

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

justify part of that violence by reconstructing the hopes, fears, and motives of members of the underground. Their apologetics take a two-pronged approach: first, recounting the deteriorating security situation of mounting Arab attacks against Jews and, secondly (especially for Fisch), stitching together a rather selective and problematic pastiche of *psukim* which are meant to provide religious legitimization for Jewish violence.

Revulsion, not explanation, should be the religious Jew's response to the *makteret* (underground).... Haggai Segal, the other convicted members of the *makteret*, and Fisch missed their opportunities for *hesbon hanefesh*. We should not. By posing the spectre of committed Jews who are careful to pack their white shirts for Shabbos as they leave for prison, but show little compunction about bloodshed, the *makteret* demonstrates religious Jews' collective failure to rule out a frightening and violent misreading of the Torah.

Shmuel Wilf
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To the Editor:

As a committed exponent of *Torah Im Derekh Eretz* I should like to add a cautionary postscript to the excerpts of my lecture that appeared in the last issue of *Jewish Action*. In my view, *Torah Im Derekh Eretz* was not meant by R. Hirsch to sanction our thorough involvement — immersion — in the cultural and educational environment of the larger society, even if such immersion be accompanied by religious zeal and strict observance of *Halacha*. Such a course is dangerous to Torah survival in the long run; it ignores the laws of sociology that govern cultural assimilation. "Hen am levadod yishkon" has not been abrogated by *Torah Im Derekh Eretz*. In his writings R. Hirsch cautioned his followers against "the attraction of worldly cul-

tures" and "vocations, occupations in which the Torah of God counts for nothing."

What R. Hirsch had in mind was the "Toraization" of the prevailing cultural and educational material *within our* Torah society, where such "Toraization" is possible and acceptable. The Torah is thus applied to the world and realities of the present generation rather than to the outdated modes of earlier historical periods. However, the primary *psychological* atmosphere in which the true Hirschian lives, mentally and spiritually, as well as physically, will always remain the atmosphere of his own Torah community. Professional and social contests with outsiders will be conscientious, courteous, helpful, and even friendly, but, psychologically, secondary.

Toras Kohanim to *Leviticus* 18:4 reads: "Make them (the words of the Torah) primary (*ikkar*), not secondary (*tephelah*)," to other pursuits. R. Hirsch, in his commentary, justifies *Torah Im Derekh Eretz* by stressing that the concern is only that the Torah remain primary and all else accessory. In my view, this applies especially to the atmosphere in which we work, live and think.

When one's over-all psychological atmosphere is dominated by that of the non-Torah world, one's Torah outlook will suffer in the long run.

This is a very real and present danger, that must be avoided. Should such avoidance turn out to be unfeasible or unlikely we would then follow the advice of R. Hirsch, who wrote in his essay "Religion Allied to Progress" (quoted in Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' article): "We declare before heaven and earth that if our religion demanded that we should renounce what is called civilization and progress we would try to obey unquestioningly, because our religion is for us truly religion, the word of God before which every other consideration has to give way." In other words, we

would then be forced to adopt a Torah Only approach as the only acceptable alternative.

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To The Editor:

In response to Dov Esterson's kind review of *Williamsburg Memories*, I would like to make the following comments:

1. I concur wholeheartedly with his complaint that the major role of Michael G. Tress, *z'l*, has not been properly reported and appreciated. I wrote three articles, two of which appear in *Williamsburg Memories*. A third article is included in *The Torah Personality*. (Mesorah Publications, N.Y. 1980). Fortunately, however, my brother Dr. David Kranzler, a noted historian and Holocaust scholar, has just completed a thorough study of the life, work and major contributions of this extraordinary young American Jew who devoted the best years of his all-too-short life to the *K'hal*.

2. I would like to direct Dov Esterson's attention to my longitudinal sociological study of the Jewish Community of Williamsburg, the first volume of which (*Williamsburg — A Jewish Community in Transition*, New York 1961) covered the period from before World War II until the end of the Fifties. My current volume, completing the fifty year investigation of the radical changes in this major Orthodox community, deals with the development of the *Hassidic* community that has evolved since the Sixties, in spite of a series of major crises, counter to the predictions of the doomsday prophecies of Jewish and other pundits. Hopefully, it will satisfy Dov Esterson's request for a more full treatment of this unique center of the Orthodox Jewish renaissance in this Country.

3. Finally, I would like to emphasize again the point I made in the introduction and throughout