professor Agus' theory that Western civilization is a town civilization, a direct outgrowth of the early medieval towns whose basic patterns of self-governing

town councils found their prototype in their Jewish communities from whom they learned the basics of commerce and democracy. Whether this thesis is ever proven in whole or in part, the present volumes do bring that thesis from the realm of a brilliant guess to that of reasonable conjecture and a not inconsequential dividend to the reader is the acquisition of some solid "learning" from the pens of *Rishonim*.

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## In Search of the Real "I"

How does one discover his true identity? Yom Kippur, the day on which the *Soton* has no control over man, gives us the opportunity to rise above the striving and soul-tensions of everyday life. The 'strange' mitzvoh of eating on *erev* Yom Kippur; the 'five afflictions' and 'the rehearsal for death' are here studied as strategies for overcoming the *Soton* and finding the real *I*.

Guessing someone else's identity is a popular recreational pastime. Determining my own identity is a not-so-popular and a costly process, usually involving a psychiatrist. But surely for the average person one's own identity is hardly a problem. Everyone—unless he is really psychotic—knows who he is. This is obvious in the physical sense that I can point to a number of objects and people and say "These are not I" and then point to my own spatial center and affirm "this is I." It is true in another sense that I can describe the series of relationships that circumscribe myself: I am someone's son, someone else's father, and I stand in relation to a third individual as "neighbor" and so on.

There is however, another aspect to the question of self identity that remains problematic for all people and is the one that becomes crucial on Yom Kippur. Central to any introspective analysis of *self* is the awareness that it is the same *I* that grows angry and the same *I* that forgives; the same *I* that sins and the same *I* that repents, and yet the *I* or the *self* is something more than the sum total of these activities. As our tradition has always indicated, human character and the depths of the psyche are extremely complex matters. Diverse and often opposite tendencies are active within the same person; they struggle and strive for domination. A man may have committed a number of different actions and yet may not be equally responsible for all of them.

What is of paramount importance on Yom Kippur, is: Which string of traits or behavior patterns stands closest to the self and has become part of it? With which aspect of your experience, your conscious life do you identify yourself? In short—*who are you?*

It is most revealing, psychologically, to suddenly confront a person with this question: *Who are you?*

*This is one more in a series of holiday studies which RABBI SPERO has contributed to THE JEWISH OBSERVER.*

and see how he responds. Will he answer—"A salesman from Brooklyn"—"an American citizen"—"a Yeshiva Bochur from Lakewood" or will he answer like *Yonah Hanovi*: "I am an *Ivri* and I fear the Lord, the G-d of Heaven." This is the essence of Yom Kippur—to find our true selves through the overlay of the random act, the fluke happening, the moment of weakness.

What indeed was the significance of that central drama of Yom Kippur in the *Bais Hamikdash*—the selection of two identical goats, the drawing of lots *וְאָחַד לְעֹזָאֵל*, *וְאָחַד לַד'*, and the dispatching into the wilderness of the scapegoat carrying all the sins of Israel? The *Maharal* writes that the entire point of selecting the goats by means of lots is that *הַגּוֹרֵל מַחְיִיב זֶה מִזֶּה*, when you use two lots, the revealing of one determines the identity of the other. As soon as you know that one is *לד'* you automatically know that by necessity the other must be *לעֹזָאֵל*.

On Yom Kippur we come before our Maker with bundles of acts, patterns of behavior, mirror images of our selves which appear identical in terms of laying claim to being authentic genuine representations of the true *I*. It is our task on Yom Kippur to penetrate deep into our souls to find that unspoiled essence, that inner core that we dedicate to G-d. Once this is done, that which carries our sins is by necessity someone else. "I am black but beautiful o ye daughters of Jerusalem"—*black the rest of the year and beautiful on the ten days of Repentance.*

Ordinarily one confesses one's sins over a sin offering and the animal is sacrificed. Only on Yom Kippur is the animal which carries our sins completely eliminated. Only on Yom Kippur is that *Yetzer Horah* in man, that evil striving rendered powerless so that for once a man can think through his situation, heed the call of G-d and devise stratagems against his adversary unimpeded by his baser inclinations. *And this shall be unto you for an everlasting statute, to make atonement*

for the children of Israel for all their sins, once a year. The Talmud observes that the word השטן is the numerical equivalent of three hundred and sixty four, implying that while the *Soton* is active 364 days of the year there is *one* day when this fomenting and fermenting, driving and striving element in man—for whom tradition had such a healthy respect that it called him מלך חכם—*is* shorn of his influence. That day אהת בשנה is Yom Kippur. Implicit in our Yom Kippur observances are three broad strategies by which our laxity may be overcome, our distractions eliminated and our sense of values restored.

### 1. The Erev Yom Kippur Meal

It is a *mitzvah* to eat a large meal on *erev* Yom Kippur. Basing their observations on a verse in the Torah, our Sages conclude: *Whoever eats on the ninth day of Tishrai is as meritorious as if he fasted on the tenth day.* Anyone who takes the trouble to ponder this strange “command” will immediately realize its incongruity. Surely without such exhortations common sense would of itself dictate a more than usual concern to eat well as a preparation for the fast ahead. On the other hand this can hardly be intended to generate *simcha*. For on the eve of the most solemn day of the year, when our fates are being decided, there is little stomach for food and even less for joy. What then is the significance of a *mitzvah* to eat and to eat well on *erev* Yom Kippur?

But perhaps reflected here is one great approach of our Torah to handling the *Yetzer Horoh*. Not repression but sublimation. If you cannot eradicate him, harness him. The harder you push against a spring the more powerful it is in the recoil. The *Yetzer Horoh* must be outwitted not outpunched, outflanked not overruled. The Midrash states that רחמנא שרי לן כוותיה לן כוותיה, everything forbidden to man by the Torah, was permitted in some other way, at some other time, in some other form. With the full range of human potentialities, with the wellsprings of our emotions open to the fullest, with all of our creative capacities alive must we serve Him. The purpose of Torah is to “cure” (תבלין) the evil inclination—season it, soften it and make it fit for human consumption. The discipline of Torah bends the drives and emotions of man to the point where it may be said that we love G-d and serve Him with *both* our impulses—the *Yetzer Tov* and the *Yetzer Horoh*. A life of obedience to Torah can ultimately heal this primordial cleavage in man's heart so that the prayer: *And unite our hearts in fear of Thee* becomes a reality.

This approach of sublimation is demonstrated for us most clearly on *erev* Yom Kippur. Of course there are other occasions during the year when eating is a *mitzvah*. But then it is justified only through a series of means-ends relationships. Thus eating on Shabbos is a *mitzvah* because it is a means to generate *simcha*. Eating every day can be a *mitzvah* if I intend this as

a means to maintaining my health so that I may better serve G-d. But there are too many crevices for the *Yetzer Horoh* to intrude and abort the effectiveness of the deed. On *erev* Yom Kippur however, the *mitzvah* is simply to eat *per se*. Squirm as the *Soton* might, a physical impulse is thus brought into the service of G-d, and the Jew is pointed in the right direction.

### 2. Destroying Self-Interest

During the entire year, the verse which appears after the Shema—ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד—*Blessed be the name of His glorious Kingdom for ever and ever* is recited silently. Only on Yom Kippur is it recited aloud. Reflected in this practice is another emphasis which helps render us immune to the *Yetzer Horoh*, on this שבת שבתן.

Self interest is usually considered one of the strongest motivational forces in man. What would a person not do to save his own skin. Yet very frequently long after a man might have given up where his own life was involved, he might fight on with renewed tenacity if he knew that the lives of others depended upon him.

This is indeed the attitude that every Jew must have to his own loyalty to Torah. Riding on my decision to perform the *mitzvah* or succumb to the *avaivo* is not only the issue of personal salvation but also the issue of the survival of the Jewish people, the question of *Kiddush Hashem* or *Chilul Hashem*, the purpose of the Creation and the entire cosmic plan. The Talmud bids you view the matter as if the spiritual condition of the entire universe was evenly balanced between merit and condemnation and it is *your* next deed which will tip the scales one way or another and either save or doom humanity! The sly *Yetzer Horoh* can perhaps sometimes deceive me into believing that one hour of pleasure in this world is worth more than all the satisfactions of the world to come. But is it easy to make me forget my responsibilities to the Jewish future? Can he blind me to the irreparable harm I can cause to the fulfillment of the Messianic dream? This (according to *Rashi*) is the challenge of the *Shema*: Hear O Israel—the Lord who is today *our* G-d, recognized only by us, will ultimately become the *One* G-d—recognized and worshipped by all. On *that* day will the Lord be One and His name One. *Until* that day—every Jew, every human being who sets up his own will in resistance to G-d's, compromises His Oneness. Only when the Almighty's sovereignty is established; only after His *Malchus*, His Kingship is actually acknowledged will His *Achdus* be complete.\* We the Jewish people have been given this back-breaking, nerve-shattering task to make known G-d's Kingdom in the world. בזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של מקום מוסיפין כוח בגבורה של מעלה, *When Israel fulfills the will of the Almighty, they add strength to the Divine might.*

\* This is why the *Shema* is the final text in the *Malcheyos* blessing, although it does not contain the word *Melech*.



Jews at prayer on Yom Kippur

Let us now consider the response of *Blessed be the name of the Glory of His Kingdom, for ever and ever*. This was originally recited aloud by Jews in the *Bais Hamikdosh*, as the response to the *Shema*, to the utterance of the Name on Yom Kippur and after every blessing. This response was limited to the *Bais Hamikdosh* because it speaks of the Glory of His Kingdom. Kingdom implies visible manifestation of G-d's sovereignty, subjection to the Divine authority, acceptance of the yoke of Torah, obedience to the Divine Will by significant segments of *Klal Yisrael*. This was seen in the *Bais Hamikdosh*. Here was devotion and service, sanctity and unity of Israel. Here was a visible representation of the *Shechina* on earth. Here was experienced at least the beginning of His Kingdom and so here the Blessing was made.

This also, according to the *Maharal* explains Yaakov's first use of this phrase when his twelve sons gathered at his deathbed and he questioned their loyalty to G-d. They answered—*Hear O Israel, just as there is only one G-d, in your heart so there is only One in ours!* Hearing this, Yaakov, in joy and thanksgiving, responded *ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד*. Says the *Maharal*—the twelve sons of Yaakov constituted *Klal Yisrael* at that moment. If they were all united in obedience and dedication to G-d, then this indeed was

a manifestation of G-d's Kingdom. All year round, the phrase *בשכמל"ו* is uttered silently—but it is uttered. Buffeted by the *Yetzer Horoh*, soiled by our myriad involvements in the stream of living, G-d's Kingdom is not too visible. But on *Kol Nidre* night, the *pintele yid* stirs and the Shuls are filled. All over the world, under the most diverse conditions, Jews turn to G-d. At that exalted moment, irrespective of what will happen tomorrow we have a manifestation of G-d's Kingdom. *I am black but comely O ye daughters of Jerusalem—black during the year but comely on Yom Kippur*.

As we look around the *Shul Kol Nidre* night we realize for a brief moment what we *could* be! What if the synagogue were so filled every *Shabbos*? What if our sense of love of one to another were to remain the entire year as it is this night? What if our sense of reverence and *Keddusha* were to stay with us the entire year! Fleeting as it may be—even as the manifestation in the *Bais Hamikdosh* did not last—nevertheless at that moment, we see *Malchus* and so loudly and almost triumphantly we cry out on Yom Kippur—*Blessed be the name of the Glory of His Kingdom—forever and ever*.

What is thus forcefully impressed upon us is the realization that an awesome responsibility rests upon

our shoulders. That option placed before us: *Behold I place before you this day life and the good . . . and death and evil* encompasses not only ourselves but our entire people, yea mankind as a whole. And it all starts with our individual deeds.

### 3. Rehearsal for Death

The strategy discussed above consists in a certain sense in flying higher than the *Yetzer Horoh* by setting our sights not on our own interests but on the transcendent goals of Israel as the Messianic catalyst. Our final approach—by contrast—can be compared to a fire-break which fire fighters make between a raging forest fire and the lush timberlands which lie in its path. They deliberately set fire to a belt of timber directly in the path of the fire and completely destroy any flammable material. When the forest fire reaches the gutted area it must stop because there is nothing else to feed on.

The *Yetzer Horoh* parasitically feeds on the human ego, its interests, its plans, its desires and its pleasures. Destroy the self and the *Yetzer Horoh* dies from lack of anything to feed on. Obviously however, we do not wish to destroy the self. So we do the next best thing: We remind ourselves of our day of death.

This is reflected on Yom Kippur not only by the *kittel*—the white shroud that we wear—but by that which is the heart and essence of the Yom Kippur observance—the prohibition against work *איסור מלאכה*,

and the *five afflictions* *המשה עניים*: abstinence from eating and drinking, anointing, washing, wearing shoes of leather and cohabitation. The essential content of life consists of the “input”—the sensory pleasures and the “output”—man’s creative impingement upon his environment, his work. With these forbidden on Yom Kippur—man stands indeed as an “angel” or even as a ghost before G-d.

Yom Kippur has been rightfully called “a rehearsal for death.” We tearfully bless our children prior to going to Shul. We do not know *if* we shall come back or *how* we shall come back. We light the candles for the departed souls and put on our shrouds. Alone, shorn of all commitments, we confront our Maker. We own nothing, we can do nothing, we anticipate no pleasures. We are dead in the midst of life. It is no wonder that the *Yetzer Horoh* has no power this day. He has no base of operations. The strivings, the petty ambitions, the silly conceits all turn to ashes in the light of death. All those considerations and values for which we are prepared to compromise our Torah observance, pale into insignificance in the light of eternity.

This is the most drastic of all strategies but the most effective. Thinking of death in connection with the other attitudes help to effectively banish the *Yetzer Horoh* from this day which is truly wrenched out of the nexus of time. So liberated, man can go forward unencumbered to confront He who is the ground of his very being and who alone can tell him *who* he is and *what* it is he has to do.

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synagogues throughout Israel so that . . ."

"Wait Mr. Wild, maybe I didn't make it clear to you . . ."

"I know, I know . . . you've been trying for years to get away from all that . . . but you know the old adage, Mr. Balabofsky, *If you can't beat 'em—join 'em*. There's lots of money around in synagogues that have closed down in the old neighborhoods; and you said yourself people are becoming more religious, you've got to capitalize on the revival. Take my grandfather, when he came to this country he used to hoot at Jews going to Schul . . . err . . . Temple on *Yan Kiper*, but today, he gets tears in his eyes when my son says the blessings on the Hanukah candles. Why he even comes to Temple with us, whenever the rabbi reviews one of Singer's new books."

"But Mr. Wild, can we get away with it . . . I mean new image alright, but it won't be the old *Histadrut* . . ."

"Mr. Balabofsky, this is 1965, you've got to move with the times, can't stand still you know."

"I suppose you're right. You

know Mr. Wild, I'm beginning to get the feel of it. I remember when I was a little boy back in my shtetel the rabbi used to offer *Oylam Haba* to Jews who gave charity . . ."

"*Oylam Haba?*"

"I'm sorry . . . it means the world to come."

"Say . . . that would make some great copy:

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"I think we've got a good campaign," Balabofsky said as he arose to leave, pumping Mr. Wild's hand.

"Here Mr. Balabofsky, take this . . . you'll need it for the first round of publicity shots."

He handed him a neatly folded black *yarmulka*. As Balabofsky unfolded the *yarmulka* the words imprinted on the lining caught his eye: ETERNAL REST FUNERAL HOME — 24 HOUR SERVICE.

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# "The Irony of the Situation"

An astute reader has sent us a clipping from the sport section of *The New York Times* of August 22, 1965. The following excerpts are quoted verbatim.

RAMAT GAN, Israel, Aug. 21 — Outstanding Jewish athletes from 27 countries are assembling here for the sev-

enth Maccabiah Games, which open Monday . . .

The Maccabiah Games are named in honor of the Maccabees, also known as the Asmoneans, who rose in revolt in the second century . . . against the efforts of King Antiochus Ephiphanes to abolish the Jew-

ish religion and substitute the Greek cult.

The Maccabees, bold and audacious warriors, were very pious. Jews who emulated the Hellenists and indulged in foot races, jumping, wrestling, discuss throwing, boxing and other events of the ancient Olympics were considered an abomination by the Maccabees.

The irony of the situation may be lost on participants at the Maccabiah games who lack sufficient Jewish erudition. The ceremony imitating the kindling of the Olympic torch on Mount Olympus will be held in an ancient graveyard in Modi'in, near the border of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, where the Maccabees are believed to be buried.

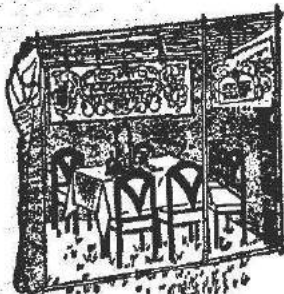
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# Letters to the Editor

## How Many Millions?

To the Editor:

I was most gratified to find the work of the UOJCA's National Conference of Synagogue Youth cited in the article, "How Many Millions?" as a tangible example of a successful approach to the illiteracy and disintegration of American Jewry. . . .

Someday it may be possible to fully record this dramatic story. There are some half dozen non-Mechitza "orthodox" synagogues whose NCSY chapters sponsor regular Mechitza Minyonim. The picture is that of "Vena'ar Koton Nohaig Bo." In the main sanctuary sit a few elderly persons—trying their level best to be real Americans, while in the Beth Medrosh "annex" sit their children struggling against all odds to become Jews.

Bemoaning and criticizing is not the answer to the spiraling statistics of intermarriage, assimilation and indifference. It is a well known axiom that American Yiddishkeit is built by *Yechidim* and that hundreds of these are individuals

who literally stumbled upon the Torah life. We must be ready with resources of mind and pocket to join in efforts of this kind. There are pitifully few who feel a responsibility to our alienated and lost brethren and fewer who are willing to act on their sentiments.

RABBI PINCHAS STOLPER  
National Director,  
NCSY of the UOJCA

## Our Deviant Brethren

To the Editor:

I enclose a check in the amount of ten dollars to pay for a two-year renewal of my current subscription to your outstanding publication. . . .

I take the present occasion to express my deep satisfaction with the ennobling spiritual content of each issue of your journal. I am confident that with the Divine blessing which your efforts to date richly merit your journal will serve to bring about a meaningful renaissance in traditional Jewish religious observance in America.

## LET US HEAR FROM YOU

The Jewish Observer invites your comments on issues discussed in our columns. Letters addressed to the Editor should be brief and preferably typed, double-spaced, to insure legibility. Letters must be signed but the writer's name may be withheld on request. Lengthy letters will be condensed.

Your reactions are essential to the vitality of The Jewish Observer and we earnestly solicit your correspondence.

I also take the present occasion to suggest that your board of editors give serious consideration to a series of articles by eminent Orthodox rabbis and laymen on the perplexing dilemma as to the *specific steps* which Orthodox Jews, both in Israel and in America, can take to maintain effective and cooperative contacts with our deviant brethren of the Conservative and Reform groups *without* sacrificing any of our Torah-derived principles. I am willing to concede that there may be very few, if any, practical steps which can be taken in this regard. However, it is deeply distressing to witness the continuing inroads of *Shmad* among our deviant brethren.

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There must be something concrete which organized Orthodoxy can, together with those few of our deviant brethren who are aware of the growing menace of *Shmad*, do to preserve our people's strength without, of course, any sacrifice of our Torah tradition. The JEWISH OBSERVER can play a unique role in commencing this dialogue which is so important to Judaism's future.

BENJAMIN D. SHERMAN  
Brooklyn, New York

*Mr. Sherman's letter was written before the appearance of "How Many Millions?" in our June issue, which attempts to come to grips with the problem. We share his hope that more discussion of this urgent matter will lead to some concrete efforts.*

### Torah Personalities

To the Editor:

You are to be commended for publishing interesting highlights of the lives of important Torah personalities, such as Reb Michael Ber Weissmandel. It is good that the American public read about the contributions to *Yiddishkeit* of these great men and take this lesson to heart.

I would recommend that you arrange for a series of articles on one of the least known giants of American Orthodox Jewry, *Reb Feivel Mendlowitz*, ז"ל. He was the pioneer for intensive Torah study in this country, and the man who laid the groundwork for the Yeshiva movement in the United States. Although thousands of his former *talmidim* at Torah Vodaath remember him with reverence, the sad fact is that the overwhelming majority of American Jewry have never even heard of his name.

There is a great lesson to learn from his philosophy, his dedication to uncompromising *Yiddishkeit*, his educational goals and the type of inspirational *Yiddishkeit* which he personified.

I recently received a brochure with his biography, written and published by well-meaning people, but which unfortunately attempts to completely distort Rabbi Mendlowitz's affiliation with Agudath Israel. While granting that *Reb Feivel* was "an Agudist in ideology," they painted him as an individual who refused to belong to "any political party" or "to any one group." Since this brochure has been given mass distribution, I feel compelled to state that this characteriza-

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tion is a complete distortion of the truth.

As one who was privileged to work closely in *Klal* work with *Reb Feivel*, I want to put on record that he was not only an ideological Agudist, but an actual active member of Agudath Israel, who worked with zeal to strengthen the movement. He encouraged many persons to join and activate themselves within the framework of Agudath Israel, and personally participated in various small and larger meetings called by the organization. I recall very clearly his telling me of his joy and his hopes when the first delegation headed by *Reb Mayer Don Plotzter*, *Dr. Nathan Birnbaum* and *Harav Zirlson* came to the United States in 1921 in behalf of Agudath Israel and how he devoted his efforts to be of aid to them.

He made no secret of his commitment to Agudism and his affiliation with the movement. *Reb Feivel* personally ardently advised me to join *Zeirel Agudath Israel*. It is regrettable that such an error should be published and spread, because in seeking inspiration from his life, one should include his attachment to Agudath Israel.

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**43RD NATIONAL CONVENTION  
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One thousand delegates and guests, including the foremost Torah authorities, are expected to attend the 3-day 43rd National Convention of Agudath Israel of America which will open on Thursday (Veteran's Day) in the Pioneer Country Club, Greenfield Park, N. Y. The convention, which will continue through Sunday, November 14th, will serve as a laboratory to analyze Orthodox Jewish positions on Jewish affairs in this country, Eretz Yisroel and throughout the world. Rabbi Leiser Levin of Detroit, has been named national chairman of the conclave and Rabbi Chaskel Besser chairman of the convention committee.

**AGUDAH CAMPS LAUDED AS  
MAJOR EDUCATIONAL FEAT**

Camp Agudah for boys, and Camp Bnos for girls, the summer camps in the Catskill Mountains sponsored by Agudath Israel of America, were lauded by educators who surveyed the projects as a major contribution to Torah education during the summer vacation period just concluded. In addition to the physical health programs of both camps, they sponsored continuous educational features to broaden the knowledge of the campers and to instill in them a love for Torah study and Torah living.

The Agudist camps, which have serviced thousands of youngsters throughout the country over the past two decades, this year invited numerous guest lecturers, distinguished Torah scholars, to enable the children to meet these great Torah personalities and benefit from their

wisdom. The emphasis on education, and the accomplishments of the camps in this area during the summer, will have far-reaching effects on the lives of the campers, the visiting educators declared.

**PIRCHEI LEADERS PLAN  
FOR NEW SEASON**

Plans for the new season of Agudist youth work were mapped out at a well-attended Pirchei Leaders Conference over the Labor Day weekend at Camp Agudah. The conference, sponsored by the National Council of Pirchei Agudath Israel, had a number of working sessions on practical aspects of leadership as well as inspiring and stimulating ideological discussions.

Amongst the guest speakers and lecturers were the *Sekulener Rebbe* Rabbi Portugal, Rabbi Yaakov Teitelbaum, Rabbi Joseph Elias, Rabbi Boruch Borchardt, Rabbi Joshua Silbermintz, Rabbi Syshe Heschel, and a group of former Pirchei leaders who today play important roles in the educational field.

A special session was devoted to the problem of reaching out to Talmud Torah students and children in smaller communities, as well as with mapping the proper approach to instill in children a sense of responsibility for the Jewish world at large. The conference ended on a note of enthusiasm, as the Pirchei leaders departed with a new spirit to expand Pirchei Agudath Israel work amongst children in their local communities.

**AGUDATH ISRAEL ATTENDS  
WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE**

Agudath Israel of America was represented at the two-day White House

Conference on Education, which was held in Washington on July 20-21, by Rabbi Morris Sherer, Executive Vice-President of the organization. President Johnson invited to the conference 650 educators and communal leaders of all faiths from all fifty states, as part of his aim to achieve educational excellence for all the nation's children. The conference concluded with a reception tendered by the President on the lawn of the White House, at which occasion Rabbi Sherer had the opportunity to again express gratitude for the President's farsightedness in including religious schools in the benefits of the education-aid program.

Subsequently the Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish press carried a statement from Agudath Israel which pointed out that the White House Conference on Education was a meaningful example of the new climate of American public opinion, which has finally recognized that religious schools are equal partners in the American educational structure. Agudath Israel was the only Orthodox Jewish organization at the conference.

**WEEKLY RADIO SERIES  
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The weekly series of radio broadcasts sponsored by the Branch Presidents Council of Agudath Israel will resume Saturday night, October 2nd, at 9:30 P.M. over Station WEVD. These programs will continue Saturday nights at the same time throughout the entire season, under the direction of Mr. Joseph Friedenson. They bring to the microphone distinguished guests representing a broad circle of Orthodox Jewish leaders from every part of the world, as well as meaningful comment on Jewish current events.

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## A LETTER TO OUR READERS

Dear Friend:

As we enter the third year of publication of The Jewish Observer we trust that we can truly call you 'friend' whether you have been with us from the beginning or you are a new reader. We hope that in the years to come we will continue to merit your friendship and support .

We feel — though it is for you the reader to make the final judgment — that we have grown in the past year. We have added to our list of distinguished writers some of the outstanding thinkers in American Torah life. We have tried to keep you abreast of the important developments in Jewish life throughout the world, particularly as it concerns Jews who cling tenaciously to traditional Jewish values and beliefs. We have attempted to react to these developments from the perspective of Sinai, and out of the conviction that the great achievements which lie ahead for Torah can be won only by an independent Orthodoxy.

In our columns we have stressed the importance of individual spiritual growth, by offering the writing of classic Jewish religious thinkers as well as the thoughts of contemporary Torah scholars in the belief that the Klal can grow only through the growth of the individual.

One of our major objectives is to present the guide-lines for healthy Torah perspectives so that our readers can react intelligently to the challenges that face Orthodoxy in their own local communities.

In the month of Elul each of us — singly and collectively — take stock of the past year and seek to climb higher toward our goals. It is our hope that this Cheshbon Hanefesh on our part will bring you a better, more stimulating and more informative publication. At the same time we turn to our readers — and prospective readers — to help make possible the continued growth of The Jewish Observer. The month of Elul is a time for clearing away old debts. We do this so that on the eve of Rosh Hashono, when each of us is judged — our accounts with our fellow men shall be clear.

If you have not yet renewed your subscription, what better time to send us your check than right now . . . in the month of Elul.

If you have received several sample copies of The Jewish Observer, now is the time for you to become a paid-subscriber.

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