

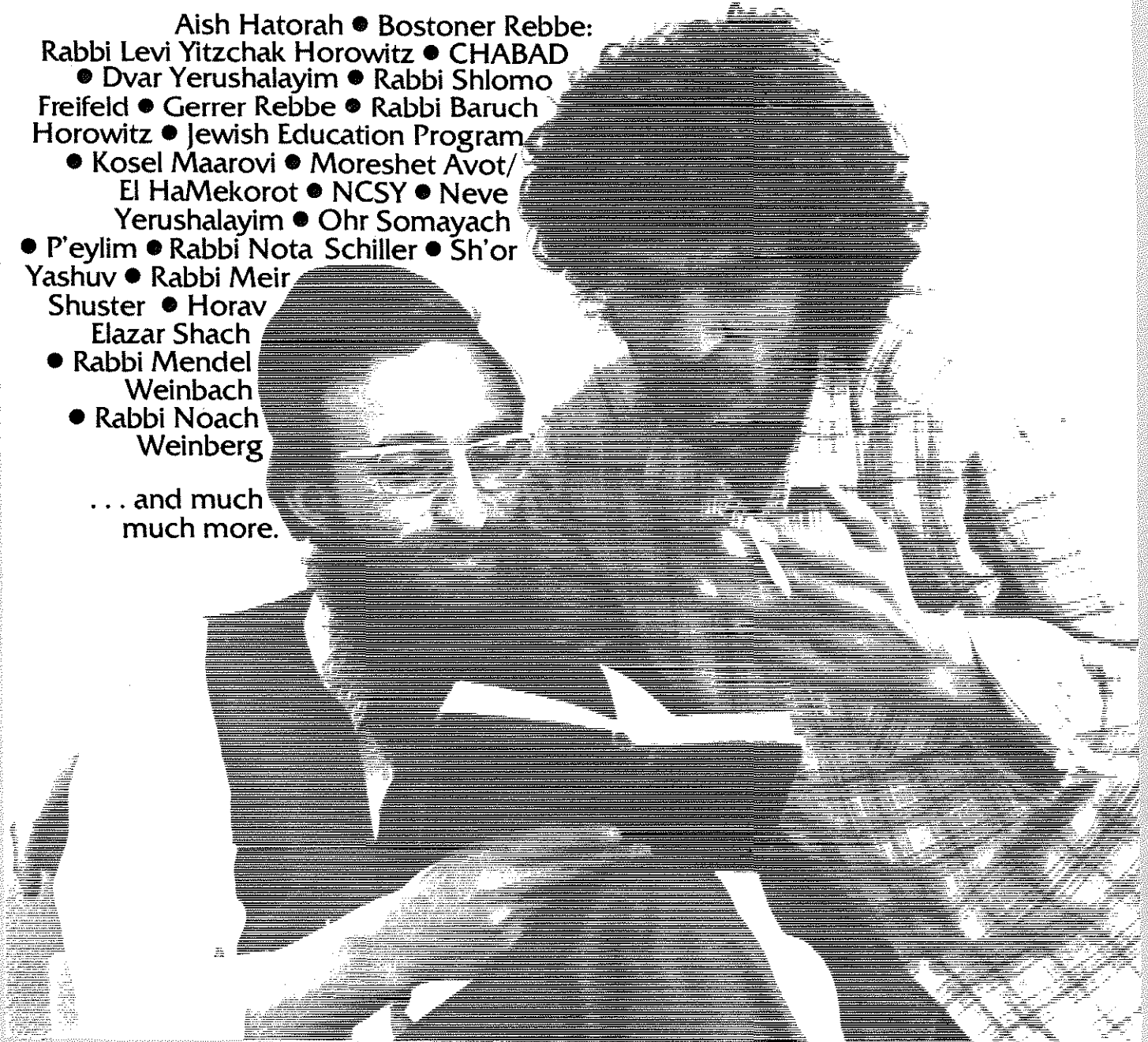
# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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## The Baal Teshuva Movement

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... and much  
much more.



# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

## In this issue . . .

### THE BAAL TESHUVA MOVEMENT

Prologue . . . . . 4

#### Chassidic Insights:

Understanding Others Through Ourselves,  
*Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz* . . . . . 5

#### A Time to Reach Out:

"Those Days Have Come," *Rabbi Boruch Horovitz* . . . . . 8

#### The First Step:

The Teshuva Solicitors, *Rabbi Hillel Goldberg* . . . . . 10

#### Teaching the Men:

Studying Gemora—The Means and the Ends of the  
Teshuva Process, *Rabbi Nota Schiller* . . . . . 13

#### Teaching the Women:

How to Handle a Hungry Heart, *Hanoch Teller* . . . . . 16

Watching the Airplanes, *Abraham ben Shmuel* . . . . . 19

#### Kiruv in Israel:

Bringing Them to our Planet, *Ezriel Hildesheimer* . . . . . 20

#### The Homecoming Ordeal:

Helping the Baal Teshuva in America,  
*Rabbi Mendel Weinbach* . . . . . 25

#### The American Scene:

A Famine in the Land, *Avrohom Y. HaCohen* . . . . . 27

#### The American Scene:

Reaching the Kids—The JEP Connection,  
*Eliezer Gevirtz* . . . . . 31

#### The American Scene:

"A Time for Action" Revisited,  
*Rabbi Chaim Friedman* . . . . . 36

"Come to the Chasana" . . . . . 38

#### The Call to Action:

Shedding Our Blinders, *Rabbi Noach Weinberg* . . . . . 39

Epilogue . . . . . 41

#### Books For Teshuva/Return

Reaching Out With Literature, *a review article* . . . . . 43

To the File, *Menachem Lubinsky* . . . . . 54

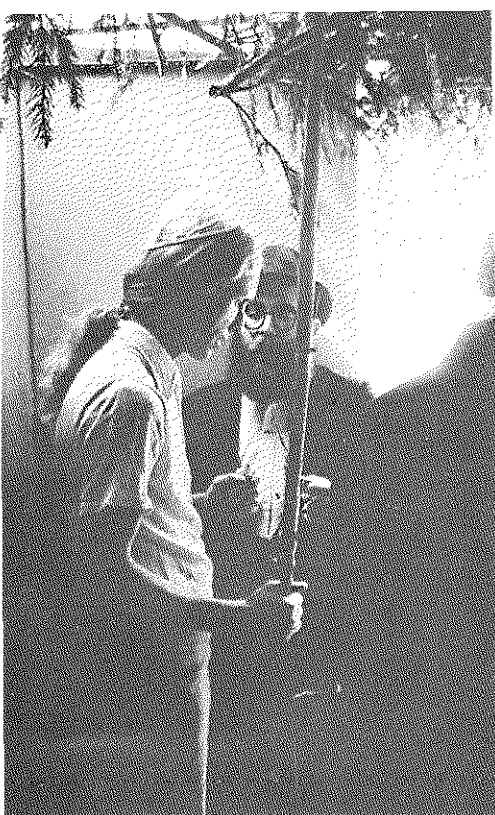
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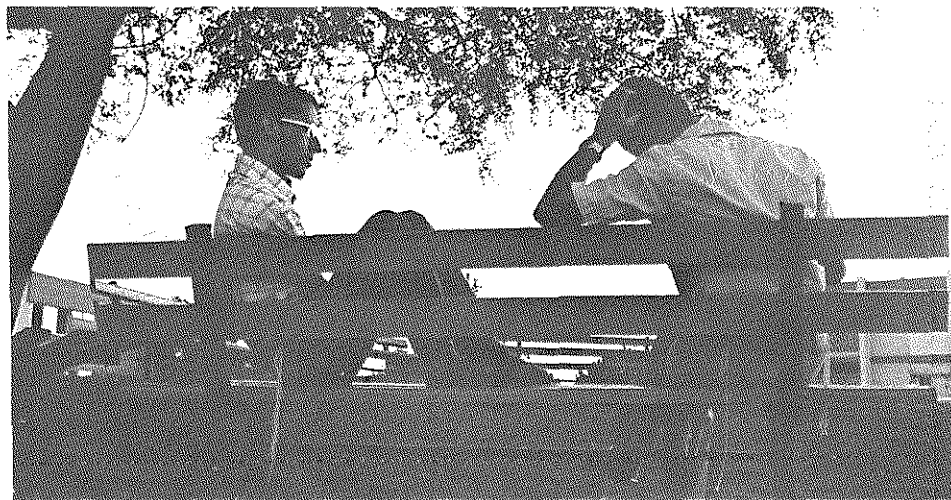
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CHABAD (Tradition, by Mel Vornhaw)

## THE BAAL TESHUVA MOVEMENT

... years ago, one of the greatest teshuvim became a baal teshuva, and the entire world stood in awe. Today, thousands of young Jews—intelligent, worldly, highly qualified professionals among them—are searching for Torah, and we are in danger of ignoring them. . . .  
RABBI SHLOMO FREIFELD, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Sh'or Yeshuv, Far Rockaway, NY



EL HAMEKOROT



Every time G-d grants Klal Yisroel some spark of inspiration and they fail to utilize it properly, its power is exploited by other forces. In the sixth century of the sixth millennia, a tremendous light of wisdom came to the world, just as the Zohar Hakadosh predicted it would. Since we did not fully utilize it for Torah, it was exploited by scientists to foster an industrial and technological revolution . . . Kabbalistic tradition spoke of the year 1948 as a time of heavenly inspiration for kibbutz goluyos (ingathering the exiles). Once again we were not able to utilize the opportunity, and the secular Zionists exploited it to create a state . . . In our own times, there is a divine inspiration for teshuva. Once again the Torah community missed the opportunity to do teshuva, and only the non-religious have taken advantage of it.

של"ט אב, רבי סימחה בונים אלטר, רבי גerrer

How do you "return" to where you never were? Many people today speak of a return to Judaism. Teshuva is the word they use in Hebrew. But in any language, how can anyone who was always elsewhere come "back"?

The sages say that the souls of all Jews—those who had been born, along with those not yet born—were present at Sinai. Thus one could speak of return in terms of a collective unconscious or déjà vu.

But there is a more immediate way of relating to the phenomenon of thousands of young Jews being awakened to Judaism. Teshuva means return, true. But it also means answer, or response . . . or, perhaps, echo.

At one level, what we are witnessing today is the answer to two thousand years of persecution, forced assimilation and seduction. But it is also the answering echo of a brit that has reverberated through the centuries; a covenant binding a people and their G-d with a law and a land.

Mordechai Schiller  
in JERUSALEM ECHOES



YESHIVA DVAR YERUSHALAYIM

"For 25 years I in Leningrad, never see Jewish wedding—until today, when my father and mother get married in Brooklyn. It is beautiful . . . beautiful!"

# THE TESHUVA MOVEMENT

## Prologue

*Teshuva*—it's as old as sin. In fact, it's older, for the Talmud tells us that it was created even before the world (*Nedarim* 38b) . . . Is this confusing? Does it knock the props out from under your thinking? Indeed, it should provoke a multitude of questions that are not easy to answer.

On the other hand, the concept of *teshuva* preceeding creation of the world also *answers* a host of questions—questions regarding the little boy, who, out of the blue comes home from a JEP Shabbaton to his Philadelphia-suburb ranch house and announces to his parents that as of then and there he refuses to eat anything but kosher . . . the NCSY veteran who says No to Barnard, and packs up for Neve Yerushalayim in Israel instead . . . the stock broker who walks into a Lubavitch mitzva tank to put on *tefillin* on a lark, and now puts them on daily, as a matter of course . . . the Israeli movie actor studying *bechavruso* in a *baal teshuva* yeshiva with a former kibbutznik . . . the erstwhile drug peddler pulling kids off the street in a Galil town—to study Torah . . . the metallurgical engineer who threw away a successful career in the USSR to live “an honest life,” and now is *Shomer Shabbos* in Boro Park . . . the paratrooper . . . the *tichonist* . . . the Jew-for J—recruiter now in a kollel . . . How does this happen? How do people, so deeply involved in late 20th Century mores and values—so sunk in the quagmire of its lifestyles—how do they overcome all the elements of human nature and change so radically? It must be by the power of something older than nature—older than the world itself: *teshuva*.

*Teshuva is indeed a supernatural act. As Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz, the Mirrer Mashgiach ורמ"ל explained: Yaakov prepared for his encounter with his brother Eisav in three ways—tefilla, gifts, and warfare. The Ramban points out that Yaakov needed to resort to the other avenues; he could not depend on tefilla alone to overcome his brother, for one may not rely on a miracle. . . . To this Reb Yeruchem added, Yaakov also could not expect Eisav to yield to his entreaties, for that would have called for Eisav to overcome his nature—and human nature is also teva, nature . . . Those who overcome their natural inclinations perform miraculous deeds. . . . thus teshuva, overcoming one's nature, is a supernatural act.*

The past ten years have witnessed a remarkable increase in the phenomenon now known as The Teshuva Movement. Some take exception to this, arguing that “*baal teshuva*” is a misnomer for those late in

discovering their *Yiddishkeit*, even a perjorative. Not so: Consider the glory of being associated with the status of constant awareness of one's shortcomings and continuously struggling to overcome them, forever striving for higher attainments. . . . Would we but all be worthy of the title *baal teshuva*!

As the ranks of those returning to Torah grew, so have efforts proliferated, which are specifically geared to their needs. Some of these efforts are part of worldwide movements, like the Lubavitch network of *shlichim* and Chabad houses that circle the globe; or the Union of Orthodox Congregations of America's NCSY movement that serves American high school-age youth; Agudath Israel's Jewish Education Program; and the Pe'ylim volunteers. Some are exerted by schools, yeshivos, seminaries. And some are the efforts of individuals—people who defy convenient labels; people who work with and around existing schools, but by virtue of legendary devotion and successes have become institutions unto themselves.

Their work should be a source of interest and inspiration to us; and indeed, there is a fascination with every facet of the *teshuva* phenomenon: Just exactly what is the climate of the times that has produced this situation? What are its implications? . . . How are potential *baalei teshuva* reached? How are they received and accommodated in various schools and institutions? What happens when they leave? . . . Can the Israeli success be duplicated in America? What, indeed is being done here? What more can—and must—be done? We have invited some of the people involved in the Teshuva Movement, including several pioneers in the field, to comment on these topics for *The Jewish Observer*.

By no means do the articles in these pages pretend to exhaust the topic; in fact, there are some glaring omissions among the people and institutions represented here. For a more complete picture, we ask the reader to investigate on his own—in back issues of *The Jewish Observer*\*, and perhaps in his own backyard.

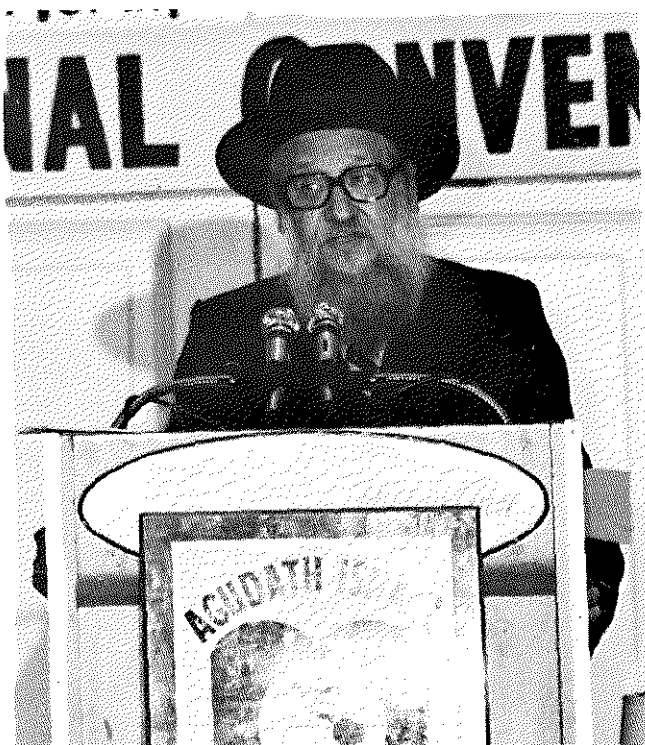
And then we ask the reader to join us in some soul-searching of our own. . . .

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\*“Russian Conversations,” Shneur Zalman Yudkin and Shimon Grilius (Jan. '76), “Two Sides of the Teshuva Movement,” Ellen Wills/Rabbi Noach Weinberg (June '77), “The Israeli Baal Teshuva Movement,” Rabbi Mendel Weinbach (Mar. '78), “Now That They're Here,” Regina Presser (Sept. '79), “Helping Others Make it,” Mordechai Arnon (Feb. '80), Report on the Baal Teshuva Session of the Knessia Gedolah (Feb. '80).

# Understanding Others Through Ourselves

*The Bostoner Rebbe, Rabbi Levi I. Horowitz*



To fully understand how to deal with the phenomenon of *baalei teshuva*, we must appreciate our own role and responsibility. At times, we may downgrade those approaching us for guidance and direction, because we lack an understanding of their motivations, their aspirations, their fears and their goals.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz, the Bostoner Rebbe, heads the New England Chassidic Center, and has been a pioneer in "kiruv" work in the Boston area for the past thirty years. This essay is based on an address delivered at Agudath Israel's Sixth Knessia Gedolah.

My father זצ"ל told how Reb Dovid'l of Lelov, as a young man, before he had become a Chassid, went to meet the Chozeh ("Seer") of Lublin. As was the custom, the men formed a line after davening to greet the Rebbe. When Reb Dovid'l's turn came, the Chozeh first asked him where he came from, and then asked him, "Who is the worst person in your town?"

"Rebbe," he responded, "how dare I, as their rabbi, suggest that one person in particular is the worst?"

The Chozeh then turned to the next person in line, ignoring Reb Dovid'l. On the following day, Reb Dovid'l tried again to greet the Rebbe, but the Chozeh confronted him with the same question. He tried to evade the issue: "I really don't have any dealings with the lowest echelon of the Jewish community." Again the rebuff . . .

The same thing happened on Friday morning. It was too late to return home so, in desperation, Reb Dovid'l decided not to attend services that evening rather than face the same embarrassing situation again. As he was davening Mincha, Reb Dovid'l imagined how inspired one must feel at this point, when in close proximity to a great saint such as the Chozeh; and visualized how the shul was packed with people fortunate in experiencing the kedusha (holiness) that emanated there; while he was all alone in a setting not at all conducive to proper prayer. It could be that he, Reb Dovid'l, is the worst Jew of his town.

As soon as he concluded Mincha, there was a knock on the door. The Chozeh had dispatched a messenger to summon him to the synagogue: "The Rebbe said, 'Now that you know who it is, you may join our service.'"



To help others climb the ladder of spirituality and attain loftier goals, we must first understand ourselves thoroughly and know who we truly are. But beyond knowing our own shortcomings, we must also accept that the person knocking on our door is deserving of our attention, our concern and our love. Indeed, this is what they are seeking. They want to feel that they are part of our community—that they are not looked down upon and are respected. The fact that they were not given an opportunity to understand their faith, or that their parents did not give them a Jewish education or identity, should not be held against them; are they truly “their father’s keeper”?

### Partners in Sin

In our daily service, we say, “But we and our parents sinned.” It seems strange to declare our parent’s guilt when confessing to our own wrongdoings. After all, it is *we* who committed the sinful act. However, the same thought appears in Prophets, where it states, “We have sinned (*chatanu*) together with our parents, and have committed intentional and spiteful misdeeds.” The word “*cheit*” (as in “*chatanu*”) applies only to unintentional acts. We only indict parent when we commit a wrong without intent, without knowledge, without understanding, for then the person alone is not to be faulted. His parents and the people in positions of leadership are equally guilty for not having taught him right from wrong. Only when the individual sins intentionally or spitefully is he and he alone guilty for committing the sin. Indictment of parents is associated with the term “*chatanu*”—the unintentional sin.

We are faced with a generation of young people who lack knowledge and understanding of what living a Jewish life means, and we must declare ourselves partners in their guilt. Today’s youth have not rejected

Judaism after studying and understanding it; they have ignored it because of misconceptions, a lack of interest, and their own struggle for identity and meaning in life. The young person who says, “I am proud to be a Jew,” should indeed be proud. It is our responsibility to give him that spirit and pride in being a Jew.

### Sharing Our Advantages

We have the advantage of having been raised in a home of observant parents. The “*Alef Bais*” was an integral part of our language and we are always surrounded by a roomful of *seforim*. It was our natural environment, a part of us. But to a young person not raised in an observant home, entering a room filled with *seforim* is an awesome, overwhelming experience. The most common question I am asked by the 20- or 24-year old is, “When shall I ever be able to study all these books?” The young person feels washed with inadequacy. At that point, we must make him (or her) understand that, “Yes, you will be able to make it just as well as I can; and it shall be with my help, if possible.”

### The Baal Teshuva’s Special Insight

“The wise have their eyes in their head and the fool walks in darkness” (*Koheles*). The Midrash explains this as applying to how different people perceive life from creation, as recounted in the opening verses of the Torah: “And the world was void and desolate and darkness was upon the face of the earth,” followed by: “And G-d said let there be light . . . and G-d saw that the light was good.” According to the Midrash, “the fool” (in *Koheles*) perceives only the darkness; to his understanding, that alone was the basis for creation. By contrast, the wise man can see the light that G-d created from the very outset—“ . . . In their head,” (in *Koheles*) corresponds to “In the beginning”—as the prime force



OHR SOMAYACH Yael Rosen

that can determine what can be done to change this world.

So, too, are *baalei teshuva* able to leave the world of darkness because of their perception of light. It is the responsibility of the Torah community to provide them with opportunities to experience the light, so they also might enter this society as active participants.

### A Simple Route for Entry

Viewing Judaism in action is a potent inspiration to those coming in initial contact with it. Witnessing how religious Jews relate to one another, how we interact with our fellow man, and how seriously we take our prayers, inspires the *baal teshuva*. Experiencing the *Shabbos*, and seeing how the family unit of husband, wife and children communicate with one another on the *Shabbos*, all serve to guiding the returnee toward choosing this path with confidence.

Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi stated that he achieved his superior abilities because he saw the great Talmudic sage, Rabbi Meir—"even if only from the back." This could be understood as meaning that even though he did not deal directly with the sage, his extra acumen in understanding the world was attained by simply being in the sage's presence. We, too, must provide searching young people with an opportunity to live with us and observe our way of life . . . not just to see the exterior, but the interior life as well. The only reason that *baalei teshuva* have joined us is because they are in search of the good. It is our obligation to provide them with exposure to the end goal of that search.

### Making Time For Others

We are often too preoccupied with our own growth and spiritual problems to spare time and attention for others. This must not deter us from providing the necessary help to the stranger—or even, at times, to our children who desperately need attention. The Amshenover Rebbe זצ"ל pointed out that even one who committed unintentional murder had a place where he could go and be received and be welcomed—the "Cities of Refuge." Who lived in these cities?—the Levites, whose very lives were dedicated to the service of G-d. It was their duty to help even those who had committed such a terrible deed, and to provide housing for them. How much more so does the obligation rest on us to help our fellows who are desperately in search of truth!

Adam, the first man created by G-d, had been destined to live 1000 years, but died after 930 years. The Talmud tells us that he allocated 70 years of his life to King David, who had been destined to be stillborn. Adam could well have kept those years for himself, claiming that he needed the 70 years to perform many more good deeds on this earth. The greatness of Adam's deed lay in his willingness to share with another his most precious gift—that of growing and gaining in

spiritually—making this great sacrifice for the sake of another person. This, then, must be our motto: to give even when it hurts—not only physically, but even if our action seems to arrest our own spiritual growth.

### An Inheritance For Sharing

The Midrash tells how Rabbi Yanai met an unusually handsome person, and how he invited him to join him for a meal. At the conclusion of the meal, Rabbi Yanai asked his guest, "Do you know any Chumash (Bible)?" "No," he responded. "Mishna? . . . Talmud?" The answer was again no . . . The guest could not even lead the *Birchas Hamazon* (Grace After Meals). Rabbi Yanai was dismayed at the visitor's abject ignorance, but the man spoke up in anger: "You have taken my inheritance!"


Rabbi Yanai was puzzled and asked, "Which inheritance did I take? I did not even know you until today!"

The guest replied, "When I was young, I passed a school where I heard the teacher say to small children: 'Moses commanded the Torah to us. It is an inheritance to the community of Jacob.' It does not say that it is an inheritance to the community of Yanai. The Torah belongs to all of us. If you were fortunate enough to learn Torah, part of what has become yours is actually mine."

The present day generation pleads with us, "Our inheritance is in your hands!" We who had the fantastic good fortune of having a Torah education, and exposure to Torah values and way of life must realize that the gain is not meant to be exclusively ours. There is an entire world entitled to share it with us, and we must provide this world with the opportunity to do so. We must bear in mind that we are not necessarily better than others. Many are inspired by a genuine desire to seek out the "Greatness of Creation," and it is our responsibility to answer the call of those seeking their "inheritance."

At the final session of the Third Knessia Gedolah, the famed Rav of Ponovezh, Rabbi Yoseif Kahaneman זצ"ל, told the following parable:

"A home was completely enveloped in flames, and inside a man was sleeping. Guards stood around him arguing how best to save him. While the fire grew in intensity, the guards continued to argue. No one was there to tell them to cease arguing and awaken the sleeper so that he could save himself . . . The Jewish individual, as well as the community, is surrounded by elements of destruction. Let us wake up those who are asleep so they can save themselves!"

That call over forty years ago applies to us today, as well. The present day generation needs only to be awakened to the spirit of Torah, and they will be able to regain their souls . . . and save themselves. 

A TIME TO REACH OUT

# The Days Have Come

Rabbi Baruch Horovitz

*"Behold, days are coming, says the L-rd, G-d, when I shall send a famine in the land; not a famine for bread, nor a thirst*



*for water, but for hearing the word of G-d, the L-rd."*

(Amos 8:11)

Behold those days HAVE COME!

One of the greatest miracles of our era is that after the terrible Hitlerian holocaust and the spiritual holocaust of assimilation there exists a movement of "a generation of those who search for Him, who seek Your Countenance." The search for the absolute religious experience as a fundamental reality encompasses today a considerable portion of intellectual youth in the world in general and a great part of Jewish youth in particular.

There are many amongst them who "wander from ocean to ocean and from the north even to the east, and they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the L-rd and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair maidens and young men faint from thirst" (Amos 8:12-13); in other words, those who travel geographically as well as in the spiritual sense from northern continents to the Far East, where they find a spiritual death (and sometimes even a physical end). However, there exists also an increasing group of those who quench their thirst from the living waters of Torah that comes forth from Yerushalayim ("Yira Shalom," "Fear of G-d—perfection").

How can we explain the phenomenon that an American Jew, whose parents and grandparents are completely assimilated, finds it natural to learn in a yeshiva—like a student at our yeshiva, whose mother was trying to persuade him to marry a Gentile and who wrote to him: "There is no generation gap between you and your great-grandmother!" Or the youths from the kibbutzim of the Shomer HaTzair, or the students from Russia, who, together with their parents, were brainwashed with atheism. And still they have a great desire to devote themselves to Torah and Yiras Shomayim.

**Rabbi Horovitz**, formerly a Rav in Manchester, England, is founder and dean of Yeshivat Dvar Yerushalayim. This essay is based on an address delivered at Agudath Israel's Sixth Knessia Gedolah.

I heard from Rabbi Yoseif Kahaneman, the late Ponevezher Rav זצ"ל, that in the course of the Hitler holocaust a million pure souls of innocent Jewish children, *cheder* children, were lost. Since then, their souls hover in the world, trying to find bodies into which they can enter in order to continue their interrupted lives. Thus pure Jewish souls are transfigured in the *chozrim biteshuva* of our days.

## A Change in Tactics

There exist today attentive ears among all Jewish circles for Torah and Yiras Shomayim, but the spirit of assimilation, mixed marriages and ignorance of Torah are stronger. Against the massive tide of regression there is merely a small trickle of those drawn closer to Torah.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between our generation and the previous ones. It is written in Brachos (63a):

*"Hillel the Elder said, If you see a generation that loves Torah, 'reach out,' as it is written 'There is one who gives freely and yet increases' (Mishlei 11:24). And if you see a generation that does not love Torah, 'gather in' (kaneis), as it is written: 'It is time to act for the L-rd, they have made void thy Torah! (Tehillim 119:126)."*

In former generations, it was necessary to pursue the policy of "gathering in" (*kaneis*)—to organize assemblies, to insulate the Torah community and to protect it from the threatened inroads of secularism and reform. Today, it is easy to persuade members of secular and reform movements to become religious Jews by means of "reaching out," by disseminating Torah, since today's generation is one that loves Torah. Since, however, this love of Torah is not yet apparent in practice, we also have to continue with our policy of "gathering in."

Yet, the special challenge of our generation is to go

*The Jewish Observer / May-June, 1980*



also in the way of "reaching out," for there are many *chozrim biteshuva* from the Conservative, Reform, anti-religious and leftist movements as well as from secular Zionism. Moreover, there is a general trend within these very movements, of return to the traditional, authentic roots of Judaism.

### He Who Was Saved Saves Others

We read in *Shemos* that the daughter of Pharaoh "... called his name Moshe because she drew him out of the water" (*Shemos* 2:10). His name, according to grammatical rules, should have been "*Mashui*, the one who is drawn." The name Moshe, however, denotes according to most commentators (Rashi, *ibid.*; Ibn Ezra & *Sephorno*), someone who draws or pulls others from the water. The *Sephorno* commentary (*ibid*) explains that Pharaoh's daughter called him Moshe "because he should rescue others. The fact that she drew him from the water wherein he had been placed, shows that it had been decreed from above that he was obligated to rescue others."

A person is duty bound to repay all the kindnesses which G-d bestows upon him, by himself being kind to other human beings. It is in this way that he shows his gratitude to Hashem.

For this reason the Torah tells us only those happenings in Moshe's life which show us how he rescued others. "... and Moshe grew up and went out to his brothers and saw their suffering" (*Shemos* 2:11); his rescue of the Hebrew from the blows of his fellow Hebrew. Later he helped the (Gentile) daughters of Yithro from the oppressions of the (Gentile) shepherds.

We read further: "... and Moshe was a shepherd." The Midrash *Tanchuma* comments that G-d tests the *tzaddikim* by making them shepherds. Our Sages relate how a young sheep fled from the herd. Moshe pursued the sheep and found it far away, drinking water from a remote pool. As he reached the sheep, Moshe said: "I didn't know that you ran away because you were thirsty; you must be tired." He took the sheep on his shoulders and carried it back. Thereupon G-d said: "If you can lead people's sheep in such a merciful manner you may be sure that you will tend My sheep, Israel!" It was then that G-d revealed Himself to Moshe through the burning thornbush at Mount Horev as a preparation for the revelation of the Torah.

While Moshe grows in saving others from their physical suffering, G-d reveals Himself to him and ordains him as the savior of Israel. Exactly eighty years after Moshe was drawn out from the waters of the Nile, he became the instrument to extricate from the destructive waters of Egyptian impurity so that they would serve G-d with the Receiving of the Torah.

### We, Too, Were Saved

Thanks to Divine benevolence, all of us have directly or indirectly been saved from the catastrophic holo-

caust caused by the wicked Pharaoh of our generation. It is thus our duty to rescue others and to devote our lives to ensuring the survival of the Jewish people. Furthermore, all of us have been rescued from the spiritual holocaust, from the abyss of assimilation, which is threatening to engulf and drown the Jewish people. Orthodox Jewry, therefore, having been privileged with the strength of Torah and mitzvos, is obligated to rescue others and extricate them from the bitter waters of atheism, permissiveness and ignorance and to guide them towards *teshuva*, to return to G-d.

### An Agenda For Rescue

I therefore propose:

(1) Each branch of Agudath Israel should set up a committee for attracting uncommitted Jews. Its task among others should be to arrange for "returnees" to be invited to Orthodox homes for *Shabbat* and *Yomtov*; to disseminate Judaism amongst irreligious circles; and to keep in constant contact with institutions involved with *chozrim biteshuva*.

(2) To establish a fund for *chozrim biteshuva* so that those wishing to learn Torah can study in a yeshiva for at least one year (also for women) by way of a scholarship which will cover the fallshort of the Yeshiva's expenses, since many applicants are unfortunately turned away for lack of sufficient funds.


(3) To organize a yearly conference of all those involved with *Kiruv Rechokim*, including those that are not connected with Agudath Israel.

(4) To set up a guidance course for workers in the field of *Kiruv Rechokim*.

(5) To suggest that the *Gedolei Torah* appeal to each yeshiva student, or to those who have studied in a yeshiva for a number of years, to give of their time to tutor beginners (*chozrim biteshuva*)—as HaGaon Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz זצ"ל, the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, asked from his pupils shortly before his death.

(6) To arrange for Orthodox representation in all *aliya* offices in the country (including Lod) and in the world (including Vienna and Rome). These are to cooperate closely with all religious organizations so that those who are yet far removed from Torah be informed of Ulpanim and institutions of learning in Israel specializing in *chozrim biteshuva*.

(7) An appeal by our *Gedolim* to all Bnei Yeshiva to be particular about improving their character traits, manners and standard of honesty by way of personal example. This will have a strong bearing upon attracting uncommitted Jews. We often observe that *chozrim biteshuva* are detrimentally influenced by the impression of a *ben Torah* who does not keep far away from falseness, *lashon hora*, deceit and strife.

(8) To arrange *shiurim* on the Ethics of the Torah in all educational institutions, including non-religious ones, since this subject attracts them and can help bring those who are estranged to the observance of all the *mitzvot*. 

## THE FIRST STEP

# The Teshuva Solicitors

Hillel Goldberg

Jerusalem: capital city of the land of the *baal teshuva*, the "penitent." 1967—not one solid *baal teshuva* yeshiva in Jerusalem; 1980—five such yeshivos flourishing, thousands of Jews thought lost to *Yiddishkeit* brought back to Torah. Real Torah. Learning it, living it, loving it. How did it happen? *Harbei sheluchim la Makom*—G-d has many emissaries. I look up three of them, three rare individuals who pace the streets of Jerusalem, approach perfect strangers, solicit potential *baalei teshuva*. What do *teshuva* solicitors do? What are the problems they face? What can be done to link still more wandering Jews to the chain of Judaism stretching from Sinai—the chain of *rebbe* transmitting to *talmid*, generation to generation, extending to this generation too?

### Being There

To solicit *baalei teshuva* is to cope with boredom. Hours can pass, but not a soul may pass by; the streets of Jerusalem (or the plaza of the Western Wall)—empty. But when someone does pass by, you have to be there. Another person, another *neshama*—you have to be there, right then. You never know when the opportunity for planting a seed, for tapping a root, will present itself.

Rabbi Boruch Levine, *teshuva* solicitor, introduced himself: bearded, ebullient, a rush of ideas. I squeeze in questions. "Where are you from? How long in Israel? Where do you learn?" Suddenly, Boruch exclaims, "Stop! I'm Boruch, don't you recognize me?" . . . A flash, a memory; years peel away, back to the Bostoner Rebbe's 1971, Tisha B'Av. I persuade a slight, beardless young man to come home after *Kinos*.

What better time than Tisha B'Av to dig into a *neshama*, to tap the root? The connection, the link with centuries, the experience of pain 2000 years

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Meir Shuster at work

old—and we're still here, still alive, still remembering; and if we are part of a past that long, then we are part of a future that long, too. My little talk triggered something in Boruch, and now here he is before me—*talmid* of Gateshead and Ponovezh, *meshamesh* of *roshei yeshiva*, frequenter to Jerusalem, where he pours out his heart to those lost to *Yiddishkeit*—just as Mordechai Adelman's late father once directed the depths of his heart to me. Plant a seed; it's worth it. Another link restored to the broken chain—in this generation.

Rabbi Mordechai Adelman, 29, *musmach* of Yeshivas Mir in Jerusalem, spends three hours on the street every day, then teaches at Yeshivas Aish Ha-Torah. "Each person you meet is a *neshama*, a future religious person, a future *ben Torah*," he says. "Each one must feel the love and sincerity of all involved. Love conquers all. We'll bring people back to Judaism through love. We're talking about a generation in which people are searching for reassurance and a sense of belonging. Look at the percentage of Jews in Hari Krishna, the Moonies, Christian cults, the rest. Why is that? Because they're looking. We just have to reach out. We have to learn how."

Then there's the master. He's learned how.

Like a darting shadow, he is often sensed rather than seen. Out of the corner of your eye, you catch sight of him moving through open air markets, lingering at the Western Wall or striding along isolated or busy streets in Jerusalem. Rabbi Meir Shuster, at 34, has mastered the art of self-effacement. He is relaxed, reserved, singleminded, seeking to engage students or tourists in conversation, to convince them to spend a *Shabbos* meal in a Jerusalem home or to enter a yeshiva.

His manner is thoroughly restrained, disarming, quiet. And persuasive. In nine years he has persuaded tens, hundreds, thousands of people to taste *Shabbos*, taste learning, taste Torah. He is out there morning, noon, night. Everywhere. . . . It took a lot to get Jews away from Torah; it's going to take a lot to get them back, too.

## The Solicitor's Dream

Precisely because *baal teshuva* yeshivos are now solid institutions—they have relatively stable financial support (comparable to that of any other yeshiva), ample students and excellent instructors—Rabbis Shuster, Adelman and Levine, who in a sense are most finely attuned to the pulse of the whole *teshuva* effort, are asking questions; and so, for that matter, are many others close to the scene.

—Must the solicitor of *baalei teshuva* be uniquely gifted, or can more people learn the trade?

—Ought women be more actively involved?

—How can the *teshuva* effort be expanded and diversified in order to cut the rate of dropouts and to reach those who will not peek inside a yeshiva even for a day or two?

—What kinds of institutions beside yeshivos are needed to attract still larger numbers of *baalei teshuva*?

All of the present *teshuva* solicitors have different approaches, but all agree that many others not only should, but *could* be doing this kind of work. It takes unusual qualities, but they can be learned.

It takes a deep love of Torah, deep enough to want to spend long hours pacing the streets of Jerusalem or lingering at the Western Wall or the Central Bus Station; it takes self-confidence or forwardness to approach a perfect stranger; it takes a non-judgmental mood—conveying a tolerance for wild hair and dress styles, and for Jews who live together out of wedlock or who are intermarried; it takes a certain intuition—something that can be acquired through experience—*whom do you approach? who appears to lack a certain element of security? who appears intelligent? searching? alone? how long to talk before getting to the point?*

And how to get the conversation started? Typical lines presently used:

*Would you like to leave Israel with something more than a suntan?*

*Would you like to take a real souvenir back to the States—a piece of wisdom?*

*Have you had lunch yet?*

*Do you need a place to stay?*

*Would you like to spend a Sabbath with a family?*

*Would you like to sit in on a class in Jewish philosophy?*

*If I were a non-Jew and called you a dirty Jew, what would you do?—I'd hit you.—Why? If you don't know what Judaism means, why get mad?*

## No Monopoly on Style

For years, Rabbi Shuster had a monopoly on the subtle, exacting job of soliciting potential *baalei teshuva*, but the recent successful entry into the field of Rabbis Adelman and Levine substantiates the claim that still others could succeed.

There is room for different approaches.

Shuster and Adelman attempt to see as many people as possible, to induce them to enter a yeshiva as quickly

## ONE DAY AT THE KOTEL

*There was a woman  
I spoke with at the Kotel  
Her five daughters  
standing round her,  
looking bored  
anxious to leave.  
"We need people  
like you in America.  
That's where Judaism  
is dying" she said.  
"Just look.  
You can see it  
in my daughters."  
And I did.*

*"I still feel  
something standing  
here," she said  
desperately.  
"They don't feel  
a thing.  
Please tell them  
about this place.  
Make them feel  
something here.  
I'm not religious.  
I have nothing  
to give them  
anymore."*

as possible; they leave long-range persuasion and demonstration to yeshiva personnel—then back to the streets. But Levine involves himself deeply in the persuasion, long- and short-range; he takes personal interest in individuals, follows up closely. There are other differences. The two rabbis are married; Levine is single. A certain "weight," a gravity, attaches to a married individual; it gives his arguments greater credibility to some potential *baalei teshuva*. But then there is a certain gut line of communication which one unmarried individual can establish with another. And no doubt, there are many other modes of being and of communication which are tailored to the needs of different types of potential *baalei teshuva*—if only more would enter the field and put their own individual qualities to work. Right now, for example, there is the need for a *teshuva* solicitor attuned to the sensibilities of young people who, for whatever reason, are committed to gaining a university education in Israel. While frequenters of the Old City and Western Wall are solicited, thousands of young students remain untouched. Take one typical summer-school class in Jewish thought at Hebrew University, 1979: There were 24 students in the class. Three were "modern Orthodox." 21 were highly assimilated and ignorant of most things Jewish; they defined themselves as Jews and did want to "get into" Judaism even if they could not define, even to themselves, exactly how. Out of those 21 students, just one had ever been approached by a *teshuva* solicitor. None besides him had ever heard of a *baal teshuva* yeshiva. And yet, literally thousands of Jewish students attend courses in Jewish subjects at Israeli universities each year.

So that's one problem—to get more dedicated Torah Jews on the streets of Jerusalem and onto its campuses to meet the hundreds and thousands who never meet a Shuster, Adelman, or Levine.

## First Stop

Then there is another problem: where to send those who *are* met? Right now there are, essentially only two alternatives: directly to yeshiva, or to a home as a first stop.

*Yeshiva.* It is true that within the *baal teshuva* yeshivos with which the present solicitors work—Aish HaTorah, Dvar Yerushalayim, Or Somayach, Diaspora Yeshiva, Machon Meir—there is a great deal of diversity. But to the outsider, a yeshiva is a yeshiva. Rabbis Noach Weinberg, Mordechai Adelman, and Boruch Levine have all estimated (the one independently of the other) that only one or two of ten people who walk into a *baal teshuva* yeshiva off the street stays there for any appreciable length of time. 80 to 90 percent of the potential pool of *baalei teshuva*—those that the present solicitor do reach—are, to all appearances, lost. There is need for an additional type of first-stop institutions to receive the *baal teshuva*. Such an institution would serve as more than an attractive alternative to the initially foreboding yeshiva. It could also do a better job of holding on to many drop-ins. For, even after many a potential *baal teshuva* joins a yeshiva, he can suffer from the institution's virtues. Precisely because the *baal teshuva* yeshivos are good, and precisely because the new *baalei teshuva* that they attract are so eager to learn Torah—to stake out a Jewish identity for themselves, to make up for lost time—many veterans have limited time and patience to devote to newcomers.<sup>1</sup> Even with a one-to-one faculty-student ratio in most such yeshivos more professionals could be used.

*Home.* The *Shabbos* meal in a home is, of course, invaluable, and for some potential *baalei teshuva* it is irreplaceable, but even for them it is only of limited value. It works as a complement to some broader framework of learning, or talking about, or living or witnessing Torah.

## An Unmet Need

Thus, the *teshuva* solicitors believe that there is a real need for, besides the yeshivos, an institution less intense than a yeshiva—a place like a hostel, a place where one can come and go, can learn periodically but not continuously, can grow at a slow pace—but where rabbis and teachers and Torah literature and classes are available at all times. An attempt to open such an institution in Jerusalem failed some years ago. In any event, it was slated to function only during the summer; and while there is more traffic during summers, the need is for a year-round institution, properly staffed, and properly ambitious. Hostels—places to sleep—are in demand in any case; and a Torah youth hostel, say the present *teshuva* solicitors, could reclaim countless additional Jews for *Yiddishkeit*.

<sup>1</sup>By the same token, many returnees respond in a totally opposite way. Sometimes *baalei teshuva* are so overwhelmed by their yeshiva experience that they leave no stone unturned in their effort to persuade friends and family to return to *Yiddishkeit*.

Who should go there?—Males?—females?—both? Opinions diverge. Rabbi Shuster believes that hostels ought to be available to both males and females (strictly separate dormitories, of course) because it is precisely the female, and the couple, who are so difficult to service now. Persuading a couple to enter a yeshiva can easily fail because while the female (for example) may want to, the male may not—so neither enters. Or—another common problem—defenses are much stronger when the potential cannot confront himself. It takes longer to get through to two attached people, takes more time, more study, often a common effort with both—things which cannot be done all that easily in the yeshiva framework.

Then, too, even within the present yeshiva framework in Jerusalem, which includes several excellent institutions for women, there is less opportunity for females, and this for two reasons. First, not everyone will approach a girl to urge her to “try Judaism.” Rabbi Shuster does; others do not. And even Rabbi Shuster believes that a female *teshuva* solicitor could have much greater success in this area than he does.<sup>2</sup> Second, there are fewer of existing women's institutions for *baalei teshuva*, and there is less diversity within them than among those available for males.

The need for greater *teshuva* frameworks for females, and for couples, then, is especially acute. Nonetheless, there is a reluctance by some to contemplate a hostel to serve both males and females, for obvious reasons. Should hopes for such a hostel materialize, halachic authorities will no doubt have to be consulted for guidance.

## One Klal Yisroel—Doing Teshuva Together

There is, then, much work to be done both in attracting *baalei teshuva* and keeping them in the fold; there is need for more people to get involved in the field and there is need for more frameworks within which to carry on the *teshuva* activity. Finally, there is the need not to separate *baalei teshuva* from the body politic of *Klal Yisroel*, as if they constituted a sect, a separate constellation. The need is not only to create more frameworks within which *teshuva* can take place, but also to ease *baalei teshuva* out of those frameworks, to integrate them fully into the *klal*.

A student at a *baal teshuva* yeshiva in Jerusalem met the present Gerer Rebbe and introduced himself: “I study at a *baal teshuva* yeshiva, but”—he hastened to add—“I’m not a *baal teshuva*.” Retorted the Rebbe: “Why not?”

*Baalei teshuva* have no monopoly on *teshuva*; non-*baalei teshuva* are not exempt from it. *Teshuva* is for every Jew; anywhere.

□

<sup>2</sup>Rashi in *Bereishis*, 12:5, comments on the verse that Avraham and Sarah “made many souls in Haran”—“Avraham converted the men; Sarah converted the women.”



# Studying Talmud— the Means and the End

*based on an interview with Rabbi Nota Schiller*

## The Climate of Teshuva

Anything of consequence, according to *seforim*, results from a combination of *olam, shanah, u'nefesh*—the place, the time, and the people. When a particular blend of these factors comes about, a major breakthrough takes place.

Today we are inhabiting the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate world, marked by a bankruptcy of much of the formerly held cliches of Western Civilization; and the resultant vacuum makes a return to something more substantial far more likely. The time is ripe.

In addition, the people are ready. The parents of today's generation had devoted their prime energies toward establishing themselves culturally, economically in the American community. They have succeeded; and now their children and grandchildren are more relaxed. They do not have to prove their American credentials. They can also afford the luxury of being more idealistic because they are enjoying a more solid economic base. (While economic cycles do have their ups and downs, today's recession is not at all comparable to the economic stresses of a generation ago.) Today's youth are therefore able to look at their Jewish heritage in a much less defensive fashion. Ironically enough, having had less Jewishness—misrepresented or otherwise—in their lives is even an advantage of sorts, for this younger

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generation has fewer prejudices to overcome. They have not ever reached the point of considering the Torah position, but they also never felt the need to defend themselves as much by acquiring and magnifying nasty stereotypes.

Add to this a rejection of many old cherished American values. Even when these ideologies coincided with Torah concepts, they were not rooted in an Absolute, and were built on flimsy foundations. The inevitable consequences of this rejection is an arbitrariness that has perforce evolved into the chaos of relative values. Young people began to feel this rootlessness even before they could articulate it; they began to call attention to the inconsistencies they were being offered, and this has evolved into a search for alternatives. A small but growing number discovered the Torah alternative.

## Marketing Torah?

So here we are, facing a ready generation in a most opportune time. Surely it is our obligation to reach out to them. We, however, are not the only ones vying for their attention, so we must be competitive. While promotion and packaging may therefore be necessary, we must maintain an extraordinary vigilance not to substitute the package for the product. For "competing" frequently implies using the norms and methods of the competition, only trying to do it better—hence the urgency to focus on the essence rather than merely on



the means. This is especially important in regard to *teshuva*; we must never lose sight of the fact that *teshuva* is a matter of intense personal development and growth. While a single event or experience may initiate the process, it cannot fully complete it. Thus, as a first step, one must be alert to differentiate between *baalei teshuva* and "candidates" for becoming *baalei teshuva*, because each requires a different approach. Any Jew with any degree of loyalty to his Jewishness, conscious or unconscious, is a candidate for becoming a *baal teshuva*.

Developing and refining our methods of bringing even more candidates for *teshuva* to their first exposure to Torah learning and a Torah community is an unresolved item on our agenda. There are any number of methods that have been experimented with for establishing the initial contact, ranging from publishing to using electronic media, from coffeehouse to lectures—even the use of entertainment. And, indeed, almost every effort that has had any degree of sincerity and consistency has been producing appreciable results.

### Step Two: Experiencing the Oral Law

Further along the road is the young person who has made a decision to join the Torah community but is still lacking the requisite information to function as a *baal teshuva*. He is ready for more than just attractive introductions. Here it would seem that for the candidate for becoming a *baal teshuva*—as, more obviously, for the person who has made the decision to become a *baal teshuva*—the key experience is contact with Torah *Sheb'al peh*, the process of learning the Oral Law that is the most unique experience, the experience that is peculiarly indigenous to Judaism which he has not had and cannot have elsewhere.

As mystical as it sounds, this young Jew ignorant of Torah—his soul also stood at Sinai; and he too enjoyed a "malach" for a *chavrusa* while yet an embryo. Again and again we see this "deja vu" of the Jewish soul coming back to that which it knew and still knows; for this reason, lectures that are intelligently delivered, well thought out, and articulately presented, are of greatest importance.

This exposure also serves to help overcome the off-hand dismissal of our Weltanschauung as a non-position. To be sure, there must be some kind of initial presentation of Judaism's idea-system at the first point of contact. After that, what remains unique and special is the personal experience with the genius of Torah—which becomes so unique, that it can not be satisfactorily reduced merely to genius alone.

Thus begins the metamorphosis from the academic to the spiritual. The problematics are the questions of timing and emphasis. Where does the "initial contact" leave off and the educational process begin? Institutions by their nature must establish programs and criteria. Individuals will have their own pace at which they swim with the current of an institution.

I am not contesting the necessity for more sophisticated techniques of tickling the slumbering consciousness of the hibernating Jew. Anything that will work and is consistent with *halacha* should be considered. Our major concern is that the novice becomes "solid" as soon as possible; and by all evidence, the greater number of young people that are successfully effecting *teshuva* today have experienced a systematic learning program allowing them to gain the norms, perspectives and sensitivities of the Oral Law.

We must keep in mind that ultimately the *hashkafa* of Torah will stand or fall on the issue of *emunas chachomim*. This is more than merely believing in our sages; it is granting of the axiom that the ideas and insights of our sages are different in kind from the product of simple human invention. It has become abundantly clear that this conviction can only be absorbed through a personal development in accumulating the specialness of these words of our sages first hand. Thus and only thus, can any firm and lasting *emunas chachomim* be achieved. And that sense of oneness—temporally and spiritually—with Jews throughout history and over the world is effected through the medium of the Torah *Sheb'al peh*: *If Rabbi Akiva were to walk into any beis midrash in the world today, he would be able to pick up the conversation where he left off; and we would be conversant with him.* There is no other cultural or ideological achievement that parallels this. Becoming one with Jews throughout history and over the world is crucial to being a Jew, hence to *teshuva*.

### The Impact of the Oral Law: The Learning Experience

In a number of places, our rabbinical literature discusses man's need for society. A gregarious creature, he is influenced by the dynamics of his social environment. Thus a *baal teshuva*, in making the transition from one set of values to another, must find a new community as well. The Torah community is built on the pinions of the Oral Law. For the *baal teshuva* to successfully integrate into this community, he must as quickly as possible be comfortable with the Oral Law. Practically speaking, one owes it to the potential *baal teshuva* to provide him with the ability to integrate into the international Torah community as quickly and as successfully as possible.

One more issue must be considered carefully. However unwittingly, we in western society have absorbed of its many cultural norms. Coming from that base/bias, it is assumed that whatever it is that Torah has to say about man, G-d, life, love and death can be evaluated while yet a spectator from without: One more carton of ideas out on the shelf for the casual browser to choose from while strolling through the aisles. Yet Torah only begins to snap, crackle, and pop with the tasting. All the persuasion that we can marshal substantiating Judaism metaphysically and historically acts only as a prelude, aimed at establishing the respon-

sibility to investigate the *text of Torah personally*. And even though the *Rambam* in the *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* speaks of the study of *Pardes* (the philosophical pursuit of understanding the relationship between matter and spirit) as the ultimate concern of man, he still stresses the importance of first mastering "*Havayos D'Abayah V'Ravah*"—a deep and sophisticated knowledge of the dialect, the question-and-answers of the halachic process.

The *Rambam* submits two reasons for this: First, they discipline a man's thinking. One must *learn* how to think—drifting or dreaming is not thinking. Thinking is a rigorous process that demands tutoring. The *Rambam* then adds another reason: "The ultimate good that G-d has influenced on the world is these *mitzvos*, learning and living the halachic process."

The *Rambam* explains in *Moreh Nevuchim* that the likelihood to deal efficiently with philosophy can only come after man has attained objectivity, for only he who no longer has subjective biases can think clearly. Man can only be objective after having honed his personality, refined the alloys out of the metal, through the experience of learning *Torah Sheb'al peh*, and developed the capacity to execute his life accordingly.

The *Gemora* states that G-d says, "I created the evil inclination, and its antidote is the experience of studying Torah." Torah is meant to be experiential, as the *bracha* says—"La'asok B'divrei Torah—to engage in the words of Torah." The exercise of presenting the system of Torah, and establishing the evidence that corroborates it, *must be recognized as provisional and limited, and must serve as but a prelude to the actual engagement in the act of learning Torah*. Only through the experience of learning *Torah Sheb'al peh* does one come to that dispassionate objective capacity for understanding the deeper philosophical truths of Torah. Therefore a priority must be put on deeper and more clear understanding of the data and the methodology of *Torah Sheb'al peh*.

### The Circular Goal

The step from M.I.T. to yeshiva is a quantum leap. Are there no easy, diluted courses for transition purposes? No half-way means? Insight can be gained from a discussion by Rabbi Yoseif Albo in *Sefer Haikrim*. He poses an interesting question: Throughout nature the dominant form, almost to the exclusion, is the circular. Things grow, their form is circular. The beehive is an exception, it is a hexagonal. The Albo submits that the *hashgacha* might have required this form because only with the squared off sides can we maximize the use of space, having one hive, one form flush against the other. Had circles been employed, efficient use of the space would have been forfeited. Then, asks the Albo, why a hexagon? It could have been a square.

His answer is a penetrating insight: When departing from the ideal—proceeding from the premise that

the ideal is the circular form—one must remain as close as possible to that ideal. The hexagon remains more akin to the circle than the square would be. No other form, i.e. an octagon, would work, for not every side could be utilized.

In a similar fashion, the ideal form for communicating Torah, for learning Torah, for establishing Torah, has been the *beis midrash*, the *daled amos* of *halacha*. It is the method whereby *rebbe* and *talmid* interact, and the *talmid* gains the advantage of the superior knowledge, direction, and insight in the *Torah Sheb'al peh*. In fact, one cannot gain insight into *Torah Sheb'al peh* without a *rebbe*.


Even though the non-Jewish world succeeded in translating the Pentateuch, the result—the Septuagint—was viewed as a tragedy for *Klal Yisroel*. Three days of darkness, the *Midrash* says, descended upon the world at that time, "for the lion which was formerly roaming free is now caged." The non-Jewish community could then claim that it too has the Torah. Indeed one can take Jewish studies at Yale and at Harvard; one does not *have* to come to a yeshiva. Yet Ptolemy was not able to achieve a complete victory, for the *Torah Sheb'al peh*, the Oral Law remains the unique province and possession of a tradition through the generations. That is exclusive to a Torah community. And through it, one becomes initiated into this society.

### Every Beginning is Hard

Establishing a learning program in Talmud for late-starters involves new problems and therefore new solutions must be sought. Adults may be secularly sophisticated, yet their understanding of Torah is so weak that they need remedial-level study. Methods of bridging the gap must be found. Yet the governing principle must be, *if it cannot be a circle it must be at least a hexagon, not a square*. He must be as close as possible to the format of the *beis midrash*, the *daled amos* of *halacha*, the excitement and intensity of building *s'vora* upon *s'vora*, block upon block, interrelating the scope, consistency and penetration of the *Torah Sheb'al peh*.

In fact, looking around to the community and seeing large numbers of young people who have successfully achieved the transition from a secular society to becoming part and parcel of that Torah community, it is obviously those who have had a healthy and steady growth in *Torah Sheb'al peh* who dominate.

A friend told me of an elderly Jewish manufacturer who had drifted from his tradition, and was taken to a yeshiva for the first time in forty years. He overstayed his visit, and when calling his wife to tell her that he'd be late, he said, "I'm calling from the factory where they make Jews."

The *baal teshuva* factory works. And the products hold their own in the finest of the more conventional institutions—as a visit to Mir, Torah Vodaath, or Lakewood can easily demonstrate. 

## How Do You Handle a Hungry Heart?

*Hanoch Teller*

Take a deep breath before you enter the classroom. There are likely to be 12 to 25 students inside—as many as a dozen of them receiving their first exposure to Judaism. Many of these girls have just arrived from a kibbutz, Hebrew University, the Central Bus Station, or the Western Wall. Perhaps “delivered” would be a more accurate term. The majority of the ranks of *baalei teshuva yeshivos* have been filled by recruits who were carefully attracted by talented solicitors—“*shleppers*,” in the parlance of the *baal teshuva* yeshivos (see Hillel Goldberg’s article in this issue).

Inside the classroom is a sea of hungry faces. The newcomers dress differently from the girls who have been attending for a longer period of time. New students invariably wear a sloganed tee shirt, jeans, san-

dals and an overstuffed knapsack. Our veterans (a very loose term in a *baal teshuva* school, where the change-over rate is quite high) dress in accord with the laws of modesty.

The faces, so different from one another, are in some ways all the same . . . Some are resting on elbows, some defiantly poised in the air. But they all speak the same message: “Teach me, prove to me, quench my thirst, give me spirituality!” Even the ones who have come only to sample the experience are intrigued.

### Openers: Questions, Moods and Answers

A logical place to embark on a Jewish education is *Lech Lecha*, the genesis of the Jewish Nation. We plumb for the depth of the Torah, rather than a mere recitation of the Biblical narrative. For example—the tests that the Almighty posed on Abraham are an indication of what

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OH R SOMAYACH Yael Rosen

would transpire in the experience of every Jew; so we begin with "*Lech Lecha*—Go for yourself." The test here is obvious. Leaving one's country, kindred and family is no easy matter, as everyone in the room knows.

Many commentaries, however, understand a different challenge in this verse: *Rashi* notes that travelling takes its toll in three areas: family life, wealth, and fame. Therefore G-d blessed Abraham with all three blessings—blessings that he had not fully achieved while residing in Charan.

Lecture concluded, I pause for questions—and they come in many guises, stemming from a variety of sources within the questioners.

Objective question: *After receiving a Divine promise of these auspicious endowments, can Abraham's exodus still be truly considered a test of faith?* . . . Perhaps the test lies in the conclusion of the verse: ". . . to the land that I will show you." The destination is not identified, and nonetheless Abraham was expected to follow.

Subjective question: *Was Abraham really expected to abandon everything that he owned and cherished for an unknown destination?* This question, like every question, must be answered. Unanswered, the question erects a barrier in the woman's religious-philosophical struggle to affirm her commitment to a Torah life. So we will attack it, directly.

Some questions, however, are actually accusations, or are used to vent a heterodox view: "*Wasn't Sarah hiding in the tent because of Abraham's chauvinistic attitude rather than due to her modesty?*"

Yet other questions mask a far deeper and broader probe. Often a question does not have an answer, and the mood of the questioner must be addressed. Sometimes this is obvious—sometimes incredibly subtle: Martha frequently questions "G-d's overbearing vindictiveness," and I later discover that she has a hostile relationship with her father . . . The attribute of Hashem: "merciful, as a father to children," is one that she instinctively rejects. You must determine which question to address—the one articulated or the one implied.

### The Handicap

We analyze the text, but I am not delivering an analytical *Gemora shiur*. Every lesson is another sales-pitch for Judaism to a marginally interested, albeit highly intelligent, clientele. Although the girls sitting in the classroom already have one foot in the door, it takes considerable time and convincing until the rest of the person follows suit.

The major difficulty in selling Judaism is that it is not a marketable item with a clear "fair-trade" price tag. The buyers are few and selective. We are convinced that the stakes are high, but they sense that the sacrifices to be demanded are enormous. It is hard for those who grew up in a Torah home to appreciate the difficul-

ties involved in the learning process of a *baal teshuva*, for implicit in every lesson is a challenge: Understanding Abraham's endurance of a heavenly test implies a personal readiness to undertake the trials of living in accordance with *halacha* . . . Abraham leaving his home to fulfill a Divine command foreshadows the fortitude necessary to leave an unkosher home, a *Shabbos*-violating home . . . Coming to grips with Sarah's modesty compels the reshuffling of a wardrobe . . .

### Antidotes and Tangents

Some commentaries explain that leaving Charan for Canaan per se was not the essential challenge posed to Abraham, for who could ignore the Divine commandment, especially in view of the gains coupled with it? The trial was purifying his motive: to leave solely because the Almighty had commanded him to. Indeed, when Abraham finally did arrive in Canaan, no red carpet was waiting for him; hostile Canaanites and a famine were, and they constituted a new challenge to his faith. (Bereishis 12:6,10) Had he come to Canaan for personal gain, he certainly would have failed this subsequent trail.

How could Abraham abandon everything that he owned and cherished for the unknown? The question is answered . . . but a greater accomplishment would be to eliminate the question, dwelling on the Source of the command: When the Eternal King of all kings, Master of Heaven and Earth, is making the promise, is there any room for speculation? Is there any need for assurances or concrete guarantees? The point is made, and the question disappears.

The *Chumash*, then, is an ideal text for *emunah*. Sometimes, however, the "text" is sidestepped. The teacher often exercises the prerogative of going off on a tangent—it is stimulating, offers a change of pace, and is an effective means of implanting *hashkafa* (Jewish philosophy and outlook) not related to the basic text. Sometimes a side topic is brought up by an inquisitive student. (This, incidentally, can be edifying to the instructor, for the learning process is a two-way street. People reared in a religious environment often maintain a stagnant outlook on many facets of Judaism. The queries of a *baal teshuva* can be stimulating and enlightening, exposing Torah insights never considered before: *Doesn't following the prescribed text in prayer quash personal expression? If self-denial (bitul hayesh) is so important, isn't Judaism really an "Eastern religion"? How are aesthetics expressed in Judaism?*)

Other times, a tangential digression is carefully plotted . . . So we veer from *Emunas HaBorei* (Faith in G-d) to *Emunas Chachomim* (Trust in Torah Sages)—a powerful, crucial concept, best dealt with gradually in small doses . . . Or we talk about *tznius*.

### The Tznius Tangent

Explaining the dignity and self respect of a woman calls for no apologetics. Rather, it is an opportunity to

describe the sublime and lofty attributes of a daughter of Israel. *Toras Emes* is the ultimate truth whose message will surely be appreciated, given the proper conditions and presentation.

Begin at the beginning, with the word. The Hebrew word for modesty is *tznius*—privacy, humility. The Prophet stated: "O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require from you? only to do justice, to love mercy, and *hatzne'a leches*—to walk privately with thy God" (Micha 6:8). Indeed, modesty is the criterion for magnanimity in the Jewish scale of priorities. Recount the Midrash at the beginning of Eicha that ranks Rachel's supplications above those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Jeremiah . . . for Rachel had supplied Leah, her elder sister, with secret identification signs so that she could enter the marriage canopy posing as Rachel, and not suffer the shame of rejection. The Almighty valued this private, humble act more than all of the eminent deeds of our forefathers.

Women were enjoined to cultivate this attribute to its maximum. For this reason, says the Midrash, the first woman was created from Adam's rib, which is inner and private in two senses: The rib is usually clothed, and it is under the skin. The way one dresses reflects a presence—or lack—of inner humility.

Reb Leib Sarahs, famed disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, earned his sobriquet from his mother's *tznius*. His mother, Sarah, grew up on a small farm well removed from populated areas. Her father hired an old widower to teach his children, since there were no Jewish schools in the area. The king's only son used to come to the farm to purchase produce and was attracted to the comely young Sarah. Upon learning of this allurements, the king ordered Sarah to be immediately wed to his son. It appeared to be a hopelessly disconsolate case for Sarah and her family, until Sarah herself thought of a last resort: with unpretentious humility, Sarah, offered to marry the only available Jewish man—the elderly widower—to avoid marrying the non-Jewish king's son . . . The progeny of this marriage was Reb Leib Sarahs, whose outstanding traits of character were always traced to his mother's *tznius*.

### The Elusive Heart Factor . . .

Each story, each sentence, each word must be suffused with "heart." The maxim, "Words that truly emanate from the heart penetrate the hearts of others," has paramount significance in instructing *baalei teshuva*. Often students are suffering from an identity crisis. Their curiosity is an outgrowth of their struggle to establish an identity. Now that America has recognized that it is a pluralistic society and each group has its own specific identity, these kids think they're out to find theirs; they do not see themselves as searching for

a religious commitment. Deep inside, however, they are caught up in the universal search for the answer to "Ayekah? Who you are and why have you been placed on this earth?" This uncertainty and quest for a definitive identity generates a host of questions, child-like and highly sophisticated at the same time. Their questions also betray feelings of inadequacy and low esteem, frequently experienced by *baalei teshuva*. The lectures and the responses must address the longing for something that is missing, while fulfilling the desire for identification and meaning . . . So "heart" is a key factor in preparation and presentation.

### . . . Down to Cindy's World

Then, all discussions, no matter how philosophical, must be grounded to practical application. Your point of departure was *Sara Imeinu*, and point of arrival is Sheryl, Cindy, Rivka, Nancy . . . It is unfair to expect a girl reared in Western society to even think of dressing in accordance with the laws of *tznius* without some minimal understanding of the concepts involved. And even then, progress is slow. After some enlightenment, however, a degree of improvement can be expected. The best way to teach *tznius*—like all other external manifestations of Judaism—is by personal example and peer pressure—no matter how subtle. Indeed, a guarded *laissez-faire* attitude is general policy in the *baalei teshuva* seminaries.

### "The Answer" is Not the Whole Answer

Never make the mistake of assuming that a good explanation will alter behavior and attitude. It can be as effective as quoting the Bible to disprove a heretic's arguments. At best, a logical explanation serves to break down resistance. It takes a long time until all of the points of resistance in the way of *mitzva* adherence are neutralized.

For example: "Why can't I take a leisurely drive on the Sabbath?" They wish to learn the Torah while standing on one foot, and you must assume Hillelian patience in instruction. So you offer a detailed explanation about *Shabbos* being the very foundation of our faith; you elaborate on the dignity of labor which *Shabbos* highlights, and the spiritual growth and the opportunity to join in the Creator's plan for the world that it offers; and you dwell on the renunciation of human mastery over sundry forces and powers. Chances are the student will still want to take a drive on *Shabbos*. But something is accomplished. A seed was planted. And seeds such as these have been known to germinate into mighty oaks.

### The Non-Academic Lessons

The conventional classroom has its limitations. Many *baalei teshuva* are searching for truth; others are



seeking human contact. They require more personal attention than the classroom can afford; they need a one-to-one relationship. The perfect environment for this is the *Shabbos* table or some activity revolving around a *mitzva*, although a school-building corridor or the street curb will also suffice. Who hasn't heard of someone "becoming frum"—or more correctly, commencing on the path to *frumkeit*—just by witnessing a *Ne'ilas Hachag* at a yeshiva or participating in a Chasidic wedding? (Two of my students came over to help clean up for Pesach. Two hours of cleaning out the refrigerator with my wife accomplished more than I did in two weeks of instruction.)

A *Shabbos* can accomplish wonders. Your "Shabbos invitation" is a highly prized compliment, for the student is like any other girl without family and friends. Once invited, she is no longer searching for where to go; rather, she is "forced to decide" whether to accept the invitation; and on her scale of priorities, the difference is an impressive one.


### How Do You Handle a Hungry Heart?

A hungry heart is a delicate organ. Correctional

surgery is not always the way to effect improvement. The Biblical dictate to circumcize the *orlah* (growth) surrounding the heart presupposes that the heart has already been located. This is not always the case. The tides of assimilation have often encrusted the heart with such a thick growth (see Isaiah 6), that never mind penetration! Mere *location* of the heart seems impossible; but we must try every conceivable approach.

*Recently a prominent attorney spent Shabbos with us. I injected every powerful and convincing discourse that I knew would attract one to Judaism, including Talmudic homilies and insights, which I was sure would stimulate any lawyer. What was his reaction to the profundity of Judaism? "This is the best noodle pudding that I have ever tasted . . ." And he came again.*

Stories? Bible narratives? Debates? Tangential discussions? Rap sessions? Curbside *shmuessing*? The *Shabbos* table?

Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner שליט"א once told me that teaching *per se* has not, and never will, make anyone *frum*. Rather, one must be so full of *emunah* to the point that it is contagious. 

## THOUGHTS OF A BAAL TESHUVA

# Watching the Airplanes

Avraham ben Shmuel

The other day, as I was sitting and learning, I could hear overhead the roar of jets flying northward. Sometime later, after a period of silence they began swooping overhead again, this time southward, back to their bases, some coming in very low—skyhawks . . .

And I was thinking . . . such a land, such a place . . . *Eretz Yisroel* . . . just a few days before, yet another bomb had gone off, injuring ten people, Yidden, brothers. Their wounds ached me, and it seemed that I bled their blood . . . And yet, I felt no bitterness toward G-d, no despair. Singing the *Gemora* tune with redoubled vigor, in the drone of the jet planes, I felt elevated, way above them, and had a new and exciting thought—"This is the core, the essence of the Holy Land!"—I whispered to myself; it is always reminding us not to see our exist-

ence on this earth as fixed, as immutable. Here one feels, one experiences the proximity, the reality, the utter possibility of the after-life. As one learns Torah and gives *tzeddaka*, and helps friends, neighbors, strangers, and marries off poor brides, and buries the dead, and gives loans to poor scholars and engages in public work, constantly trying to smile and to be happy and content with one's lot, and engages in Torah study at every free moment, one begins to feel fear disspate.

Let the jets roar overhead. May Hashem protect our young pilots and help us bring His truth to them, in excursions into army bases, armed with guitars, strong drink and good cheer, to bring Torah to their souls and determination to their hearts, to fight for the defense of Jews and the Jewish way of life.

Let them swoop and roar overhead, emitting supersonic booms. And let determination and truth come booming, and roaring, and crashing into our consciousness. Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition! Bombard the PLO—and the evil inclination within us! Bring *both* to submission! And let us not forget to pray, and say *Tehillim* and ask fervently for Hashem to speedily bring about the unimagineably sweet reality of seeing all our brothers and sisters, the whole *mishpacha*, united, as once on Har Sinai, in love and fear of Him, and may we all, soon be able to say *Ze Keili*!

Tally-ho! Be of a strong heart, and don't miss the target—materially and spiritually!

Avraham ben Shmuel  
Bnei Brak

# Bringing Them to Our Planet

*Ezriel Hildesheimer*

## The Differences

Simply stated, our goal is to bring others to the Torah way of life. This certainly calls for interaction on a personal level. Yet, we can never forget that we—the Torah community and the secular society—inhabit two different worlds. When their children are playing in the streets in our neighborhood in Petach Tikva, we see them mimicking the TV stars in their little songs and dances, personifying the very influences from which we try to protect our children . . . Yet we do want to reach out to them.

The *chiloniim* (secular Jews) look at us living cold, monastic lives, untouched by daily concerns and human emotions. As some kind of *golus* creatures, we are a puzzle to them, an anomaly. Would they have an inkling of the *Shalom Bayis* that pervades in our homes, the sense of togetherness and the general stability that our community enjoys, then they would view a Torah life as attractive rather than forboding—but how do we reach them?

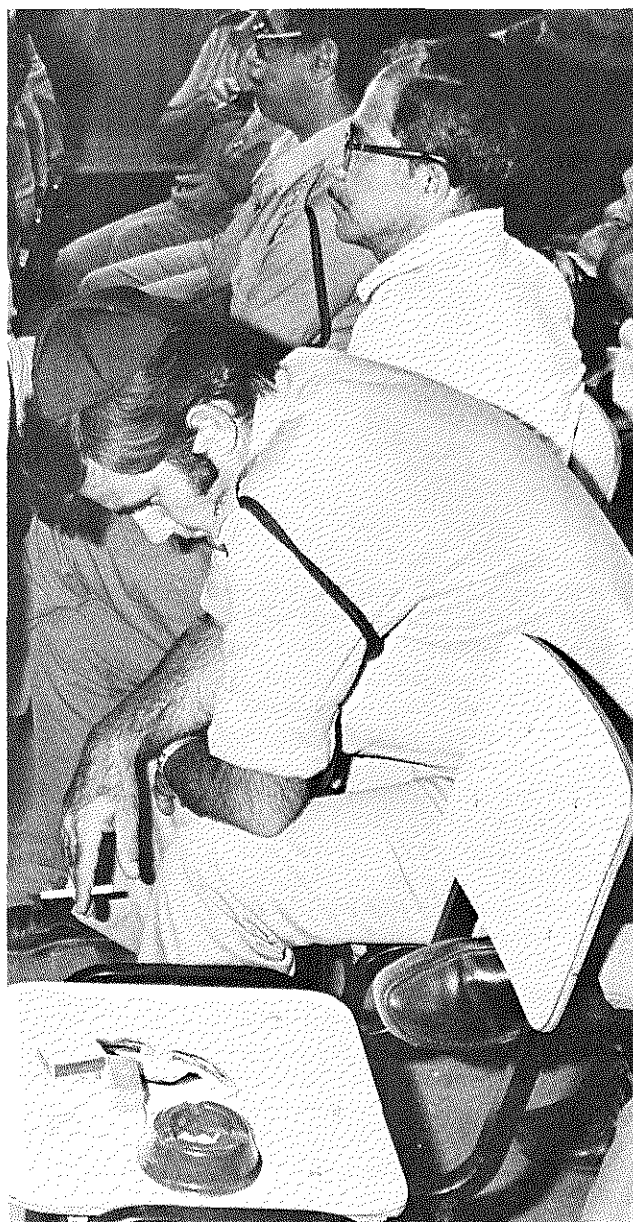
In truth, the differences are not categorical. They are mainly a matter of emphasis. They also seek stability, a grounding for ethical and moral values. They, too, have the capacity to care about others; to be concerned parents. And they all have the *Pintele Yid*. And we, like them, appreciate material comforts, and yearn for national security. We must first discover our common ground—as people, as Jews—and build from there.

## In The Wake of the War

We started a little over ten years ago. Several Kollel fellows in Bnei Brak felt an obligation to harness the "*teshuva* fever" that seemed to have seized the country in the wake of the Six Day War. They consulted with Rabbi Elazar Shach, who encouraged them to direct their efforts toward people who already have a degree of commitment. The initial programs launched were with students in *tichonim* (high schools) under religious

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EL HAMEKOROT

auspices, where standards of observance are not too high. A volunteer army of married fellows fanned out, and wrangled for permission to address classes in various schools. The success was astounding—schools actually begged for return visits, and cooperated with workshops, special assemblies and regional conferences of specific grade levels. The programs center on a specific *midda*, or preparation for a coming festival, but always come home to a basic *hashkafa*, helping the students work out their purpose in life . . . In due time, every religious high school in the country was clamoring for El Hamekorot ("Back to the Source") visitations.

### Camping Into Judaism

For the past nine years we've been running Camp LaNoar, accommodating 150 girls at a time. From the very start, the atmosphere is deliberately non-judgmental, as if to answer in the negative the hovering, unarticulated question: "Are they out to get us?" Small discussion groups offer free exchanges. Gradually the girls realize that their *madrichot* are real people, and that their way of life is attractive and meaningful.

Probably the most crucial session is the last one: "How do we go home?" For openers, several girls put on a skit portraying how everything can be done wrong. ("Hi Mom! I'm home—real *frum!* See my long-sleeved dress?") It's a sure laugh-getter, and clears the air. Then follows a more realistic, carefully plotted skit, tracing the anticipated confrontation with parents, coaching the girls in firm yet reassuring responses . . . Many an alumna of Camp LaNoar has become an *isha tzenua* (woman of modesty) in every sense of the word.

### Branching Into the Army

Each activity that we undertake seemed to suggest another. We wanted to keep contact with *tichon* graduates after they entered the army, so we set up sporadic *Yom Halyun* assemblies for officer groups . . . To maintain influence between visitations, we launched *Machshevet* Magazine—a highly literate monthly dealing with problems in *halacha* and *hashkafa*, which has proven to be very popular. Some 35,000 copies of *El Hamekorot*, an anthology of the best of *Machshevet*, have been sold . . . An ancillary program has several hundred Bnei Brak families host visiting students on special *Shabbosos* . . . Special seminars are held for teachers in Memlachi-Dati schools (government run religious schools, where most of the teachers are not of yeshiva or Bais Yaakov background, in contradistinction to the Chinuch Atzmai Torah Schools Network), seminars that have proven to be highly influential.

### The Yarchei Kallah Retreat

One of El Hamekorot's most innovative programs is a Yarchei Kallah for *baalei teshuva*—potential and

actual. Thirty to forty families, with some hundred children, go to a sylvan retreat for six days. While much of the activities are structured—lectures by volunteer kollel fellows, day camp activities for the children conducted by a dozen Bais Yaakov volunteers—the greatest impact is realized by one-to-one rap sessions that round out midnight to the pre-dawn hours. On the surface, the atmosphere is relaxed, non-judgmental. The lack of an official dress code makes some of the lecturers ill at ease, but we swallowed this along with the defiant mound of untouched yarmulkas at the meeting room entrance—remember, we are kollel people, not accustomed to the permissive atmosphere of Tel Aviv University. But our perseverance pays off.

Dov was an executive at the Weizmann Institute, and his wife, Aliza, is a prominent lawyer. Dov had watched in astonishment as Ehud, one of his colleagues, "turned religious." First he seemed to be stifling a secret, then he wore a kipa—in the laboratory, yet!—and tzitzis strings carelessly made their appearance around his belt. Most of all, he seemed to have achieved an inner peace that he had always been missing in his personal makeup. Dov asked him why the change, and Ehud told him about the Yarchei Kallah.

Expecting no enthusiasm from his wife, Dov presented the retreat as an inexpensive (\$20 a day per family) chance to get away from it all . . .

At the close of the first lecture, Dov approached the lecturer: "I can accept the value of everything you say, except—how can you prove the divinity of the Torah? How do I know that Moshe Rabbeinu was not simply a brilliant legislator?" The ensuing conversation extended into the late hours. He continued to attend all sessions, listening intently, arguing stubbornly—until Friday night at 3 AM, he entered his room and told his wife, "Aliza, I've made up my mind. I'm a dati."

After a minute of silence, she said, "Well, I guess that means good-bye." She did not pack up and leave just yet, though . . . Dov was at Shacharis at seven that morning, wearing kipa and tallis.

When he left, he shook hands with the director and said, "When I came here a week ago, I thought I was a 'big man,' but now I realize that I am a nobody."

We advised him to take his steps slowly, sure-footedly, but he refused, "If I am a dati—and I am—then there are no half-way measures. Where there's light, I do not want to stumble around in half-darkness."

That was Tamuz. Two months later, Dov decided that he could not enter a religious life on the basis of ignorance, and took a leave of

absence from Weizmann to enroll in the Yeshiva Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem—and Aliza entered Neve Yerushalayim School for Women.

### Taking Stock

While the three annual Yarchei Kallah retreats have many such success stories, we try to analyze what our strongest selling points are, and how we can bolster our existing programs . . . Our visitors are actually taken aback by our willingness to open our homes to strangers. To be sure, *chiloniim* visit each other for the evening, but rarely sleep over at a friend's house, and never at a total stranger's. So the *Shabbos* visit to Bnei Brak is always an eye-opener. Then, there is the delight of Bnei Brak's ambiance—just another garden suburb of Tel Aviv, instead of the walled-in ghetto they expect—full of happy, playing children. The warmth and the sense of togetherness that permeates the religious homes also have their effect . . . Visits to schools, when arranged, are always full of surprises—the courtesy of the students, who rise to their feet when visitors enter, and address the teacher in the formal third person, in stark contrast to the sullen, brazen attitude of students in public schools and universities . . . We build on these feelings by arranging family-to-family bonds that go beyond a single weekend.

### The Unfinished Agenda

But we are not in a self-congratulatory mood: When the police were over-reacting to Sabbath observance demonstrations in Rechov Hashomer in Tel Aviv, we arranged a *Yom Halyun*—not just with the officers, or the patrolmen, but with their entire families. We explained ourselves and the central place of *Shabbos* in the Torah scheme of things. The response was very positive . . . No, not all of them became *Shomrei Shabbos*, but—believe it or not—several men did apply for regular *Shabbos* leave. Moreover, there were no more incidents on Rechov Hashomer. But not all of the record makes us proud. We were invited to set up a similar seminar in Jerusalem, but we could not arrange for a large enough hall with suitable accommodations.

Our publications department is short of funds for salaries for accomplished translators, and printing expenses. (We draw from many sources, including *The Jewish Observer* for our articles in *Machshevet*.) We have an army of volunteers, but need professional help, and funds.

"Unfinished Agenda" does not *only* mean tasks not fully completed (Rabbi Shach, incidentally, is constantly encouraging us to undertake new projects and to offer existing ones with greater frequency). The dominant measure of "incompleteness" is in our dealings with committed *baalei teshuva*. It is not enough to simply coax a family to decide to lead a religious life, for then the major part of the work is only beginning. The

people must purchase *tefillin*, a new wardrobe, new dishes, *kasher* their kitchen, engage tutorial help for their children. Indeed, a *Gmach* (free loan fund) has been established to help people returning to Torah who are short of funds. More—we have to help them establish a new social milieu, for *baalei teshuva* frequently lose their old ties of friendship. Previously shared interests often include activities they now avoid. They no longer eat in old friends' homes. And erstwhile companions often shun them . . . unless they, too, become attracted to *Yahadus*, as Dov followed in Ehud's footsteps. Often, the newly religious feel compelled to move to more religious surroundings. The *teshuva* route can be very lonely, and "holding their hand" takes a big place on the agenda.

And, then, look at a map of Israel. Ignore the religious population centers. The rest of the map—that is our "unfinished agenda." IT

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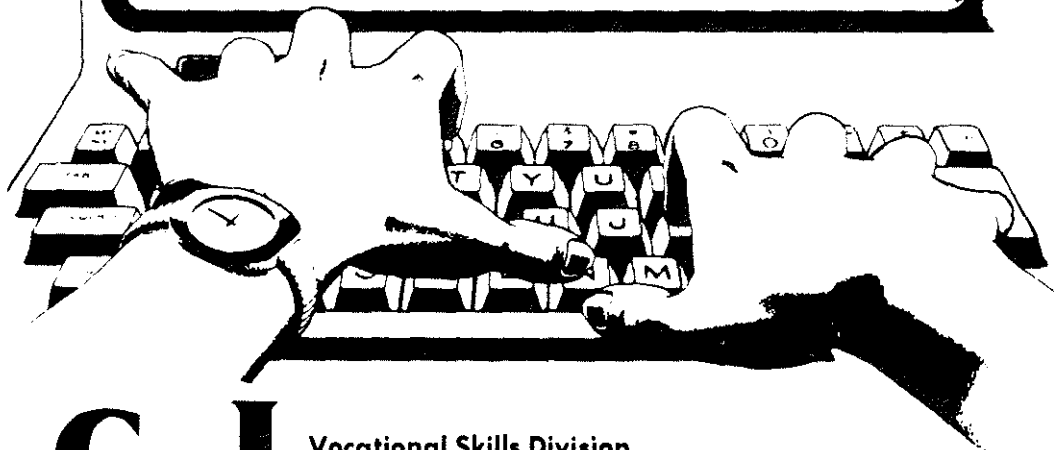
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# The Baal Teshuva in the United States

Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

*"Is this what Yiddishkeit is really like?"*

This is the painful question so many *baalei teshuva* have written back to their *rabbeim* in Israel after their first encounter with American Orthodoxy. The bitter criticisms that follow this query—from the lack of elementary decorum in *shul* to the exaggerated stress on material acquisitions—may be trite observations for the denizens of Orthodox population centers. But for the *baalei teshuva* introduced to *Yiddishkeit* in a Jerusalem yeshiva, they express just part of a trauma that threatens his ability to become a well-adjusted member of the Torah community.

This constellation of problems does not affect those individuals whose *kiruv* to *Yiddishkeit* has been achieved through the influence of a Torah personality within his community. Any Chassidic group or synagogue worth its salt can point to at least one member who was a late-starter in *Yiddishkeit*. This sort of *baal teshuva* has struck his roots within his community and has assimilated the attitudes of his neighbors toward all of the strengths and weaknesses of their society.

The challenge to the American Jewish community deals not with these isolated individuals but with the hundreds of *baalei teshuva* who return each year from *Eretz Yisroel* yeshivos and try to establish roots within Orthodox communities in the United States. This is no simple matter for a young man or woman brought up in a non-observant home and a victim of cultural brainwashing about unpleasant stereotypes of the religious community.

## The Rosy Over Assessment

But if they suffer from a misconception of this community as a result of their early years, they suffer from an illusion about it from their experience at yeshiva. It

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Rabbi Weinbach, a founder and dean of Ohr Somayach, contributes frequently to these pages.

is hardly a secret that the most powerful ingredient of the yeshiva experience is the exposure to a spiritual and intellectual elite of *roshei yeshiva*, instructors and administrators. Even the families outside of the yeshiva with whom they often spend a *Shabbos* or *Yomtov* meal are carefully selected "beautiful people," in a *ruchniyos* sense. The *baal teshuva* therefore develops the idea that every religious Jew refrains from talking during *davening* and Torah reading, spends every available hour either learning or teaching Torah, and raises a large number of well-disciplined, cherub-faced children who delight in saying *divrei Torah* and singing *zemiros* at the *Shabbos* table. Despite their awareness of the inconsistency of this utopian illusion with the realities of the total religious community, the Yeshiva heads do not always attempt to convey the "facts of life" to their starry-eyed students for fear that they are not quite yet prepared for such a shock. It is relatively simple to have a man-to-man talk to caution the sophisticated veteran of a couple of years of Torah study as to what awaits him upon his return home. But this is rather delicate when dealing with someone who has just reached the threshold of commitment; and in spite of the urgent need for such sessions, they rarely take place.

## One More Committee?

It is the unsophisticated, unrealistic product of a uniquely compact yeshiva experience whom the religious community is called upon to absorb. In an era of a governmental absorption ministry for *olim* and official Agudath Israel absorption committees in Israel and America for Russian immigrants, there may well be a need for a similar committee to study and implement the best ways of absorbing these valuable new members into our society.

To be sure, the "committee" would have to maintain open channels of communication with the Israeli yeshivos, to know who is coming and what his/her particular story is. Generally, though, the committee

members would have to be keenly aware of the full range of problems facing a *baal teshuva* upon his return to the old country.

### Living at Home

First of all, there are his problems with his own family. At Ohr Somayach we jokingly refer to the advice on *kashrus* and human relations which every departing student receives as a "survival manual." But this is no laughing matter for the boy or girl who must refer to this unwritten manual in *kashering* a kitchen, *toiveling* dishes (immersing them in a *mikva*) and buying rabbinically certified products without making the lady of the house feel as if she has been rejected as a good Jewish mother. *Shabbos* is a particular ordeal, not only because of the special halachic problems of cooking it entails, but because the member of the family who winces when a light is turned on and who refuses to watch television becomes an insufferable weekend party-pooper for his parents and siblings.

An "absorption committee" can introduce to the aforementioned family a parent who has already made the transition from outraged hosts of a "fanatic" child to an understanding and proud parent who followed his example. Nothing is more effective in gaining parental cooperation than hearing the experiences of another parent who had suffered the same agonies. Since the *Shabbos* obstacle is virtually an insurmountable one in the early stages, this committee would see that the young *baal teshuva* receives invitations to spend these first *Shabbosos* at other homes.

### Meeting the Old Gang

Another serious problem faced by the returning *baal teshuva* is the confrontation with his old friends. It is one thing to stand up successfully to their challenge that he has lost his sanity and even to stir some soul-searching thoughts in the minds of his abusers. It is an entirely different matter to realize that he can no longer enjoy the friendship of acquaintances whose ideals of morality and entertainment he can no longer share. This break with family and friends creates a social vacuum which the "committee" members can fill by opening their homes to the *baal teshuva* any old time he just feels like relaxing with people who appreciate him.

The reason for returning may often be for the sake of "*tachlis*" (vernacular for "settling down") and this means the committee must marshal its resources to help the *baal teshuva* in finding employment and a *shidduch* (proper mate). In regard to the first, it should be borne in mind that the job candidate is not necessarily looking for work in the field for which he trained at college. His dramatic detour to Yiddishkeit has filled him with the sublime ideal of *kiruv* and taught him the supreme significance of a positive environment. If he can do something in the educational or social service field that will enable him to influence others, he will view this as an

opportunity not to be evaluated in terms of salary and fringe benefits. But at the least he expects his place of work to be one in which he will not be forced to lower his newly found standards because of the laxity of his fellow workers.

The *shidduch* situation is probably where the most mistakes are made by the people with the best intentions. The tendency has been to fault the Orthodox community for discriminating against the *baal teshuva*, accusing many of its members of refusing "to accept a *baal teshuva* even if they first discover his status five minutes before the *chupa*." One could honestly say that too many Torah Jews are guilty of practicing "but-don't-move-on-my-block liberalism" in regard to *baalei teshuva* by encouraging them to join the ranks, but not to "intermarry" with those of *yichus*.

Over the years there has been a gradual change in this situation. A significant percentage of Ohr Somayach students have married the daughters of families that are "Frum From Birth" (caustically referred to as F.F.B.'s by the B.T.'s in an exercise of reverse snobbery). One *talmid* married the daughter of one of the school's founding deans; and this past winter I had the privilege of attending the wedding of a pioneer *talmid* with the daughter of a prominent American Rosh Yeshiva. This represents an important breakthrough in the area of social acceptance of the *baal teshuva* and should serve as a signal to all the amateur matchmakers that they should indeed dare to suggest girls from the "finest" families for a *baal teshuva*.

### The "Hasmada" Gap

The *baal teshuva* who returns to the States to continue his Torah studies at a yeshiva faces a different set of problems. He is invariably shocked to find that the motivation and *hasmada* (diligence) of most F.F.B.'s do not measure up to that of himself and his fellow B.T.'s for whom Torah is still a thrilling new experience. He may miss the variety of subject matter to which he was exposed back in *Eretz Yisroel*, and wonder why there was so much more *hashkafa* and *ruach* back there. The anonymity of existence in a big yeshiva contrasts too sharply for him with the family atmosphere of his *baal teshuva* yeshiva, with its high teacher-to-student ratio.

Perhaps it is too much to expect a concerted effort for absorbing them on the part of their fellow students, who may find the *nouveau frum* a trifle too earnest for comfort. But the *mashgichim* and *ramim* (faculty) of these yeshivos should certainly be capable of recognizing the special needs of these *talmidim* and should endeavor to cater to them with special *shiurim*, and perhaps even with an extra measure of personal interest.

So much effort has gone into helping our young *baalei teshuva* in their quest for Torah and *mitzvos*. The vast gains they have made are too valuable to risk losing in their return to their geographic home. Intelligent planning and heartfelt concern can go a long way in securing this investment of time, money, and *neschama*.

## A Famine in the Land

*"Behold the days are coming, says the L-rd G-d, when I will send a famine in the land. Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of G-d." (Amos 8:11)*

Avrohom Y. HaCohen

That there is a famine in the land is abundantly clear to anyone involved in the Teshuva Movement today. Where the victims—or beneficiaries of this famine are best served needs a careful analysis. The remarkable success of *baal teshuva* yeshivos in *Eretz Yisroel*, which far surpasses any comparative effort in the United States, has created the impression that without the mysterious ingredient of *avira d'ara* (the atmosphere of the Land), no significant effort can be made or is even worth attempting. As one who has taken an active role in *kiruv rechokim* work in both countries, I would like to offer some insights as to why this work has met with greater success in *Eretz Yisroel*, and some suggestions as to how this success can be duplicated if not surpassed on these shores.

### Smashing the Idols

The first factor is an educational one. In his introduction to the Laws of Idolatory, the Rambam describes the strategy of the archetype of *kiruv rechokim*, Avraham Avinu. After raising doubts in the minds of his target about his G-dless lifestyle, Avraham did not immediately plunge into a dissertation on truth. He first smashed the idol that had been mistakenly worshipped. As long as the idol was around to remind its worshipper of his past liberties, it would be highly improbable that any message of truth could be absorbed.

The university student stirred to doubts about his lifestyle and beliefs finds it difficult to take the next step of entering a yeshiva to learn about Yiddishkeit when he is still so close to his campus, his family and his friends. Smashing the idols today means physically

separating the *baal teshuva* from these influences, and what is a more effective separation than thousands of miles of ocean?

### The State of Readiness

Of course there is more to *Eretz Yisroel* than just distance. There is the inherent *kedusha* of the land which certainly exerts a powerful though undefinable influence. There is also the fact that the person visiting Israel is really looking for some sort of spiritual experience, regardless of how far away he has been from any form of observance. When someone meets him or her at the *Kosel Maarovi* or the central bus station and suggests a look at a yeshiva or a *Shabbos* with a religious family, the reaction can be surprisingly positive because it is almost as if something of that nature is *supposed* to happen in the Land of the Bible.

### The Bankruptcy Factor

The previous point is hardly relevant to the Israeli *baal teshuva*; and it is also difficult to see why *kedushas ha'Aretz* should suddenly affect him after seeming to be an almost counterproductive element during his years of growing up as a secularist in the Holy Land. The distance factor works against the possibility of an Israeli returning to his roots in his native land and society. And yet the number of Israeli *baalei teshuva* is growing at an even faster rate than that of the Americans.

One explanation is that it is much easier for an Israeli to reach the conclusion that the lifestyle of his society is bankrupt. His secularist ideology has been founded in great measure on the success of Israel as a state and as a progressive society. His country's educational, social and economic failures have caused him to

Avrohom Y. HaCohen is special coordinator for American outreach programs for Ohr Somayach Institutions.

begin questioning the powers of his icons on his own, making the iconoclast's work infinitely simpler. The American young man or woman who is still being sold the "American dream" by the high-powered media, and who feels no compulsion to think in Jewish terms as does one whose personal security is threatened because he lives in a Jewish state, is much harder to convince that something is missing in his life.

### Hitchhiking to Survival?

Another element in the Israeli situation is the sense of the struggle for survival which is part of the local consciousness in every circle. Paul Laster, the Virginia-born former captain in the Israel Defense Forces Educational Department who now is in charge of Ohr Somayach's seminars for army and kibbutz groups, has used an interesting gambit to bring home to secular Israelis the need to learn more about their faith. Asking his audience to rate themselves as Jews on the basis of their performance of mitzvos he will usually get a range of from 20% ("I got to synagogue on Yom Kippur") to 60% ("I fast on Yom Kippur and I visit the Kotel when I am in Jerusalem"). He then asks them to consider the possibility that all the Jews in yeshivos and religious communities disappear to another planet, leaving them—and Jews like them—to be the sole guardians of Yiddishkeit. The 60% fellow would be chief rabbi and the 40% runner-up his deputy. The absurdity of such a situation deeply impresses Paul's listeners, who suddenly realize that they are hitchhiking on the dedication of the religious community of which they are so critical.

### More For Less

While the aforementioned points help explain part of the reason why success is easier to come by in *Eretz Yisroel*, there is a far more prosaic reason which may perhaps be the most significant factor. To conduct an effective educational program for students with little or no background in Jewish studies, an institution must be prepared to invest substantial funds in assuring that the quality and quantity of its personnel will be equal to the challenge of teaching Torah to beginners and guiding them through their delicate withdrawal stages. The teacher-student ratio in a *baal-teshuva* yeshiva should ideally be one-to-one, and if the yeshivos in *Eretz Yisroel* have not yet achieved this utopian formula, they are not far away from it. The only reason they can afford this situation is that they receive government aid and that the dollars they raise abroad are translated into astronomical amounts of local "Monopoly" currency. Although the Israeli institutions face the same ongoing struggle to maintain and expand their programs as do their American counterparts, they are capable of surviving with a much higher expenditure per student.

If the yeshiva-supporting Torah community of America could adjust its sights and dare to fund *baal teshuva* programs here the way they are funded in *Eretz Yisroel*, we would see a dramatic increase in the number of *talmidim* in local institutions. A move in this direction has been taken by Ohr Somayach, which recently moved its American branch to the Monsey community with the hope of upgrading it from its former role of an extension program for students who must return to the



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States before they are really ready to meet all of its spiritual problems, to a Torah center capable of attracting and servicing those college students who are not prepared to travel all the way to *Eretz Yisroel* to study.

### The American Pluses

More than an act of daring, this more represents a sober investment based on specific opportunities for *kiruv* that America offers in greater measure than *Eretz Yisroel*.

First of all, there is the proximity of the family. Once the initial hostility of parents to a child's return to Yiddishkeit has been overcome, the nearness of the *baal teshuva* to his family is converted from a danger to an opportunity. It is a matter of record that parents who have made the trip to Israel to visit their son or daughter at yeshiva have invariably been brought closer to Yiddishkeit, through their encounter with the student's teachers and friends. This opportunity to influence the family is obviously more available when the yeshiva is based on the local scene.

Another important advantage is the ability of a local yeshiva to enable its students to maintain some sort of involvement with university studies concurrent with their Torah studies. Even if this is nothing more than a once-a-week attending of classes towards a quickie degree, it is usually enough to avert the dangerous yeshiva-or-college crisis, which has been the cause for many a potential *baal teshuva* to give up.

There, too, there is the supportive community of English-speaking Torah Jews in a community such as Monsey. While there are enough American expatriates in Jerusalem to create the effect of a broad "community campus" for *baalei teshuva* there, one cannot begin to compare this with the sheer quantity of *yeshivaleit* and solid *baalebattim* here who can communicate with the *baal teshuva* in his language and who are prepared to open their homes to him.

It is not a one-way street either. Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky recently pointed out that *baalei teshuva* contribute to the community they learn and live in, with their fresh and enthusiastic approach to Torah and *mitzvos*, which serves as a gentle spur to those of us to whom these matters have become a matter of course.

### Bring on the "Stars"

There is yet another possible dimension of an American program. To appreciate it, we must return for a moment to the Israeli disappointed with his secular upbringing and in search of something better. Hundreds of thousands of Jews of all ages have emigrated from Israel to North America in the past couple of decades. Despite their desperate efforts to Americanize, they have basically remained strangers who are not completely happy here, and are too ashamed or too disillusioned to return to their native land. They therefore

may be as ideal candidates for outreach programs as Americans are in Israel. The *baal teshuva* movement should seriously consider importing some of the "stars" of the Israeli *baal teshuva* world, like Ikka Yisraeli and Mordechai Arnon, to work with their Israeli brothers on our continent.

### Riskless Reach-out

One final note. A *baal teshuva* yeshiva in America affords its students and teachers with an opportunity to reach out to college campuses without having to take the risk of establishing permanent facilities in those spiritually inhospitable surroundings. The proximity of college campuses to a local yeshiva make it possible to arrange Shabbatonim and seminars for college students not yet ready for the big move to regular yeshiva studies.

In conclusion, the "famine in the land" is not limited to the Land of Israel. There is a hunger for the word of G-d in America as well, and the vibrant Torah community here has the ability to satisfy that hunger for all those who are not privileged to make the move to *Eretz Yisroel*. IT

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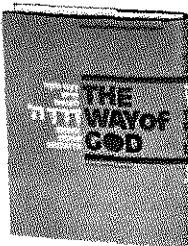


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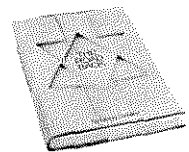
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## Reaching The Kids— The JEP Connection

Eliezer Gevirtz

### They Called Him "Billy"

*He called himself Billy then.*

*His first encounter with JEP was a reluctant one. They'd come, these young yeshiva men from Brooklyn, to speak about something called Chanukah at his afternoon Hebrew school in suburban Philadelphia. Chanukah, he mused—wasn't that the Jewish Xmas? Still, it was something religious, and his parents had warned him about religion: "Too much of that can make you seem different, and we don't want that." So he played it cool when they came, and took a seat in the rear. But then they began their program—singing Jewish songs, telling Jewish stories, and displaying a verve and sincerity he had rarely seen before in his placid, prefabricated life. Suddenly he recalled the glow on his grandfather's face as he used to light the Chanukah Menorah, in the days before his family switched to the "Chanukah bush." He had always secretly wondered what that was all about, always yearned to capture that glow for himself. As the JEP people continued their program, he found himself fascinated. A jar of pure oil had been discovered amidst the ruins; a spark that had lain latent for a generation had been rekindled.*

*So he accepted the invitation to Boro Park for a Shabbaton. He almost canceled when his parents reminded him that it would mean missing an*

*important Little League game. But once the JEP weekend program began—the seudah, the zemiros, the Oneg Shabbos, the rap session, the Kumsitz—this all-American boy sensed the soaring spirit of a true religious experience, and he was awed. He had finally been able to discuss and share Judaism with those who identified with it more than twice a year, and he returned home with "good vibes" about Yiddishkeit.*

*Once he was back home, these feelings began subsiding a bit. His parents and friends tried to "bring him back to earth," as they saw it. But then JEP reappeared in his community with a "Ruach Visitation." Billy couldn't keep from coming, and was pleased to find the singing, the spirit, and the personal attention all as before, only more so. Then came the door raffle. The top prize was not a baseball or a radio—not a thing—but an experience: a free summer's stay at a summer camp. The winner was Billy. This was one offer his parents couldn't refuse, and Billy thrived in a Torah atmosphere that summer.*

*The next summer, he was back, of his own accord and with his parents' grudging consent. From then on, it was one milestone after another: day school student, yeshiva gedola talmid, and, presently, full-time bochur in a New York Beis Hamidrash. He calls himself Ze'ev now, and is himself a JEP volunteer. The erstwhile Little Leaguer has joined the "majors".*

*When JEP began in 1972 as a makeshift kiruv project led by a few young idealistic Beis Midrash Bachurim, success stories such as Billy's were the dreams that fired the volunteer workers forward. They set as their goal the ideal of reaching out to all non-*

**Rabbi Gevirtz**, a mechanech, is also editor of the Zeirei Forum and Darkein magazines, and the author of JEP's new publication, *Lehovin U'Lehaskil*. This article is based on an interview with JEP's executive director, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Golding.

religious Jewish youngsters and, through emotional and spiritual religious encounters, reawakening their Jewish spirit. They hoped to place as many of them as possible in yeshivos and religious summer camps. Since then, their efforts have often been dramatically successful, with over 1,000 yeshiva and camp placements to date. . . . But not always.

### The Adjustment of Judy

*Her eyes. Her sparkling, curious eyes—that's what the JEP volunteer remembered best about Judy. She seemed a natural for JEP's programs—a girl who bubbled over with enthusiasm. Judy had come to the JEP office with her mother, seeking help. She had been a public school student, and had been very unhappy there. Was there a place for Judy in a yeshiva?—Judy's mother wondered. It wasn't that she wanted Judy to become religious—"after all, one has to cope with the outside world these days; we don't live in the shtetl anymore"—but a Jewish school was still probably safer than a public school, and maybe learning a little Hebrew wouldn't be so bad after all.*

*The JEP worker had eagerly offered to assist. She had a number of yeshivos to suggest, and, in the meantime, why didn't Judy take part in some JEP programs? Judy did, and her interest in her heritage seemed to blossom. During the discussions and tutoring sessions, she appeared to be making up for lost time.*

*Various yeshivos were contacted, and they were most willing to consider Judy's application. All seemed well as summer approached, and the JEP worker went off to camp with the assurance from Judy's mother to keep in close touch with the JEP office. Then, in August, the mother was called to see if any additional help was needed.*

*"Oh, well, as it turned out, I did go to the yeshivos. They seemed ready to help, but they looked too religious for me. Then I heard of a fine Lutheran school right nearby, with very reasonable tuition, and they welcomed me with open arms and said they wouldn't push religion. So I've enrolled Judy there. But maybe she'll still come to some of your programs."*

*She never did.*

### Release Time and Day School Visitations

The past eight years of success and failure, of achievement and frustration, have been very enlightening for JEP's leadership. The problems and issues that have arisen have taught this corps many lessons regarding what does work best.

**Reach Out:** This title of the first JEP record summarizes JEP's basic approach: an extended hand to the alienated youth. A noble ideal, certainly—but where does one make contact with such *rechokim*, and how?

With so many unaffiliated Jewish youngsters attending public schools rather than yeshivos, and spending *Shabbos* at the movies rather than in *shul*, how can one reach them?

One program that has worked reasonably well is utilizing the Release Hour time set aside by public schools for students' cultural and religious activities. Through this, JEP is currently offering weekly Jewish programs to hundreds of public school children who would otherwise have no contact with *Yiddishkeit*. These programs of instruction, song and spirit—supplemented with ingenious, specially prepared workbooks and newsletter/booklets ("JEP Express") have succeeded in prompting a number of students to opt for yeshivos instead. One may wonder about the necessity of conducting similar programs in Talmud Torahs and day schools, where children already have some minimal sense of Jewish identity, but even children receiving a Jewish education need the added *chizuk* of a Shabbaton or an older *chavrusa* program.

In fact, programs involving day-school children are often more vital and more successful than Release Time classes. The latter involve children from inner-city public schools and members of this group are usually street-wise and cynical, and are frequently beset by personal problems that continue to plague them even after entering yeshiva. On the other hand, day school students can offer better potential for yeshivos, and JEP can provide a highly effective support system for the



day school's maximum goals. A child who studies about *Shabbos* can better relate to the experience of a *Shabbos* in Boro Park or Monsey, and then continue to build on it as he continues his formal studies in school. . . a day school student who is debating whether to go to a superior public school in East Plainfield, New Jersey, or

to opt for the local Hebrew high school, will now consider Mir or Torah Vodaath after a *Shabbos* in Flatbush. The limited resources of our community must be used where they are most effective.\*

### The Unreachables?

For every child contacted in these ways, count many more who remain beyond our reach. For one thing, children are not *required* to attend Release Hour programs; in fact, public school principals are constrained by law from distributing information about them. Then, many Jewish students attend private schools—sometimes even Christian parochial schools. These often attract well-to-do youngsters whose parents want an exclusive secular education for them, but who are unconcerned about its religious content. Thus, in Manhattan's posh West Side, schools with names like "Trinity" and "Cathedral" boast a 30 to 40 percent Jewish enrollment. Needless to say, these students receive little Jewish instruction there—the religious training is in the hands of priests; but they do attend chapel services and participate in church choirs. How can they be reached? There are no simple answers.

Even Talmud Torahs cannot be assumed to be natural allies to Orthodox outreach efforts. Those who do accept JEP's assistance have often expressed great satisfaction afterwards, as this letter from a Dix Hills, N.J. educator indicates:

*\*Among the investments made are five (so far) inspirational phonograph records and the JEP "Mitzvah Manuals," which have proven to be exceptionally effective reach-out tools and reinforcement media.*

*"As each youngster returned to the bus for the trip home after the Shabbaton, there was an exuberance among them which could be seen in their desire to relate their experiences to each other. While some approached this event with ambivalence, all came away with a deeper Jewish feeling and understanding. . . I can assure you that this experience will serve as a catalyst for greater knowledge and observance of our religious beliefs."*

But not all are so cooperative. Many react in horror to any proposal that might make their students more religious. In one recent case, the board of directors of a Conservative afternoon school fiercely debated JEP's offer to sponsor a Shabbaton for their students, and finally rejected it. The reason: the boys and girls would not be sitting together during *tefilla*. . . Outreach programs to Jewish youth must take their elders' opinions and prejudices into account, too.

### The Intermediate Steps

Initial contact is, of course, only the first step. Speaking to Jewish children and having them participate in Jewish programs does not in itself lead to bottom-line success. If the child simply returns to his assimilated environment, little has been accomplished. He needs the total Torah environment of a yeshiva or a camp. But the decision to join a yeshiva is not usually his alone. When his parent supports it, the results can



JEP IN ST. LOUIS



be gratifying. A widowed mother from the Bronx wrote:

*"After being in camp last year, and spending this past year in yeshivos, my two sons have really become religious, and have a great interest in everything concerning religion. All these things would have been impossible for me to accomplish without the help and support JEP has given us."*

However, many have been the times when JEP has inspired youngsters to the extent that they have asked to be placed in yeshivos, only to have their parents curtly respond, "Sorry, not interested."

Parental influence over their children's religious attitudes, as well as their control of their children's activities, are built-in drawbacks of dealing with younger children. Nonetheless, JEP continues to deal primarily with elementary and junior high schoolers: yeshiva and Bais Yaakov volunteers are more confident with them, and—more important—the group leaders create the environment when dealing with them, and thus are not subject to negative peer influence, as can be the case when being *mekarav* teenagers. Ways must be found to include parents, then, in the *kiruv* process. They must be shown that efforts like JEP's are not a threat, but an aid to their own goal; that these activities can ultimately save their children from intermarriage, drugs, conversion, or religious cults—but only if they support them.

### The Decision. . . and More Problems

Once a youngster does decide to make the switch from public school to yeshiva, much still remains to be done. The newcomer usually has little familiarity with Hebrew studies, or the requirements of *frumkeit*. He has responded to the warmth of true Jewish living; now he has to get accustomed to the discipline as well, and the transition is not always easy. JEP provides tutoring and counseling, as well as some tuition support, but the major burden of helping these youngsters adjust falls on the yeshivos.

Just how well equipped are our yeshivos to help these newcomers? Serious problems abound—should the newcomers be placed in special programs, or should they immediately be mainstreamed along with the other students? The latter choice is not an easy one, for the new arrivals can have a negative influence on their more religious classmates, introducing views and habits that are hazardous to religious health. On the other hand, religious students at times tend to react to the newcomers with condescension and rejection instead of with the acceptance they need. These matters must be worked out thoroughly by our *mechanchim*, so that future problems can be avoided. In too many cases, public school students enter yeshivos with great alacrity, only to switch back a year later because they "couldn't hack it."

### Contributing to Solve "Kiruv" Problem

Some of the above-mentioned problems can be ameliorated by increasing manpower: The more *kiruv* workers there are, the more schools and children can be reached, and the more programs can be mounted. Tutoring programs for those entering yeshivos could be intensified, and the follow-up that is so crucial after a first contact could be carried out more effectively. It takes outstanding talent to present the view of Yiddishkeit that these youngsters deserve to see. In fact, one of JEP's proudest achievements has been the development of a cadre of dedicated *beis hamidrash* and Bais Yaakov students who have become experienced *kiruv* workers.\* Mostly as volunteers, they have heeded the call of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein שליט"א to devote a *ma'aser* (a tenth) of their precious time to *klal* work. It is hoped that their experiences through JEP have given them the training and insight that will help them become the *mechanchim* and communal leaders we sorely need in the future.

Their commitment, however, is of necessity of temporary duration. After a few years, other priorities dictate that they pursue different goals; and these outgoing volunteers are hard to replace. For example, *klal* work can compete with a total commitment to Torah learning, and *roshei yeshiva* are faced with the dilemma of whether to allow *talmidim* to take time off from *sefer* to travel long distances for JEP visitations. . . Yet it would not be necessary for *bachurim* from Brooklyn to travel all the way to Northern New Jersey (for example) for a visitation if *bnei Torah* in the area could accept the task themselves.

Additional full-time salaried employees would also increase JEP's effectiveness. That would, of course, require additional funds. Yet when we consider the vast sums of money that Christian missionary groups spend yearly to lure Jewish youth—the Long Island group called "Bnei Yeshua" had a budget of some ten million dollars for 1979 alone—we certainly cannot afford not to increase our own financial commitment to *kiruv*. A small investment in attracting Jews while they are still impressionable can offset the fortune lavished on them by missionaries when they are older.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of all that the adult Jewish community could offer is its personal involvement in *kiruv*. It is unfair to sit back and expect JEP and other such groups to win back all estranged Jews by themselves, and then offer criticism when these efforts fail to work as expected. JEP does not need arm-chair tacticians as much as it needs help. If JEP sponsors

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\*These youngsters have become accomplished, thanks to training seminars and some excellent leader's guides, including two recently published books: *Lilmod U'lelamed*, by Rabbi Mordechai Katz—a synopsis of *chumash* in English, with appropriate stories and parables, and *Lehavin Ulehaskil*, by Rabbi Gevirtz author of this article, which deals with thirty-six basic questions on *hashkafa* (Torah philosophy and world-view).



a Shabbaton in a community, its members should offer a warm welcome to the guests—but that is not all. The adults should be involved with the children—especially on Sundays, when many of the student volunteers are back in the *beis hamidrash* or the classroom. And then they themselves should follow up the visit by maintaining contact with their former guests, making them feel welcome to return at any time.

This open-door policy should not be limited to the youngsters, for their parents are just as much in need of true Jewish hospitality. Often, an entire adult community can be favorably impressed by the vitality of our Torah corps, as Torah Umesorah's Project SEED has demonstrated. If the religious lay leaders—and yes, the average religious household—were to favorably impress their assimilated Jewish neighbors through outreach programs of their own, their children would naturally gravitate towards Judaism. Parental negativism would be reduced, and this would make JEP's job all the easier.

### Is It Worth It?

In the meanwhile, questions and problems remain and the JEP leadership must constantly evaluate which programs deserve more effort and which should be scrapped. . . if it pays to run one-shot visitations to far-flung areas where impact is strong, even long-lasting, but follow-up is difficult. . . how volunteer recruitment can be more fruitful and how training can be enhanced—for the benefit of those being reached, and for those reaching out (mind you, a yeshiva student has much to gain from learning to articulate basic Judaism to youngsters).

And then, at moments of frustration, the volunteers may wonder if the effort is really worth it. Unresponsive kids, obstructionist Conservative rabbis, recalcitrant parents, overcrowded yeshivos, dwindling budgets—but one never knows when a miracle will flash. One never knows when someone will really be reached.

Like the rock music enthusiast from Mineola who suddenly turned on to Jewish music, and then to Judaism. Or the Talmid Torah transient who came to a JEP event, was impressed, became involved, and is now a Yeshiva Rebbe. Or Ze'ev, who used to be Billy.

Better yet, let the youngsters themselves speak, as they have in their letters:

*"You don't know the effect you and Boro Park had on the 22 kids who came up. Two are now strictly kosher and two are Shomer Shabbos, and one boy especially turned very religious. I think he loved what he witnessed in Boro Park. As for me, I'm seriously considering yeshiva for next year. . . ."*

*"After the Shabbaton, I made some requirements for myself. First of all, I memorized 'Borei Nefashos,' and I lay tefillin every day. (Don't worry, I'm not as dumb as you think: I don't do it on Shabbos!) I daven three times a day, and I*

*know all the brachos, even the one for thunder. Because of this, Hashem raised the amount of push-ups I can do from 25 to 40. Hope to see you soon!"*

*"I'd like to thank you for your generous hospitality and wonderful Shabbos in Boro Park. Someday, G-d-willing, I'd like to live there, marry a nice frum girl, and have five or seven children. You're very fortunate to have a large family and to be a real Jew, not a fake one like those we have back home. I'd like to be like you."*

Much has been accomplished during the past eight years, but much, much more remains to be done. A lot depends on the attitude of the religious community. Will it be satisfied with one thousand souls returned to Yiddishkeit, or will it help raise it to the level of a hundred thousand?

Billy or Judy? Which will mark our future?



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# A Time for Action Revisited

Rabbi Chaim Friedman

In an article published in the June, 1973 edition of *The Jewish Observer* ("A Time for Action") based on an address by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein שליט"א, the Rosh Yeshiva called for yeshiva students, in view of the extraordinary nature of our times, to become personally involved in *Kiruv Rechokim*. He emphasized self-sacrifice, and said that "as in charity, where one has an obligation to give one tenth of his income to the poor, so one must spend one tenth of his time working on behalf of others, bringing them closer to Torah." If one is endowed with greater resources, he must correspondingly spend more of his time with others.

In the seven years that have followed, a tremendous amount has been done in *Eretz Yisroel*. Some twenty or so *baalei teshuva* yeshivos dot the land; there is even a "yeshiva" in a prison. P'eylim and other organizations, as well as a number of dynamic personalities, have literally changed the face of whole communities and regions. In the United States, however, *baal teshuva* activities seems to have peaked. Beyond doubt, *Eretz Yisroel* with its advantages of spirituality and sacred places has a drawing power—especially potent with Jews who are aware of a spiritual void to be filled.

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Rabbi Friedman is Rosh Yeshiva of Dvar Yerushalayim in Brooklyn.

## Even in America

Even to those who have not been to the *Kosel*, the lack of meaning and goals in life is very real. Even one who has never walked the streets of Meah Shearim also can personally perceive the hollowness of contemporary life, as is attested to by the success of the eastern and Christian cults, as well as their secular sister, the human potential movement, among Jews and non-Jews alike.

*Two years ago I met Jeff in a grocery store in Seattle, Washington. He was wearing a yarmulka and had his tzitzis out, which is far from the standard garb in the Pacific Northwest. Striking up a conversation with this fellow, I listened to the tales of his odyssey from Eugene, Oregon, to California, then to New Zealand, on to Tibet and finally to the Kosel. Returning to the United States, he felt the need to pursue his yearning to "be" a Jew. So he bought all the books he could on Judaism and attended concerts and lectures convened in his area, but was left cold upon entering the synagogue . . . Through him, I made the acquaintance of many young people who, after their own personal journeys were finding their way into Judaism.*

*Marty was a proofreader and was asked by a Rabbi to proofread a Chassidic text he was preparing for print. Taking the train to his home*

*on Long Island, he began to read the manuscript, and could not put it down. Missing his station, he took the train back—and again missed his station, so immersed was he in this book . . . He continued his reading, but found that after a point he could no longer comprehend the text. He called the Rabbi who suggested he put on a yarmulka; thereupon he proceeded in further studies till again he called the Rabbi . . . Little by little he started performing mitzvos, and today he is a Torah-observant Jew.*

These stories and hundreds like them are taking place in America. For some, the catalyst is going to Israel; for some it's a book. Whatever the starting point, there is much soul-searching. No, we in America do not have a geographical focal point like *Yerushalayim*. True, the spiritual frenzy and passions of the late sixties and early seventies has quieted down. Nevertheless, beneath the veneer of outward acculturation and assimilation the searching and passion of the Jewish soul is crying to be uplifted, to express itself in Torah and mitzvos.

## The Primitive State of the Movement

Somehow the Torah establishment in America has not yet created a mechanism to adequately deal with these needs. NCSY, Torah

Umesorah's Operation SEED, JEP, Chabad and various other organizations and individuals have their successes. But the scope of reach-out activities in America is still primitive in relation to Israel.—Why?

Some have suggested that the egocentricity of life and the stress on materialism has made American Orthodoxy complacent and self-content. Living a "thing-centered" existence, people tend to judge one's Torah commitment by which *hechsher* one does not use, or by how many *chumras* one keeps, and not by the quality of his or her *tefilla*, or by one's sense of responsibility for the Jewish people as a whole. By contrast, when someone called the attention of the late Ponovezher Rav זצ"ל to the irreligious behavior of a young man, suggesting that he not be allowed to touch the wine, the Rav replied that there is no problem: We should immediately turn the fellow into a *baal teshuva*.

#### Who is Really "With It"?

There is a striking contrast between the warmth of the most "charaidisha" Jews in Eretz Yisroel and the shocking indifference of so many New York Jews who claim to be aware and "with it." It seems that within their own "enlightened" framework they are really psychologically isolated from the spiritual

needs of the times. This lack of concern may be why our young college students are given to remark that "the local rabbis don't care about us, the yeshiva doesn't care about us, only the Guru cares about us" (quoted in *The Rolling Stone*).

In self-defense, people cite the Rambam's directive in *Hilchos Dayos* that one must withdraw from a place of non-Torah conduct and values—even if it means retracting to isolated enclaves. Yes; but self-preservation does not nullify the obligation to reach out and educate Jews who have been deprived of a Torah life—as he himself states in *Hilchos Melachim* regarding the Karaites.

We must launch projects and create institutions to meet these needs. But, first the Torah community must develop consciousness of responsibility. The synagogues and *shtieb'lach* must be humanized to the point where a newcomer, despite backpack and beaded hair, or lack of familiarity with the *tefillos* can be made to feel at home among fellow Jews... Synagogues should organize adult study programs in a non-condescending and accepting fashion... In advance of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, community synagogues should not merely be presented as a place to *daven* and hear a sermon, but should prepare to relate to those once-a-year Jews and meet them at their level with mini-courses in

Jewish studies... Seminars, *Shabbatonim* and *shiurim* should be run during the year... As a matter of course, every community should maintain hospitality committees with an outreach in publicity, such as signs on college campuses and gathering places of young Jews... The yeshiva *bachur* should set aside some time to help a less advanced *bachur* in learning, and also help newcomers from a day school or non-yeshiva background get adjusted in the yeshiva... And there are a number of educational programs being offered by yeshivos and other organizations that would welcome lay help — either in terms of publicity or other technical logistics, in which the lay man could assist.

#### Mobilizing for Action

Our goals, then, are two-fold: First, to develop a sensitivity to the whole problem of assimilation and alienation from the Torah life; and then, to forge a commitment to combat it through *ma'aser* in terms of both time and money.

The "Time for Action" declared seven years ago is still with us. Who is to say how much longer we will be given the opportunity to reach out and help others? In the meantime, they are awaiting our action. Let us think... awaken our compassion... and act.



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# COME TO A CHASANA . . .

"Come to a *chasana*," says the voice at the other end of the 'phone; "Come right now!"

What? Without an invitation? On a Thursday night? My thoughts silently question her words, and go on to plans for that evening's supper. But the voice is undeterred. "You really must come," she insists, "They're Russian, you know. . . ."

The phone-call ends. But there's

another ring—my *yeitzer hora* is on the line! "Thursday night . . . you haven't finished today's chores yet . . . then *Shabbos* cooking, washing and cleaning."

"There's always tomorrow," I answer him bluntly.

He fiercely rebounds, "That's what you think! Tomorrow is also *eruv Succos*, and the *Succah's* far from ready." And then, using his most powerful weapon to win me round, "You've got *mitzvos* to do you know. You can't neglect a *mitzva*!"

No, you can't neglect a *mitzva*! That's why I abruptly end his "call" and, encouraging my husband to have ready his car, his *Shabbos* suit, and his enthusiasm, within minutes we are on our way through New York's dense rush-hour traffic.

Half an hour later. A heavily decked *kallah* is brought to the *chupa*; she looks fragile and petite. The *chassan* stands nervously, his eyes glazed. The voice of the Chasidische Rebbe rings clear in the night air, deafening the background noise of cars. Night has fallen, but a small corner of Brooklyn is ablaze with the lights of the street-lamps, the flickering *chasana* candles, and a hundred pairs of shining eyes.


"*Kol sasson v'kol simcha*" . . . Eli and Sonja are married! Let us be *m'sameach chassan* and *kallah* with a tasty *seuda*! Let's sing and dance! '*Gila rinah ditzah vechedvah, ahavah vachavah v'shalom vrei'os*' . . . Let's make this tiny *shtiebl* into a place of the greatest joy!

Midnight . . . we leave. We make our way from a room lit with the hundred pairs of eyes that are still shining.

A typical *chasana* you might say . . . *Boruch Hashem*, you've been to many like it. But then I didn't tell you that Eli and Sonja already had a Soviet state marriage some five years before, and that their little son lay sleeping elsewhere. And I didn't



tell you either that when Eli left Russia alone some nine months previously, his understanding of "Jew" was but a stamp on his cards or that in the following months he undertook the covenant of *milloh* and accepted the yoke of *mitzvos*, to make that "stamp" into a reality. Who would have thought that the shy but jubilant *chassan* was this Eli, who "reborn" after nine months, greeted his wife, on her arrival, with a second proposal of marriage. And who would have thought that the pretty *kallah*, who sat with ease among the women guests, and danced so joyfully with them, was this Sonja, who, only a fortnight earlier, had said *naaseh v'nishma* to a Torah of which she knew nothing?

The story of Eli and Sonja, refuseniks and escapees, is one of pain, suffering and longing. The details are theirs. But so is the triumph! What should concern us now is their future, and not their past, for they will need much help and support in building their *bayis ne'eman*. What should concern us too are the many other Elis and Sonjas who, from Russia, Iran and elsewhere, are now thankfully seeking our welcome. And, what should concern us above all, are the countless others who come to our shores, but do not seek our company. 

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# Shedding Our Blinders

Rabbi Noach Weinberg

*Who is blind by My servant? Who is deaf but My messenger? Who is blind like my perfect one, or blind like the servant of*

*G-d? You see much and do not retain; ears alert, and yet do not hear*  
(Yishayahu 42:19).

We are living in frightening times. Every human being alive today has to be blind not to realize that humanity's existence is threatened by a third World War, atomic warfare, environmental pollution, an energy crisis and sundry other menaces.—*Yet he continues to be unaware!*

But what is his blindness compared to the blindness of a man who believes in G-d? Who designed the atom, placed Uranium 238 in the Table of Elements, gave us titanium for I.C.B.M. missiles, and the chips to control them? Who placed the oil reserves in Arab hands and set up Khomeni to handle Iran's share of the wealth?—*How can the believer fail to see the obvious?*

But his blindness is as nothing to the blindness of the servant of G-d, the comparatively perfect one, who knows that Torah is his instruction book for living, who reads the *Tochacha* every year, and has heard G-d say in anger and wrath, "I shall rule over you!"—*How does he continue to shut his eyes so readily?*

How can a Torah Jew say when the Al-mighty turns His wrath on us: "*Why did he do this to us?*"—But He *said* He would, and He gave His reasons why.—"*Can't we do anything to protect ourselves?—to survive?*" He says, *All I ask is that you make the attempt, and I will help you.*

Who is blind but the men who say that today, if we organized, if we dedicated ourselves, if we put forth the effort, if we reached out to our brethren, they *still* would not listen? *We all know that they would listen.*

---

Rabbi Weinberg is Rosh Yeshiva of Aish HaTorah, a yeshiva for baalei teshuva located in the Old City of Jerusalem.

They are waiting for us! Thirsty, misguided souls, the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, waiting for someone to speak words that they can understand.

## There Are No Accidents

We Torah Jews know that there are no accidents: "G-d is complete in all His deeds." Everything that occurs is a direct message to us. We read daily of the self-sacrifice, the willingness to give one's life on the part of various and sundry terrorists and so-called Freedom Fighters. In the forefront—internationally and by no accident, you may be sure—is the PLO, helping and pointing the way for the rest. They are ready to make every sacrifice for their so-called causes (read: gods). And we for our cause, for our G-d? We, whom the Al-mighty is constantly speaking to and urging on? It is to *us* that He is speaking. . . . And we are simply *yotzai*. We are complacent, satisfied with lip service, and no more. Where are our fighters?

In the meantime, the Russians have invaded Afghanistan. Begin is making deals with Sadat—who has proclaimed that he'll join the Arabs in a war against Israel, and wears a swastika-designed tie in Jerusalem. . . . The United States arms Egypt, Saudia Arabia, and Jordan. . . . And our Jewish children are in the hands of Krishna, Moon, EST.

## Who is Blind But My Servant?

We who say the "*Sh'ma*" every day, and recite our obligation to accept death for our G-d, if need be—where are our young men who are willing to die?—Who are willing to give up all and *live* for the sake of

our Al-mighty G-d and His causes, for our eternal people?

We answer: "Kollel," and it is true that those studying Torah are the sustaining force of *Am Yisroel*. . . . Without them we are nothing. We point at their financial sacrifices with pride. *Lo alman Yisroel*—Israel is not bereaved—and, indeed, the kollel people are the *kiyum* of *Am Yisroel*.

So count them up: 1,000 young men in America and another 500 Americans in *Eretz Yisroel*.

This is our army? For how long a term of service? From three to ten years. . . . and then what? How many of our young men are in business, in profession? And how many fighting for our cause?

We must open our eyes and see. We must open our ears and hear. The Al-mighty, Creator of the universe, and the G-d of *Am Yisroel*, demands that His people prepare and be ready for the final home-coming. We must have no other thought but that this be accomplished.

We should meet every night—but at the very least, once a week! Seek advice, make plans. . . . Come to Yerushalayim, we will teach you how to be effective. We have no choice but to succeed. And now this is the key: if we but realize this—that we have no choice but to succeed—then we will!

Our attitude must be like that of a young man I recently met in the United States. Daniel knew of my activities with *baalei teshuva*, so with pride he told me that he had also made a *baal teshuva*. I asked him, politely, "Who?" He answered, "A 95-year old woman."

I must confess that I was astounded. I said as much, and asked him to please explain how he had accomplished such a feat.

Daniel owns a nursing home in Baltimore, 400 beds. All of his clients are non-Jewish, except for three. He asked a shaila regarding the kitchen and so on, and in accordance with the guidelines he received, he feeds treifa food to all but his three Jewish patients, whom he supplies with catered kosher meals. One day, an inspector came; this 95-year old woman approached him and complained, "The owner isn't giving me the same food as everybody else."

The inspector asked the young man why this was so. He explained that since she is Jewish, he can not feed her treifa. The inspector told him, "Buddy, you're living in America. You can't force this woman to keep kosher. Give her the same food as everyone—or else."

So our hero approached his 95-year old and began, "You know, kosher food is far more expensive than treifa food."

She answered, "Who needs it? I want to eat like everybody else."

"Well," he continued, "everyone knows that kosher food is a lot more delicious than this treifa stuff."

She answered, "I'm 95 years old. I taste something? I want to eat like the rest."

"But kosher food is a lot healthier than the treifa junk!"

"Look," she says, "I'm 95 years old. Soon I'm going to die, anyway. In the meantime I want to eat like everybody else!"

Daniel smiled triumphantly, and said, "I got her to keep kosher, make Brachos, she lights candles, keeps Shabbos, davens, washes netilas yadayim."

"Fantastic!" I said. "But tell me what you said. How did you convince her?"

He looked at me and replied, "You don't understand. Don't you see, Ich hob gehat ah breira? Did I have a choice? I don't know what I said. I raved, I pleaded. I don't remember a word, all I know is she says, 'Modeh Ani, she says Brachos, she washes—just like I told you.'"

We also have to realize that we don't have a breira.

Who is the blind man but My servant? Who is deaf by My messenger? Who is blind like My perfect one, or blind like the servant of G-d?

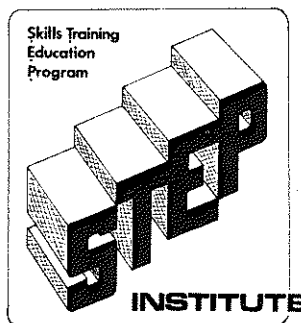
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# THE TESHUVA MOVEMENT

## Epilogue

Anyone over fifty has been asked, "Where were you during the War, Daddy? What were you doing?" Some suffered tragically. Some fought heroically—either in the military service or in *hatzala* (rescue) efforts. Others . . . did not know that Jews were being killed—or so they claimed. And many who did know were helpless to change events.

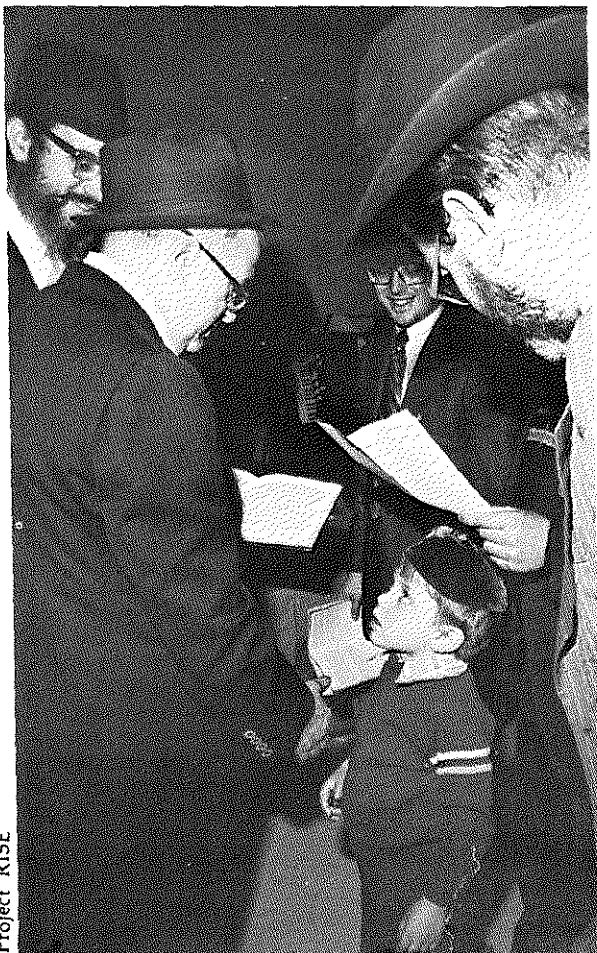
Someday very soon, we—everybody reading these lines, as well as hundreds of thousands who never see them—will be asked, "What did you do to save Jews during the 80's?" For although Hitler's crematoria fires have been banked for 35 years now, the destructive tides of assimilation and intermarriage are washing away, destroying the majority of our young people. Whether the intermarriage statistics of 48% refer to "marriages" or to "those getting married" can make little difference when one considers that of those remaining, the overwhelming majority do not have the slightest idea of what being Jewish entails. . . . So the catastrophic predictions of the demographic experts: "10,000 Jews by the year 2076," show some elements of

possibility וְחָ. Indeed, Israel's President Navon had remarked that more Jews are succumbing to intermarriage than were lost to Hitler!

Yet, hand-wringing despair is totally out of order. The articles that preceeded this leave little to the imagination in terms of what can be done and how; they only leave it to the reader to take action. . . . This time, no one can say, "But I didn't know." And everyone of us *can* do something. No one—*asolutely no one*—is without the ability to help schools, institutions, or individuals.

"What did you do to save Jews? I mean, how did you help the thousands that wanted to be saved? . . . How did you make their trip home easier? . . . How did you help them understand that it is not a matter of 'us' and 'them,' but one of a big, collective 'us,' wherein we are all part of the same family? . . . How did you put your mind, your money, your heart, your time, your concern, your home, your smile, your handshake . . . to work? . . . Did you help five?—two?—one?"

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## Reaching Out With Literature

The phenomenal flowering of Torah literature in English in all its varied manifestations—notably translations of *Tanach* and rabbinic classics, halachic works in English, ethical and philosophical treatises, as well as a number of periodicals—owes a great deal to the *teshuva* movement. It has generated a thirst for Torah guidance, and created a mass market for all these works. Yet, they of course do not only address themselves to *baalei teshuva* but to religious Jewry as a whole. There is, however, one group of Judaica which is a direct response to the *teshuva* movement: works which analyze—and encourage—the return to authentic Judaism and seek to interpret it to the searching reader.

To be sure, works of this type have been written ever since Jews started drifting away from Torah, in the beginning of the modern era (one need only remember Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's pathbreaking *Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel*). Yet the most recent past has seen an ever-increasing number of books on this type written for the English-speaking public; *The Jewish Observer* had occasion to review, for instance, some of the publications of the National Conference of Synagogue Youth (JO, June '77) and A. Shafran's brilliant *Jewthink* (JO, Dec. '77). A number of other books merit our attention, remarkably diverse in approach even though pursuing a common goal, *Kiruv Rechokim*.

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**Being Jewish**, by Shimon Hurwitz  
(Jerusalem 1978; Feldheim, \$4.95)

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This book was written by an attorney in the United States who came to *Eretz Yisroel* to search for his Jewish identity and stayed to study at Yeshivat Dvar Yerushalayim. This is a very personal book; it does not recount the author's life, to be sure, but it is an eloquent and brilliantly readable account of the great discovery he made: the stark contrast between the Western culture he knew (which centers on the individual) and the true Jewish culture which he is now learning about (which centers on G-d). He shares his insights with his readers by means of a remarkable device; he takes twenty-five basic topics and devotes to each two brief chapters—one from the viewpoint of the modern world and the other, *lehavdil*, from that of Torah. The titles of these chapter-pairs almost tell the story by themselves e.g. "Death" and "Life without Death"—(juxtaposing

*The Jewish Observer* / May-June, 1980

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modern man's obsessive fear of death and his sense of life as fleeting, with the Jewish conviction that this life is only a preparation for an everlasting life of far greater significance). Other chapter-pairs are called "'Judaism'" (in author's quotes) and "'Torah Judaism'"; "'I'm all right, Sam'" and "'Honest Self-Examination'"; "'The World of Parts'" and "'Wholeness.'"

This is a deeply felt personal statement, but it speaks the language of the common man; it uses simple basic phrases to express sharply defined fundamental ideas. As a result, it is not difficult to read—but it is likely to stick in the reader's mind. "Being Jewish" was not written to be a scientific treatise, but to jolt the contemporary Jew into rethinking his ways of thought; and this objective it is bound to attain.

## The Handbook of Jewish Thought

by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan

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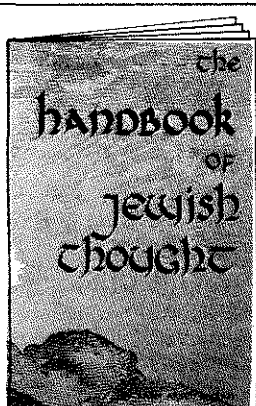
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## The Road Back by Mayer Schiller (New York, 1978; Feldheim, \$8.95)

Very different in approach is *The Road Back*. This author, too, started outside the fold and worked his way, in to the very wellsprings of *Chassidus*. His book, too, carries the seal of a profound personal experience. But the author goes beyond it, to pose—and to answer with great scholarly erudition and outstanding intelligence—some general questions: *Where are we? How did we get here? Why go back? Back to what? How to get back?* Each of these questions is a chapter heading—with the last chapter called "Welcome Back."

The encyclopedic range of thought and information in this book is perhaps illustrated best by the fact that it starts with two quotations—one from Ortega Y Gasset and one from the Rizhiner Rebbe. Whether the author surveys the present condition of American Jewry or whether he dissects the philosophical underpinnings of the French Enlightenment, he shows a masterly grasp of the primary sources, and a remarkable ability to present demanding ideas in readable form. It would go beyond the limits of a review to enumerate all the insights that can be found in these pages, but I would like to single out the effective way in which the author shows up the narrow dogmatic bigotry and ideological prejudices of those who, in the name of enlightened rationalism, tried to do away with religion. His discussion of the various proofs put forward for the existence of G-d is impressive—and so is his analysis of *mitzvos* and the means of getting back to G-d.

Needless to say, in a book that ranges so wide and far, there will inevitably be points on which one might question the author's approach. For instance, after describing the attack of the Enlightenment upon religious faith, he tries to defend *religion*—if he had limited himself to the defense of Judaism, however, it would have simplified his task and spared him some intellectual convolutions (e.g. is there really "no inherently Jewish approach to . . . tolerance or pluralism"?). This reviewer would also disagree with his assessment of the current Orthodox scene. I do not believe that one can lump the Hirschians with liberal modern Orthodoxy (the author himself is forced to present a pretty long list of differences between them). I believe the author completely misreads "centrist Orthodoxy" when he labels it as lacking "clear ideological formulations"; perhaps because his sympathies at heart lie with the right wing. And I, finally, believe that (perhaps for the same reason) he does not really come to grips with the very real problems of rightist, mostly Chassidic Orthodoxy. But these are matters of opinion which can be argued; they do not take away from the value of a work that not only will undoubtedly have a strong impact, but throws out a scholarly challenge to our alienated brethren.

**Tsedek** by Professor Henri Baruk  
(Binghamton, 1972; Swan House Publ. Co., \$2.95)

If Mayer Schiller sets his call to Yiddishkeit against the background of modern philosophical trends, *Tsedek* deals with Torah in contrast to modern psychological thinking. The author, Professor Henri Baruk, a world-renowned psychiatrist, sees the sickness of our world as rooted in the disastrous influence of contemporary psychology (and especially psychoanalysis), a modern reincarnation of pagan hedonism. In search of an antidote, he found Torah—a way of life founded on *tsedek*, peace and harmony, based on the balance of justice and kindness taught by the laws of the Torah. The author's relatively limited background in rabbinic literature accounts for a few remarks that we might question. Overall, however, he masterfully delineates the faulty and superficial approach to man and life by the various schools of psychology, and demonstrates how basic social conflicts can be resolved along Torah lines. The book was translated from French and published by Michel Abehsra, as part of an effort to establish a center for *baalei teshuva* in Binghamton, N.Y.; however, it has a significance far beyond the Binghamton project itself.

**A Matter of Return** by Rafael Eisenberg  
(Jerusalem, 1980; Feldheim, \$3.95)

Totally different again is *A Matter of Return*. Where the books discussed so far dealt with the individual against the background of modern cultural and intellectual developments, this volume offers "a penetrating analysis of *Yisroel's* afflictions and their alternatives." In this work, originally written by the late Rabbi Eisenberg זצ"ל in Hebrew, and now translated into English by his wife, the author sought to deal with the whole sweep of world-wide happenings. His goal was to show, by means of passages from *Tanach* and Talmudic sources, that the distressing crisis of our world—atheism, materialism, and immorality—was predicted long ago, as a prelude to the perfection of the world through the establishment of the rule of *Moshiach*. Likewise, there was predicted the suffering and demoralization of the Jewish people, as a result of the oppression by the nations (Rabbi Eisenberg tries to relate the prophecies to specific events in our days).

However there was also foretold that, if the pious men in Israel will keep G-d's teachings alive, they will arouse the powers of goodness within the Jewish people and bring about the coming of *Moshiach* at which time the whole of mankind will accept the Kingdom of G-d. The author also touches on such topics as the final war of Gog and Magog, the return of the Ten Tribes, and the ultimate self-revelation of G-d in history. The message is clear—we are challenged to exchange modern self-centered striving for a dedication to G-d's will. The

message is addressed to all of us, but the Jew who had drifted away from Torah is in particular called upon to find fulfillment in working for the great goal of world history.

The author has accumulated a remarkable wealth of source materials and has constructed from them a vast structure. Even though it is possible to disagree with some of the interpretations based on current happenings, the overall picture is a compelling and inspiring one, and deserves the widest possible attention both within and without our own camp.

**"Lehavin U'Lehaskil"** by Rabbi Eliezer Gevirtz  
(New York, 1980, \$5.50)

Some volumes have appeared recently, whose goal has been to provide specific answers to oft-asked questions of Torah ideology. Thus, The Jewish Education Program (JEP) of Agudath Israel, which has made outreach its big goal, has now published "*Lehavin U'Lehaskil*"—a guide to Torah *hashkafa*. In six sections are treated the most crucial questions that an outsider could ask about Torah Judaism: *What do we mean by G-d, and how can we prove His existence? Why don't*

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we believe in the Theory of Evolution? Why is there pain and suffering? These are some of the questions treated in part one. Other parts deal with the chosenness of the Jewish people and the authenticity of the Torah (part two); why Jewish laws are necessary and why some Jews have formed separate branches of Judaism (part three); what could be the purpose of such *mitzvos* as *kashrus* or *tzitzis*, and what is the role of the Jewish woman (part four); what is wrong with assimilation; and how does Judaism differ from other religions (part five). The last part, finally, discusses how one can go about becoming a better Jew.

While the author has done a most creditable job in dealing with all these questions—and many more—some of his answers are particularly thorough and enlighten-

ing, e.g. his marshalling of the arguments against evolution (pp. 46–55), for the truth of the Torah (pp. 86–92), or against Christian missionaries (pp. 143–146). On the other hand, this reviewer would have liked to see the discussion of the difference between Judaism and the other world religions (pp. 138–143) to be more emphatic in tone—as Rabbi S.R. Hirsch stressed, other religions represent man reaching out to G-d, whilst Judaism represents G-d reaching out to man, and therefore it alone has succeeded, historically, to make over an entire nation and to lift it up to a life of actual divine service.

Of course, the author had a difficult challenge to meet: effectively to deal with the problems and hang-ups of the non-religious reader without descending to his level of limited comprehension and sensitivity (an example of the difficulty the author faced is provided by the discussion of how Judaism views the relationship between the sexes, which could not be skipped and yet necessitated utmost discretion). This required a careful weighing of practically every sentence, and the author did very well indeed (but why did he write that “other Torah laws have been extended by learned Sages to apply to new conditions, such as the use of electricity,” surely a rather ambiguous and dangerous statement?). It is to be hoped that this volume will indeed be used to the fullest both by JEP and by other organizations concerned with *kiruv rechokim*.

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**Eight Questions People Ask About Judaism,**  
by D. Prager and J. Telushkin  
(New York, 1975; Tze Ulmad Press, \$9.00).

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This is a volume that has attained wide circulation. In many respects, it covers the same ground as Rabbi Gevirtz's book and it does so in a particularly lively style, which holds the attention of even the casual reader. Moreover, there is no mistaking the sincerity and idealism of the authors, as well as the great effort that went into this work. One would clearly want to recommend it. Yet there is a vast, and fatal difference between this book and “*Lehavin U'Lehaskil*”: the latter's clear perception of *daas haTorah* and commitment to it, is lacking in the other work. We have painfully learnt in America that dedication to Judaism, even to Torah, is not enough unless these terms are given specific and authentic meanings. Prager and Telushkin draw on authors and recommend authors that *cannot* provide a correct understanding of Torah Judaism—Yechezkel Kaufman, Louis Finkelstein, I. Bashevis Singer, Louis Jacobs, and others. They try to mine from these men, and others like them, whatever will contribute to a positive attitude toward Yiddishkeit; but, in the process, they bestow legitimacy upon the ideas put forth by these men—and occasionally, subtly, are themselves misled by them.

An example can be found in the very beginning of the book. The authors—correctly—stress that one



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should observe the Torah even if he has some doubt about the existence of G-d; they point out that in fact, crises of faith are to be expected. That is true. One who doubts G-d's existence is still a Jew. But they go a step further: they declare that one can be a good Jew while doubting G-d's existence, and they make of such doubts an ideal, by quoting Emanuel Rackman: "A Jew dare not live with absolute certainty, because certainty is the hallmark of the fanatic and Judaism abhors fanaticism (and) because doubt is good for the human soul..." This is a terrible distortion, if not an outright denial of a fundamental principle of Torah. Does G-d really "not wish certainty with regard to His existence"? What about the Torah's injunction that "thou shalt know today and take it to your heart that Hashem is G-d in Heaven Above and on earth below..."? What about the *mitzva* of *emunah* and about the affirmation of the *Shma Yisroel*?

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**Think Jewish** by Rabbi Zalman I. Posner  
(Nashville, 1979; Keshar Press, \$7.95 and \$3.95)

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Altogether different is yet another recent volume, *Think Jewish*. It contains 26 essays, the bulk of which are based on questions posed to the author by college students at Chabad encounter sessions. His aim has been to show that Torah teachings address themselves to the real problems of the world around us—to present "a contemporary view of Judaism, a Jewish view of today's world." A wide range of subjects is covered, such as the role of *emunah* in Judaism, the concept of the Chosen People, Miracles and Revelation, the function of *mitzvos*, and the significance of Torah. At the same time, the specific Chabad perspective on serving G-d and on *Chassidus* is clarified. There are many incisive insights such as the author's insistence that, when children leave their parents' religious path, it is not a failure of communications as we would like to think, but all too often, the parents' own perception of Torah values. He analyzes the role of free intellectual enquiry—and its limitations—as applied to Torah and *mitzvos* as well as to matters of the world. Many of the topics discussed are illuminated by observations of personalities as diverse as the Baal Shem Tov and Reb Chaim Brisker.

The reader cannot but be impressed by Rabbi Posner's ability to interpret difficult subjects to non-religious audiences in a manner intelligible and persuasive even to them. This reviewer, however, totally disagrees with the author's classification of all religious Jews as either "enclave Jews," disinterested in the non-Orthodox, or "activist Jews," represented by Lubavitch in particular. While it is true that Lubavitch has established a firm record of *kiruv rechokim*, the truth is that there are today hardly any Orthodox groups—be they educational or communal organizations or movements—that are not deeply involved in bringing our alienated brethren back to Torah. There can be legitimate arguments among ourselves about methods and

approaches; but to convey to a non-religious audience the idea that the Orthodox community, except for the "activists," wants to have nothing to do with the irreligious Jew is both wrong and harmful. Yet, on the whole, this volume provides an instructive lesson on how to reach out to those around us. IT

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He received *smicha* at an early age from *Gedolei Hador*: Rabbi Meir Arak, Rav of Turna, and Rabbi Yosef Engel of Cracow. As a young man Rabbi Ehrenfeld succeeded his father Rabbi Simcha Bunim זצ"ל as Rav of Mattersdorf during his father's lifetime. He had already commenced to assist his father in the yeshiva, which was renowned for its thousands of students, among whom were numbered outstanding *rabbonim* and *talmidei chachomim* in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

He managed to escape from the clutches of the Nazis, in 1938, and arrived in the United States almost penniless. Here he succeeded in setting up his Yeshiva Chasan Sofer, which is responsible for the education of thousands of *talmidim*.



He did much for the settlement of Jerusalem and on his first visit to *Eretz Yisroel* in 1959, he proposed the establishment of a memorial to the *Sheva Kehillos* of which Kiryat Mattersdorf was the center. He set up a Talmud Torah and Yeshiva Ketana in Kiryat Mattersdorf, which now have over 300 *talmidim*, a girls school and a kollel.

He continued to disseminate Torah in his yeshiva in New York

until the very last and to maintain contact with his thousands of *talmidim*. His *tzidkus*, regal bearing and warm personality continue to inspire all who had the good fortune to bask in his presence.

Rabbi Ehrenfeld is survived by children and grandchildren who continue to perpetuate the noble traditions of the Chasam Sofer.

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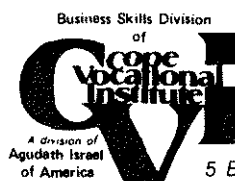
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## 18,000 CHILDREN IN AGUDATH ISRAEL SUMMER CAMPS WORLDWIDE

The record enrollment of 18,000 children in 55 summer all day and sleep-away camps operated by the affiliated chapters of the Agudath Israel world organization is proof that the summer experience has become part of the year-round Torah educational program of Orthodox Jewish children all over the world. This report and assessment was released by Rabbi Moshe Sherer, chairman of the international Orthodox movement. He said that the enrollment figures indicate that camping has become an important tool in educating children through experience toward a Torah life, which now extends to all socio-economic strata.

With Israel leading the way, all of the Agudath Israel summer camp operations throughout the world reported dramatic increases in enrollment over the past year. The vacation retreats, most of which bear the name Camp Agudah (for boys) or Camp Bnos (for girls), are located in New York, Illinois, Ohio, Montreal, Toronto, Argentina, England, Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy.

According to Meir Frischman, director of the camps division of Agudath Israel of

America, New York's two summer camps (popularly known as "Ruach Country" because of their unique Torah spirit) opened their 38th season on June 26th with many physical improvements and continue in their tradition of accepting among their campers many children from poor Jewish homes. Mr. Frischman indicated that the renewal program of both New York State camps continued this year, with the highlight, a new large shul at Camp Agudah.

In addition to the children from 26 cities, a contingent from Latin American countries returned this year for their annual lesson in "Yiddishkeit in action." Some of the campers are children from uncommitted Jewish homes who are recruited by the Jewish Education Program (JEP), the reach-out division of Agudath Israel.

Russian immigrant children are the subject of special emphasis by the Agudath Israel camps in Israel, the U.S.A. and Canada. In New York, Agudath Israel's Project RISE (Russian Immigrant Services and Education) has teamed up with the Be'er Hagolah Institute for a special day camp for Russian immigrant children.



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### Correction

The date for the commemoration of the destruction of the Telshe community was stated incorrectly in "Thank You, Elie Wiesel" (JO, Apr. '80). It should have been listed as 20 Tamuz.

## AGUDATH ISRAEL WORLD ORGANIZATION TO LAUNCH NEW PROGRAMS THIS FALL

A broad range of new programs to help Jews and authentic Judaism globally will be launched this fall, according to plans mapped at a meeting on June 15 of the American members of the international executive of the Agudath Israel World Organization. The three-hour meeting, which was presided over by Rabbi Moshe Sherer, who was elected chairman of the world executive at the recent Knessia Gedolah in Jerusalem, also worked out plans of synchronizing these activities with the international Agudist executive bodies in Israel and Europe.

The new office of the Agudath Israel World Organization for the American continent, which is located in a special suite at 5 Beekman Street, New York City, will be fully

staffed as of the first week of September. A European office is expected to open at the same time, with the diaspora offices working in conjunction with the main world office in Jerusalem.

The international executive has selected Dr. Isaac Lewin, Rabbi Menachem Porush and Rabbi Sherer as its representatives to the meeting of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, which is taking place in Amsterdam, Holland, July 7-8.

The planned activities cover the broad range of concerns expressed at the Knessia Gedolah, which seek to intensify and expand Torah study throughout the world, including

spiritually underdeveloped Jewish countries, the rescue and resettlement of Jews from lands of danger, lifting the levels of religious observance globally, building bridges between Eretz Israel and the Diaspora, a new thrust in bringing uncommitted Jewish youth to a Torah way of life, and a major effort for a forceful advocacy of a unique Torah view on all international problems. An itinerary is being mapped for Rabbi Sherer to visit seven European countries this fall, beginning after Succos. Rabbi Yehuda Meir Abramovitz, of Jerusalem, chairman of the Vaad Hapoel Haolami, will spend a month this summer in South American countries to strengthen Yiddishkeit in that section of the world.

## E.R.A. DEFEAT HAILED BY AGUDATH ISRAEL OF CHICAGO

Chicago, Illinois . . . Ever since the spotlight of the ratification of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution turned to the state of Illinois, the regional Commission on Legislation and Civic Action

of Agudath Israel spearheaded efforts to defeat the E.R.A. Under the leadership of its chairman, Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller, the commission worked with other opponents of the amendment including Phyllis Schlafley, the

leader of the national "Stop E.R.A. Movement." The combined efforts resulted in a 102-71 vote in the Illinois House of Representatives in favor of the E.R.A., but fell 5 votes short of the vote of 107 needed for approval.

The E.R.A. issue became even more significant to the Orthodox Jewish community in recent months when a national debate heated up on whether women should be included in a renewed registration for the selective service system. According to a spokesman for the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America, if the E.R.A. had been on the books "there would have been no chance of defeating attempts to register women in the Congress."

Despite the defeat in the Illinois House of Representatives, Agudath Israel of Chicago continues to actively campaign against the E.R.A. since it is likely that a new vote would be taken at any time when the proponents feel confident that they had the necessary majority in the bag. Rabbi Keller, who testified before the Illinois House of Representatives on several occasions on the E.R.A. issue, said that he was planning for a team of national Orthodox Jewish leaders to come to Illinois to explain the opposition of the Orthodox community to legislative leaders.

Dr. Aaron Twerski, national chairman of Agudath Israel's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action, said that "the Illinois defeat is by no means a final victory. Since many state legislators in Illinois still hedge on the issue and the measure could still be approved by three other states," he said, "the Orthodox Jewish community cannot let down its guard."

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## CELEBRATION MARKS BRIS OF TWENTY-FOUR RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS

Twenty-four Russian immigrant boys from two to seventeen years old, who recently underwent *brisim*, were honored at a unique celebration sponsored by Project RISE (Russian Immigrant Services and Education) of Agudath Israel of America. The boys were part of the bris program of Project RISE in cooperation with Maimonides Hospital.

Fifteen of the youngsters were celebrating a double *simcha*: Being the first born in their families, they also marked their *Pidyon Ha'ben*. *Kohanim* for the *pidyon* were Mr. Eugene Fixler of the Agudath Israel national administration, Mr. Louis Bloom and Mr. Louis Singer. In addition to the 15 of the 24 boys who were celebrating their *Pidyon Ha'ben* as well, Project RISE staff member, Moshe Krasnerman celebrated his own *Pidyon Ha'ben*.

"Dovid is a hero," says Mr. Faye Laufer, Project RISE staff member speaking of 12 year old Dovid Blokh who was one of the 24 youngsters. In a scene typical of the heroism of these young Russian immigrants, she added: "As Dovid was coming out of the anesthesia following his *bris*, his very first words were 'At last I am Jewish.'"

The children and the families were joined at the celebration by the three *Mohalim* who performed the *brisim*, Rabbis Dubov, Goldberg and Pirutinsky. Rabbi Ephraim Oratz, director of Project RISE, opened with a greeting in Russian, a translation of "*Hinei ma'tov uma'noim*" (How good and pleasant when brothers sit together). Others who partici-

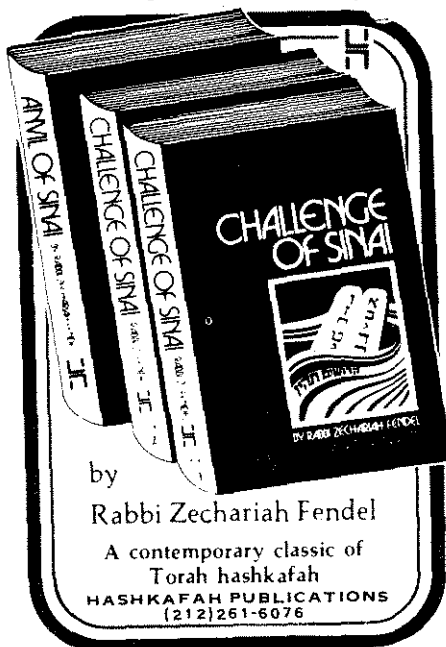
pated in the program were Rabbi Chaim Twersky, Chief Chaplain of Maimonides Hospital and Rabbi Shlomo Rosen, former *meshamesh b'kodosh* of the Moscow Synagogue.

Chairman for the occasion was Rabbi Abish Brodt, member of the advisory commission to Project RISE. The celebration was organized by Rabbi H. Augenbaum, director of the RISE *bris* program.

Special guests from the Agudath Israel national administration included Rabbi Moshe Sherer, President, Mr. Louis Glick, Mr. Mendel Berg, Mr. William Weisner, Mr. Eli Abramczyk and Mr. Joseph Neumann, chairman of Agudath Israel's Project RISE.

Other recent Project RISE programs included a "retreat," where 16 Soviet immigrants spent *Shabbos* with families in Monsey, New York. The retreat idea was initiated by Mrs. Marcia Kahn-Frankel and Mrs. Ursula Lehman (President of the women's division of Congregation Beis Meir Chevra Hashas in Monsey). Rivka Schlesinger of Project RISE, who organized the event, expressed the thanks of immigrants to the families who greeted them so warmly.

In keeping up with its information campaign, Project RISE has begun a new newsletter in Russian with articles on Yiddishkeit and listings of available service to immigrants.



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## To the File

*\*Editor's Note: The Jewish Observer regularly features news items from Agudath Israel of America to keep our readers informed of its extensive work. The activities of the organization's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action, specifically its efforts on behalf of yeshivos, have been among the more prominently featured subjects.*

*During the past year, the work of the Commission, under a new Office of Government and Public Affairs, greatly expanded. The following is a compilation of memoranda from the files of this office, which can shed some light on the extent of its efforts.*

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** The File

**Re:** Energy and the yeshivos

**Problem:**

While inflation continues to take its toll on our yeshivos' financial stability, rising energy costs are adding considerably to the grave situation. The inflation rate for the entire economy in 1979 was 13%, but the price of number six heating oil, for example, rose from 28¢ per gallon in July 1978 to at least 56.6¢, an increase of 102%. Utility bills and school bus fuel costs have similarly skyrocketed during this period.

All the while, salaries and food expenses have risen, and tuition and contributions have not kept pace.

**Activity:**

The Commission on Legislation and Civic

Action brought the yeshivos into a new Federal Energy Schools and Hospitals Grants program, sponsored several in formational seminars with energy experts, with the result of a number of yeshivos receiving grants—either for Technical Assistance studies (TA) or Energy Conservation Measures (ECM).

The Commission continues to disseminate information on energy conservation to the yeshivos.

**Summary:**

If the yeshivos implement just half of the various energy conservation measures suggested in the material distributed by the Commission, the cumulative savings can run in the tens of thousands of dollars. If a larger number of yeshivos take advantage of the Federal Grants program, more will be able to shift to cheaper sources of energy.

to provide bus transportation on days public schools are closed. The second priority was to convene meetings between the yeshiva heads and the administrators of the city's pupil transportation system. After a meeting at which representatives of eighty institutions confronted Dr. Frank J. Macchiarola, Chancellor of the New York Board of Education, the yeshivos then met with those directly responsible for their transportation needs. They learned of more problems: reductions in bus service rather than an increase. The Commission's efforts resulted in the restoration of cancelled buses, and has facilitated better routing and improved communications.

The prognosis is for continued difficulty; as part of its summer internship program, the Commission will conduct an extensive legal study to advance new concepts in school bus transportation within the parameters of the law.

**Summary:**

Despite some accomplishments in this area, it will be necessary to continue to press for more gains.

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** The File

**Re:** Bus transportation

**Problem:**

New York yeshivos are dependent on bus transportation provided by the local educational agency. This spares yeshivos transportation costs, estimated at close to \$100,000 per bus. The system, however, limits the use of the public buses to conventional school hours, on regular school days.

**Activity:**

The Commission sponsored a study of the problems of school bus transportation in New York City's five boroughs. Dr. Gerald David, consultant of the Commission, concluded that the New York City Board of Education could be more accommodating to the yeshiva students' needs by extending hours and days of service. The study also pointed to problems of routing, on-time performance, and transportation between various boroughs of the city.

The Commission then drafted legislation

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** The File

**Re:** Federal efforts for yeshivos

**Problem:**

Ever since the setbacks several years ago with defeat of a tuition tax credits bill, few initiatives have appeared on the Federal arena. While several Supreme Court decisions have been favorable to our cause, they generally dealt with ancillary services, whose effect was minimal.

**Activity:**

Recognizing limitations posed by the courts, the Commission has worked with other groups to re-define rules and regulations to better facilitate participation of non-public schools in Federal programs. New regulations issued by HEW mandated local

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schools districts to include non-public school if they are to be funded. . . . The Commission lobbied successfully for a new Assistant Secretary for Non-Public Education. . . . It intervened for a number of yeshivos that had been denied use of bilingual education funds for Yiddish and Russian programs because the public schools did not deal with problems in the same languages. Subsequent regulations ruled that yeshivos could participate even with languages other than those standard in the public schools.

In the meantime, efforts were underway to draft new Federal legislation to assist yeshiva parents in these difficult economic days. Agudath Israel was credited for giving a BEOG's program for elementary and secondary school children such a chance. While tuition tax credits remain on the back burner, Agudath Israel is strongly urging the Senate to pass such a program.

These efforts have taken the leadership of the Office of Government and Public Affairs to Washington on numerous occasions, and—at the invitation of President and Mrs. Carter—to the inauguration of the new U.S. Department of Education.

**Summary:**

While Agudath Israel and the yeshivos continue to win small battles, the overall struggle is yet to be won.

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** The File

**Re:** Mandated services

**Problem:**

It is more than a decade since Agudath Israel and others conceived of state reimbursement for the services yeshivos provide by state mandate. The program, which was eventually signed into law, brought nearly \$800,000 a year to New York State yeshivos. But it lived in a precarious state as the American Jewish Congress and the other secular Jewish establishment organizations continuously challenged the law in the courts.

The U.S. Supreme Court finally rendered a 5-4 decision earlier this year, declaring mandated services constitutional, but administrative problems abound—such as discrepancies between the amounts billed by yeshivos and the dollars actually received. Communication between government agencies and the yeshivos was often found wanting.

**Activity:**

The New York State Education Department asked the Commission (which has over the years monitored the program and issued bulletins to the yeshivos with pertinent information) to serve as the coordinating

agency for the program. It now regularly sends the yeshivos computer print-outs on their projects, and serves as intermediary between the yeshivos and the State, to reconcile discrepancies.

The Commission aims for nation-wide adoption of compensation for mandated services, paying for such activities as record-keeping, attendance and testing. It is currently disseminating copies of the New York law to other states in hope that this can become a model for general practice.

**Summary:**

The case of mandated services is a good illustration how Agudath Israel has evolved from forceful advocate for government aid to yeshivos, to an agency facilitating more direct forms of assistance.

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** The File

**Re:** Federal aid for yeshiva workers

**The Problem:**

District Court Judge John Reynolds of Wisconsin ruled last summer that the out-stationing of CETA workers (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act Title 11B) in a religious institution, even in jobs not related to sectarian activities, was unconstitutional. This ruling meant that a yeshiva could not even receive support under Title 11 of CETA to employ a custodial or cafeteria worker.

Agudath Israel of America spearheaded formation of a coalition of Orthodox Jewish groups—including Commission on Law and Public Affairs (COLPA), National Council of Young Israel, Torah Umesorah, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, a number of yeshivos, and the Boro Park Jewish Community Council. This coalition has been monitoring the situation for a year and a half, to thwart the negative impact of the court decision and subsequent regulations; and conducted high-level meetings between the Solicitor of the U.S. Department of Labor; Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel; noted Washington attorney, Nathan Lewin; and leaders of other faiths. The effort also included sensitizing legislators and government officials to the concerns of the religious community.

In the interim, an amicus curiae brief to the U.S. Court of Appeals in the seventh circuit filed by Nathan Lewin, with Dennis Rapps of COLPA, argued that the CETA program, which is designed to help the unemployed, is not analagous to the aid to education issue since CETA is a social program for the poor.

In addition to the legal efforts, a coalition of national and New York local organizations met in Washington with Congressman Stephen Solarz and Special Assistant to the

President Stuart Eizenstat to discuss this problem further.

**Summary:**

Concerted effort may bring about a change in this ruling, which seems to reflect a knee-jerk reaction against aid to yeshivos, regardless of how construed.

## Summary

The above memoranda are just a sample of the growing number of activities by the Office of Government and Public Affairs of Agudath Israel of America. The activities listed relate only to programs of assistance to yeshivos as a group, without mentioning numerous instances of intervention on behalf of individual institutions. It also did not discuss extensive efforts for drafting legislation to protect the rights of the Orthodox Jews. Nor did it cover a new involvement in social problems, such as foster care and the needs of the Jewish retarded. Similarly, the Commission has been active in advocating Orthodox values in such settings as the White House Conference on Families.

If this past year was any indication, we can look to the 1980's to mark a further upgrading of the status of the Orthodox Jew. Recognizing that Torah education is the cornerstone of our survival, there is no question where the emphasis will be.

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