

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

IYAR 5754 / APRIL 1994  
U.S.A.\$3.00 / FOREIGN \$4.00  
VOLUME XXVII / NUMBER 3

# **BLOODSHED AT HEBRON: How do we respond?**

WHO  
GUARANTEES  
"ETERNITY"?  
TWO LETTERS AND  
RESPONSES

# HOW DOES THE AVERAGE ISRAELI VIEW RELIGION? REPORT ON THE GUTTMAN REPORT

# SHMITTAH 5754

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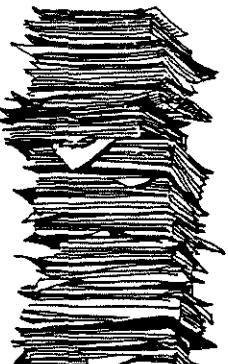
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84 William Street, New York, N.Y. 10038, 212-797-9000



# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

**THE JEWISH OBSERVER** (ISSN) 0021-6615  
is published monthly except July and August by  
the Agudath Israel of America, 84 William Street,  
New York, N.Y. 10038. Second class postage  
paid in New York, N.Y. Subscription \$22.00 per  
year; two years, \$36.00; three years, \$48.00.  
Outside of the United States (US funds drawn  
on a US bank only) \$12.00 surcharge per year.  
Single copy \$3.00; foreign \$4.00.  
**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to:  
The Jewish Observer, 84 William Street, N.Y.,  
N.Y. 10038. Tel: (212) 797-9000.  
Printed in the U.S.A.

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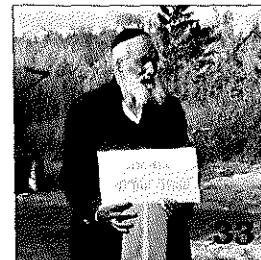
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<b>SOLE U.S. TRADE DISTRIBUTOR</b> Feldheim Publishers 200 Airport Executive Park Spring Valley, N.Y. 10977	<b>EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE</b> M.T. Bibelman Grosvenor Works Mount Pleasant Hill London E5 9NE, ENGLAND
<b>ISRAELI DISTRIBUTOR</b> Nechemia Rosenberg Kiryat Telshe Stone, 108A D.N. Harei Yehuda, ISRAEL	<b>AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTOR</b> Gold's Book & Gift Co. 36 William Street Balmain 2138, V.I.C., AUSTRALIA

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MONTH 1994  
VOLUME XXVII / NO. 3



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# THE

## Ultra-Orthodox Are the Betrayers of Zionism

**H**OMICIDAL FANATICS of whatever stripe often use causes to justify mass murder; faith, nation, vengeance, ethnic cleansing — anything will do. But for Baruch Goldstein, and the extremist fringe in which he moved, to invoke Zionism as their cause is a cruel hoax. They are far closer in spirit to David Koresh than to David Ben-Gurion.

The original Zionists were, if anything, their very opposite — children of the Enlightenment in open revolt against the narrow strictures of their faith. Tired both of czarist oppression and of waiting for the Messiah, small groups of young Russian Jews made their way into Turkish Palestine in the late 19th Century and established the first Jewish settlements. The vast majority of these settlers were not religious, though rather bent and heterodox individuals, which is why total war and mass extermination by a fury of total war and mass extermination

selected assembly of the Jewish people. It would be hyperbole to give Herzl exclusive credit for the ultimate success of Zionism, but his ideas a mere half-century later, but his daring tightrope act as the initially unappreciated head of a predominantly non-religious nation enabled him to conduct the high-level diplomatic negotiations with the British that resulted in the Balfour Declaration.



# HEBRON

## Jewish Zealots Are Despoilers of Judaism

*Continued from Previous Page*  
long unregenerate agnostic with only the most tenuous links to Jewish tradition, he nevertheless relished a fanatical supercession of no practical relevance in the coming age of science and technology. The idea that it could stir up murderous passions in the 20th Century — of which he lived to see only the first four years — he would have thought absurd. And although his Zionist movement included a small religious faction from the very beginning, all major branches of Jewish orthodoxy vigorously denounced and even attempted to impede the arrival of the Messiah as premature and contrary to God's will, of which, of course, he was not a part.



American-born infidels come to claim title to the land on behalf of some rather remote ancestors, certain consequences were inevitable. But far from accidentally, it was the threat of imminent peace that triggered millennial fantasies of both the Jewish and Arab realms that triggered the Hebron tragedy in a shrine whose religious significance would probably have left the founder of Zionism cold.

The long-range impact of Baruch Goldstein's crime will in large part depend on the actions of the Rabin government and the reactions of Israeli society as a whole. Resolute efforts to end the conflict are long overdue, but the example of the West Bank massacre demonstrates the dangers of clinging to them too much.

# DISASTER



Honoring a Killer Whom Some Jews Call a Hero

At the grave of Baruch Goldstein, who killed at least 29 Palestinians in a Hebron mosque last month and was killed by hundreds of Jews gathered yesterday to praise him and to denounce peace talks. Photo: AP/Wide World

## A TORAH PERSPECTIVE

*The killing of 29 Arabs in the Ma'aras Hamachpeila on Purim was a watershed event, the repercussions of which will no doubt be felt by the Jewish People for a long time to come. Rarely has a single act by a lone individual had such far-reaching consequences. Though the memory of Baruch Goldstein's deed and the reaction to it may fade with time, the issues it raised will not. It is important that we clarify a Torah perspective on these issues, and distinguish it from our immediate emotional response.*

## I. REACTIONS—THEIRS AND OURS

**A**t the outset it must be clear that our condemnation of Goldstein's actions has nothing in common with the condemnations by the United Nations, the media or the Arab world. Nor is it occasioned by the censure of the world. A United Nations which remained silent when twenty-two Jews were killed in an Istanbul synagogue, a United Nations which has, in fact, never seen fit to condemn the killing of a single Jew, has no moral standing to condemn the act of a single distraught Jew or to attribute his act to the Jewish People, Judaism or the State of Israel.

Wanton slaughter is a virtual way of life in the Arab world. When Hafez Assad slaughtered 12,000 of his own citizens in Hama, his ruthlessness only served to gain him new respect among his fellow Arabs. When Arab governments sponsored the Lockerbie bombing, in which more than 200 innocent people lost their lives, no Arab country called for an international investigation. Jews are killed by Arabs with a frightening degree of regularity, and until recently, there never was any statement of regret or condemnation on the part of Arab governments—the failure of Arafat to express condemnation of the Afula attack, even after intense international pressure, being but the latest example. To Arafat, for whom murder is always an acceptable option, and duplicity a code of honor, the victims are no more than convenient bargaining chips in his struggle to extract ever-greater concessions from the Israeli government.

### **A Double Standard**

**A**natural reaction to censure in these matters is that we are being judged by a double standard. When such things happen in other countries, as they tend to in the Middle East, they are hardly noticed, let alone condemned. But when one Jew acts out his frustrations in a tragic manner, Jews and all of Judaism are to blame. Surely much of the

**Rabbi Klugman** lives in Jerusalem where he is a maggid shiur in a yeshiva gedola.



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criticism and outrage is latent antisemitism coming to the surface and finding justification to rear its ugly head.

As far as our self-image is concerned, however, there most certainly should be a double standard. We have been uniquely entrusted as a nation to be the standard-bearers of the Divine Law. Through our adherence to that Law, and our demonstration that no other system of belief and action so ennobles man as the Torah, G-d is glorified on earth. This task is not just a national one, but one imposed on each Jew individually at every moment. We are to be a *mamleches kohanim vegoy kadosh*—a kingdom of priests and a holy nation: "As the priest among the people, so should the Jew among mankind uphold the vision of G-d and humanity, and by so doing, be a holy nation raised above every injustice, profaneness, and hardheartedness as becomes the bearers of such a message." (Hirsch, *Shemos*; and *Horeb* 613)

## II. THE DEED

**T**he murder of a non-Jew by a Jew, the *Meshech Chochma* explains in *Parashas Mishpatim*, constitutes not only murder, but *chillul Hashem* as well. When Baruch Goldstein trained his machine-gun on several hundred Arabs prostrate in prayer, he did not aim at a specific person whom he knew to have harmed Jews in the past or to be about to harm Jews in the future. He intended to kill as many Arabs as possible, and any Arab at all would do. Whether there were innocent people among those killed was of no concern to him. Each individual killing thus constituted a separate act of *chillul Hashem*, and taken together, they form a unique desecration of the Divine Name.

Adding to the desecration was the fact that this machine-like shedding of human blood was not the act of a secularized Jew, but of one committed to the observance of the *mitzvos*. Worse yet, this was not the act of a religious Jew who slipped up in a moment of weakness, acting contrary to his own view of what a Jew is supposed to be. In his mind, Baruch Goldstein saw himself as performing a *mitzva*.

This latter aspect of Goldstein's crime was quickly seized upon by the world media. Typical was the British *Daily Telegraph*, which labelled the settlers "Hamas in Skullcaps." Much attention was given to the fact that Dr. Goldstein killed on Purim, as if his actions were a faithful reenactment of the story of Purim. Latent and not-so-latent antisemites delighted in highlighting tailor-made proof that Jews are not just the victims of Christian savagery, but the perpetrators of savagery themselves; indeed, that their religion encourages it. Unfortunately, in this they were abetted by other Jews with yarmulkes—like Dr. Goldstein, devotees of Kahanism or Kahanist fellow-travellers—who did not hesitate to condone his "holy" act before the whole world.

In our own minds, we may think of ourselves as infinitely removed from Kahane's minions in belief and action. But to the millions who watched the events on TV or read

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

TAAMUZ 5755 / MAY 1994  
VOLUME XI NUMBER 10  
SIXTY FIVE CENTS

## *The Misapplied Lesson*

**N**EVER AGAIN" IS, OF COURSE, an implied judgment of the past. But as the expression indicates, it is primarily the basis for a plan of action for attacking current and future problems.

It draws on the past in its own way to declare that compromise and retreat are the by-words of defeat, and that survival for the beleaguered Jew is only possible when he is not afraid to assert himself with physical prowess and political clout.

This generalization has then been applied uniformly to any and all problems that face individual Jews and Jewry at large: *Are territorial concessions demanded of the State of Israel? Are Soviet Jews suffering persecution? Is a prominent anti-Semite given red-carpet treatment in the UN or at a college campus symposium? Is neighborhood stability being threatened: — in the inner city, in "tipping" neighborhoods, or in suburbia? Are the Jewish poor being ignored?* The "Never Again" response invariably has been to slug it out. Regardless of the complexities of international intrigue and diplomacy, in spite of the "hostage" status of Jews in enemy lands, forgetting gains made through low-profile approaches, ignoring the possibilities of loss of life in pursuit of extreme policies, and — most hazardous of all — completely losing sight of the decisive role of G-d's providence in the destiny of Jewry, the "Let our right be proven with our might" approach is simplistically applied to every and all situations, even guiding young children in making life and death decisions on the basis of elemental gut reactions.

about them in the newspaper, religious Jews of all types, especially those with beard and *payos*—*kollel yungeleit, Chassidim*, and Kahane followers —are all the same. And when dealing with *chillul Hashem*, the perception of reality is reality.

The fact that Goldstein was described by all who knew him as a kind and gentle man, a wonderful, caring doctor, only makes matters worse. Such a portrait leaves the impression that it is possible to lead a normal Jewish life, be gentle and soft-spoken... and be a murderer as well—with no apparent contradiction.

Besides bringing to the fore a hatred for religious Jews among non-Jews, Goldstein also generated a revulsion for Torah among non-religious Jews, whose knowledge of the Torah is so scant that they will believe whatever they are told. The distaste they now feel for Torah Judaism will not be quickly overcome. How shall they seek the light of the Torah, when they see only darkness and blood, and when the bearer of the Torah is himself not illuminated by it?

## *Spilled Jewish Blood in the Aftermath*

**B**ut that is not all. Goldstein's actions placed the lives of Jews all over the world in mortal danger. Two days later, one Jewish boy was killed and another critically injured in the Brooklyn Bridge incident. The killing of eight Jews in Afula and five more in Chadeira are two installments in the series of retaliatory bombings promised by Hamas. In Jewish population centers everywhere, the fear is palpable.

Every Arab who died in the Ma'aras Hamachpeila is part of an extended clan, which grieves over him and whose "code of honor" demands that his blood be avenged. One Hebron notable told *The New York Times*, "When a son or father is killed we must take revenge. It is a social obligation. We do not rest until the soul of our relative is avenged. Goldstein himself is dead and will not be a target. He was indiscriminate in his murder. They will surely be."

Thus when Goldstein vented his anger and rage in Hebron, not only Arabs were victims; his act resulted in the killing of Jews as well. True, Arabs have never needed a reason to kill Jews. But they now have yet one more "justification," yet another rod with which to stoke the flames of their hatred.

### III. THE KAHANIST LEGACY

#### *"The Weapons of Violence in Your Hands"*

**B**aruch Goldstein became a follower of Meir Kahane at an early age, and it is impossible to understand his act outside the context of his mentor's ideology. Riding the wave of euphoria in the wake of the Six-Day War, Kahane elevated "Jewish Pride" to a supreme Jewish value. No longer would the Jew be pushed around. Not only would he fight when attacked, he would initiate confrontation with his enemies. Let them fear us, as we have feared them, he taught.

Times have changed, Kahane claimed, and Jews, relying on their own physical prowess, are now

master of their own fate. "Never again" would we be cast in the role of helpless victims—lambs to the slaughter. The upraised fist was the Kahani symbol.

To a people who had suffered so much, there was much visceral appeal in the Kahani doctrine, for it seemed to hold out the promise of an end to the status of perpetual victimhood. Later, in *Eretz Yisrael*, Kahane told his followers that if the will were there,

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they could possess their land freed of Arabs. In this he echoed Herzl's call: "If you will it, it is no dream." Like all demagogues, he sold a pleasurable fantasy as if it were reality. He gave comfort by assuring his followers that they were masters of their own destiny—that their fate depended primarily upon their own courage.

True, the Talmud teaches us, "If one comes to kill you, rise up and kill him." Nowhere are we enjoined to sit passively, allowing the enemy to strike us. But the resort to violence, whether on the individual or national level, is for us at best a regrettable necessity. Not so for Kahane. Through violence would the Jew show himself possessed of the requisite will; through violence would he prove himself worthy of redemption. Baruch Goldstein's marriage at the Mugrabi Gate to the Temple Mount, in the Arab section of the Old City, with Kahane serving as *mesader Kiddushin*, was a typical example of deliberate provocation.

## An Inversion of Jewish Values

In Kahane's glorification of violence, not as a means of last resort, but as the means of first recourse, there lay a total inversion of traditional Jewish values. From the time that *Yitzchak Avinu* distinguished between the voice of Yaakov and the hands of Eisav, the Jewish response to our enemies has been radically distinguished from that of Eisav. The natural response of Eisav is violence and bloodshed; the natural response of the Jew is the voice raised in supplication to *Hashem*.

To Eisav belongs the blessing, "By your sword shall you live." And should we attempt to usurp his blessing and challenge him on his own terms, says the *Midrash* (*Devarim Rabba* 1:17), then we risk losing the ten *berachos* given to Yaakov. Thus, Rabbi Chiya exhorts us, in that same *Midrash*: When Eisav seeks confrontation, avoid him. Sometimes the threat is "clear and present," and there is no choice but to fight. But never should we be the instigators. We show our worthiness, not by appropriating "the tools of violence" that are properly Eisav's but through the recognition that our destiny is totally dependent on G-d's favor. That is the lesson exile is meant to teach, and when it is learned—and only then—is redemption possible (*Hirsch Siddur*, pp. 266, 703; *Chumash Devarim*, 8, 10).

It was the Kahanist penchant for violence and confrontation to which the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* of America referred to in their prescient denunciation in 1976:

"In response to widespread queries regarding the viewpoint that our Jewish brethren can be helped in their distress through violence and terror..., we herewith proclaim that such acts are contrary to *halacha*, that according to Torah Law they are to be viewed as very grave prohibitions. We therefore declare that whoever follows these ways will suffer extreme retribution. Needless to say, he is considered a transgressor of Torah Law."

Kahane was never allowed entry into the mainstream *yeshivos* precisely because his view of Judaism was seen as an aberration. The *yeshiva* world saw through the selective

and distorted use of *Chazal* and the prophets which so impressed other Orthodox Jews.<sup>1</sup>

### Revenge

**R**evenge holds a prominent place in the Kahanist pantheon of values. The glorification of exacting a price in blood from those who strike us is part and parcel of the Kahanist doctrine of holy violence. And here too there is much visceral appeal. Nothing is more natural than the desire to strike back at one's enemies and to cause them whatever suffering they have caused us. But the mark of a Torah Jew is the extent to which he has integrated the Torah so that it controls every emotion and action. For one bound by the Torah, the impulse to strike back must give way to a series of questions: *Will the response strike at those who are culpable? Will random acts of violence deter further attacks or make them more likely? Will murder in the name of Judaism increase the honor of Torah, or cause it to be despised? Do we, in fact, live in a world in which we can be oblivious to the reaction of the nations of the world?*<sup>2</sup> There is no evidence that Baruch Goldstein considered any of these issues, for they are far from the Kahanist mindset.

Kahane never tired of speaking about the "Jewishness" of revenge and how the avengers are "blessed." To that end, he made liberal use of the various places where the Torah and the prophets speak of *nekama*, revenge, and often quoted *Chazal* (*Berachos* 33a): "Great is *nekama* (retribution) for it was placed between two names of *Hashem*—*Keil nekamot Hashem*." His understanding of

<sup>1</sup> By contrast, Rabbi Moshe Gorelick, president of the RCA felt the need to issue a *mea culpa* on behalf of his membership for having tolerated Kahane and opened their shuls to him. (Worthy of note, some RCA members disassociated themselves from this implied guilt.) But even Rabbi Gorelick's expressions of regret focused on Kahane's extremism. The problem with Kahanism is not that he was extreme, for that implies his ideas would have been acceptable if properly modulated. Kahanist ideas are antithetical to true Jewish values even when held by kindly Jewish grandmothers incapable of harming a fly, much less killing human beings.

<sup>2</sup> The *Gemara* makes it clear that until the advent of *Moshiach*, we are enjoined from behavior that could provoke anger from other nations (*Kesubos* 111a).

the meaning of *nekama* is not only wrong, it is pernicious.

The revenge of which the Torah speaks has nothing to do with reprisal, the natural human impulse to hurt those who have hurt you. Revenge, as Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz explained (*Sichos Mussar*, Part 3, p. 41-43), is not merely getting even. When wrongdoing or injustice goes unpunished, it is a *chillul Hashem* in that evil is allowed to flourish in G-d's world without retribution. The revenge of which the Torah speaks is the righting of the scales, the revelation of *Hashem's* judgment and the removal of the *chillul Hashem* present whenever that judgment is not manifest. *Nekama* in the Torah is therefore invariably linked with *Hashem's* name—*nikamas Hashem*. It is exacted by *Hashem* and carried out by Him, and not by human beings intent on venting their personal desire for revenge.

Our forefathers were murdered and butchered over the centuries, but when they prayed for vengeance, it was *dam avadav yikom*, retribution exacted by **Him**—that is, *Hashem*. The Jewish People always knew that G-d would never forget the bloodshed of the innocent, particularly if it was spilled in His service and out of loyalty to Him. Knowing this, our people throughout the ages have committed to G-d and to G-d alone the task of avenging the blood of their murdered

### Look Into Your Heart

To the Editor:  
I am a member of the Orthodox Jewish community of Brooklyn, a contemporary of Dr. Baruch Goldstein, who committed the brutal massacre in a mosque in Hebron. About 18 years ago, he sat in my living room and I interviewed him for a research project on Orthodox Jews excelling in extracurricular activities. I saw a promising young man, a gentle, compassionate and happy human being at peace with himself and the world.

Today I see a physician turned mass killer, who exuded bitterness and woe. The pessimism and doom he embodied pervade our Orthodox Jewish community. The pain is at times so deep that suicide or homicide seem its only forms of relief.

It is incumbent upon the Orthodox Jewish leaders of today to examine the actions and beliefs that drove one of their own to commit heinous genocide, rather than impute blame on our Arab neighbors for this turn of events.

AMY NEUSTEIN  
Brooklyn, Feb. 28, 1994

fathers and mothers, wives and children. This promise sustained them and kept them free of bitter and burning lust for vengeance against their oppressors and murderers. It made them strong enough to suppress every impulse of vengefulness, and—even as the most persecuted of peoples—to remain the meekest nation on earth.

The thought that Goldstein's actions are the answer to the Hebron massacres committed in 1929 and 1936 is patent nonsense. The Jewish People has a long and bitter accounting to make with the Arab nation, but no mortal can make that reckoning or settle that score. Only *Hashem* can and will bring them to account. We say *Moshe Rabbeinu*'s words every *Shabbos* in *Av Harachamim*, a prayer which was authored in response to the butcheries committed by the Crusaders: "O Nations, make joyous the lot of His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants and He will wreak vengeance upon His enemies and His earth will atone for His people."

When *Hashem*'s vengeance is revealed, we rejoice in the revelation of His justice; not in the destruction of our enemies. At the splitting of the Sea, *Hashem* meted out precise judgment to enemies bent on our destruction. And yet he forbade the ministering angels from singing in celebration of this glorious demonstration of His absolute dominion over nature and the precision of His judgment: "My handiwork is drowning and you wish to sing?" (*Megilla* 10b) And for the three thousand years since then (*Beis Yosef, Orach Chaim* 490, citing the *Midrash*), we have not recited the complete *Hallel* on the intermediate and final days of Pesach, in keeping with the injunction, "Do not rejoice in the downfall of your enemies" (*Mishlei* 24,17), because on the seventh day of Pesach, human beings who hated us were killed by *Hashem* himself.<sup>3</sup> As the *Meshech Chochma* (*Shemos* 12,6) explains, the Jewish conception of revenge is therefore totally removed from glee at the death of our enemies.

<sup>3</sup> As to the obvious question, "Why did Moshe and the Jewish People sing the *Shira*?", see Rabbi Aharon Kotler, *Mishnas Rabbi Aharon* (*Ma'amarim V'sichos Mussar*), vol. 3, pp. 3-4 on the difference between *Shira* and *Hallel*.

## New Focus On Motives In Killing On Bridge

By JOE SEXTON

One of the men arrested in connection with last month's Brooklyn Bridge shooting told the police that Rashid Baz, who prosecutors say fired on the van of Hasidic students, was "very angry" after the massacre of Muslims in a mosque on the West Bank and that he said, "We're supposed to kill all those Jews."

The statement by Bassam Reyati, the owner of the car service where Mr. Baz worked, was among the documents filed by prosecutors yesterday in State Supreme Court in Manhattan. Also included was Mr. Baz's statement to the police, in which he denied that there were any "political reasons" for firing on the van. Mr. Baz, a Lebanese national, told the police he opened fire with two different guns because he believed someone in the van had fired on him first.

Aaron Halberstam, a 16-year-old student, died and his friends suffered

## ARAB CAR BOMBER KILLS 8 IN ISRAEL; 44 ARE WOUNDED

### HEBRON REPRISAL IS SEEN

Militant Hamas Group Takes Responsibility for Suicide Attack at a Bus Stop

By CLYDE HABERMAN  
Special to The New York Times

AFULA, Israel, April 6 — In the most serious terrorist attack inside Israel since 1989, 8 people were killed and 44 others wounded today when a Palestinian suicide bomber blew up his car beside a bus in this northern Israeli town.

The explosion turned the bus into a storm of flying metal and flames, slashing some victims to pieces and horribly burning others.

Many, including several who died, were Israeli teen-agers preparing to board the bus, which had stopped near two schools where classes were letting out. "Two boys were

### IV. A ZIONIST HERITAGE

Meir Kahane always claimed that he was the last true Zionist, and in this claim he was on much firmer ground than in his claim of Torah antecedents for his ideology. Mainstream Zionism has for a hundred years preached the self-sufficiency of human action. Mockery of the ghetto Jew, quietly looking to G-d for his salvation, has been its stock-in-trade. Zionism asserted, and continues to assert, that Jews will achieve redemption, however defined,<sup>4</sup> only through their own efforts. From its beginnings, the Zionists sought to create an image of a "new Jew" distinguished by his valor and martial virtues, cut off from the enfeebling effect of *golus* spiritual values.

In his faith in physical strength and confidence that a new post-*golus* stage in Jewish history has been reached, Kahane and mainstream Zionism have much in common. And the similarities do not end there. Zionists never tire of crowing about the might of the Israeli army and the Jew's newfound ability to strike at any foe. If any Israeli is harmed, its spokesmen constantly declare, "We will make our enemy pay twofold." As a strategy of deterrence, such a policy of reprisal has much to recommend it. What is objectionable is the trumpeting of such reprisals as proof that a "new Jew" is born, one who will never again be led like "sheep to the slaughter." Such celebrations of reprisal are but the Kahanist doctrine of revenge writ large.

Goldstein was motivated, at least in part, by a strong sense of betrayal by a state whose values he felt himself to

<sup>4</sup> Kahanism is not "Jewish" in its focus on bringing the *Ge'ula* through our actions. According to its perspective, the Torah commands that are related to a *Ge'ula* agenda—specifically *Yishuv Eretz Yisrael*—tend to assume a dominant place in the scheme of things. But the Torah has not one or two, but 613 *mitzvos*, and there is a balance between them. If one *mitzva* obligation comes into conflict with another, the Jew turns to the *Shulchan Aruch* and to the halachic decisors to mediate between seemingly conflicting obligations. By contrast, Kahanism calls for choosing one or two *mitzvos* of preference and viewing the rest of the commandments of the Torah from the perspective of their favorite *mitzva*. This is a fallacy shared with religious Zionism. One cannot view all the other *mitzvos* through the prism of one.

exemplify. The government no longer even bothers to send a minister to the funerals of terror victims for fear of giving too much prominence to the escalating state of terrorism. Rather, victims are etherealized away as "victims in the war for peace," as if their deaths somehow advanced that process.

The government efforts to delegitimize the settlers has given them a sense of fear and uncertainty. Whereas until now they were viewed, rightly or wrongly, as the frontiersmen of the Zionist dream, they now feel that the State has lost its sense of destiny and purpose. The vision and ideal of their lives is disintegrating before their eyes. Having been nurtured on a doctrine that we are in control of our destiny through the might of our arms, the settlers suddenly see the State doing everything in its power to reverse that process. The response to acts of terror seems to be ever greater concessions to the one who made terror into an art form (Arafat). Is it surprising, then, that one of them took machine-gun in hand to put an end to that reversal and to perpetrate his own "homemade revenge"? In his eyes, he was surely doing no less than discharging his civil duty.

All of the above does not soften, does not explain, does not justify. There is no justification for the shedding of blood. It does, however, put the government's pious denunciations and proclamations of righteousness in a more dubious light.

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**Revenge held a prominent place in the Kahanist pantheon of values. The glorification of exacting a price in blood from those who strike us is part and parcel of the Kahanist doctrine of holy violence.**

### Hundreds of Jews Gather To Honor Hebron Killer

By CLIFF HIRSCHMAN

QIRYAT ARVA, Israel—Dressed in black, they came — in a steady stream, they say — to the cemetery today to recite afternoon prayers at the grave of Baruch Goldstein, the Jewish deputy to the Knesset who was killed by a Palestinian terrorist.

They came to pay their respects to the man who, they say, was the first to stand up to the post-Zionist objectives in the West Bank and Gaza and to insist on the possibility of peace in the region.

Give up Hebron and Jerusalem will be a small price to pay, they say, for the warning that came with a deadly

bullet.

Baruch Goldstein's deed and the reaction to it has once again served as a stark reminder that:

G-d has set us down with the eyes of the world upon us, and for centuries past the world has been in the habit of laying the blame for the crime of one single Jew at the door of the whole of Jewry, and of concluding from the manner in which the children of Israel live, how the law of Israel demands that its children should live. Do you not see, then, that on your individual life the honor of your people depends, and upon the behavior of the children of Israel depends the respect for the One and only G-d and His law? Do you not see how an unworthy step in your life degrades not only you, yourself, but

the whole house of Israel, yes, even G-d and the revelation of His word? Let us remember that the eyes of the world are upon us. Let each one live in the consciousness that upon him rests the honor of the whole house of Jacob, the fulfillment of Israel's task, the hallowing of G-d and His law, and let us live in such a way that we offer to the eyes of the world nothing but a pure, good Jewish life based on the Torah and not give the lie to the words of the prophet, "Thy people also shall be righteous at a future time as yet unknown, their ideals will prevail in the mind of man; they are the branch of My planting, the work of My hands that I may be glorified through them." (Yishayahu 50,21)

(HIRSCH, HOREB 614)

That, in sum, is the demand of Jewish destiny. ■



**B**aruch Goldstein's deed and the reaction to it has once again served as a stark reminder that:

G-d has set us down with the eyes of the world upon us, and for centuries past the world has been in the habit of laying the blame for the crime of one single Jew at the door of the whole of Jewry, and of concluding from the manner in which the children of Israel live, how the law of Israel demands that its children should live. Do you not see, then, that on your individual life the honor of your people depends, and upon the behavior of the children of Israel depends the respect for the One and only G-d and His law? Do you not see how an unworthy step in your life degrades not only you, yourself, but

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# RABBI MORDECHAI SCHWAB,

## זכור צדיק לברכה

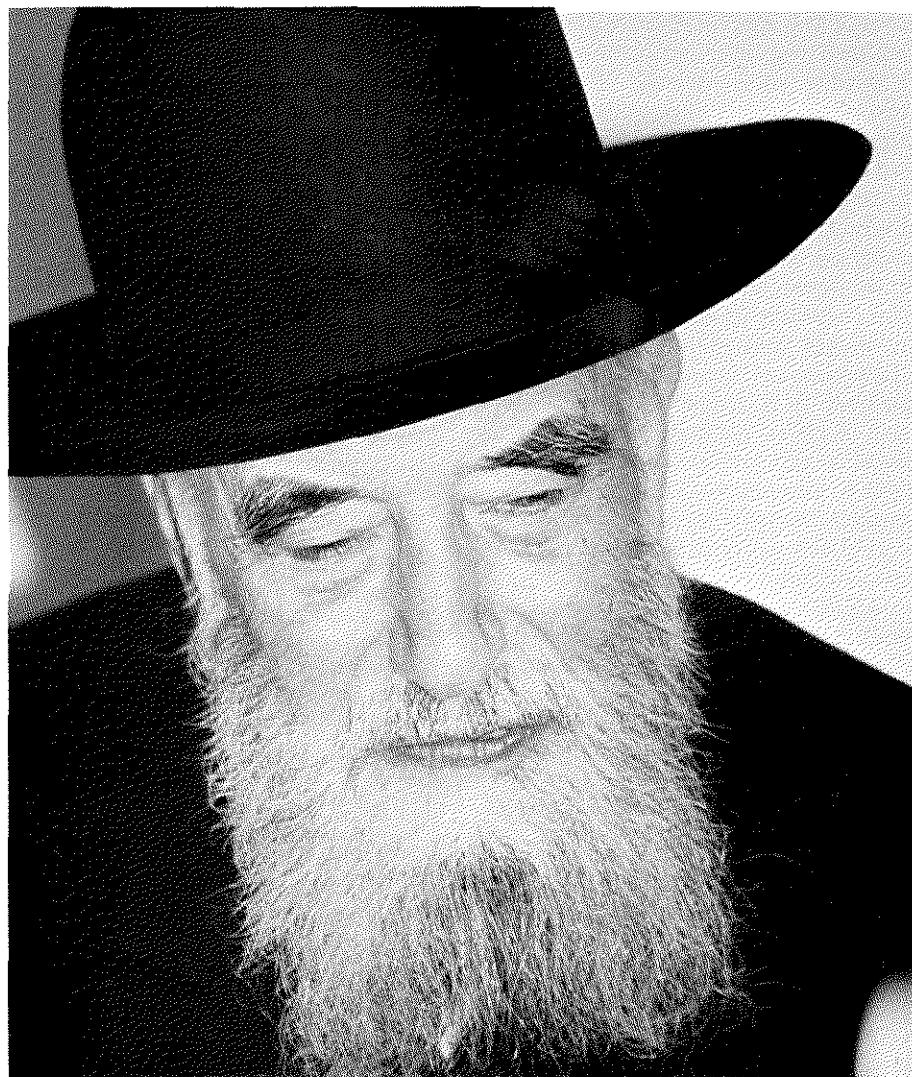
The passing of Rabbi Mordechai Schwab, ז"כ צדיק לברכה, on 18 Adar, left the world impoverished for the loss of a man whose humility, Torah scholarship, *tzidkus* (piety), and warm accessibility as advisor and mentor to people from all walks of life earned him the title "the Monsey *Tzaddik*."

Born to Reb Yehuda and Chana (Erlanger) Schwab in Frankfurt-am-Main, close to 83 years ago, he had the benefit of an upbringing in a home steeped in German-Jewish *ehrlichkeit* and integrity, in the *kehilla* led by Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Breuer, ל"צ.

At age eighteen he followed his older brother, יwl'ch ר' שליט"א, Rabbi Shimon Schwab, to study in the Lithuanian *yeshivos*, including three years in Mir, where he learned with Reb Yonah Minsker (author of *sefer Yonas Eilem*), and then in Kamenitz, where he became exceptionally close with Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz, ז"ל. During his years in Kamenitz, he married Yenta Buchalter from the Lithuanian town of Maltz.

During the war years, he was part of the Mirrer group in Shanghai, where he was respected by all, and was especially close to the *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Yecheskel Levenstein, ל"צ.

He came to America after the war with the Mirrer Yeshiva. He began to assume a prominent role in the yeshiva world some twenty years ago, when he became *Mashgiach* in Mesivta Bais Shraga in Monsey. After the passing of Rabbi Yaakov Karnenetzky, ז"צ, he also served as *Rav* of Congregation Chug Talmidei Rav Yaakov; he also delivered regular *mussar shmuessen* in the Yeshiva Gedola of Passaic and *shiurim* in Washington Heights. Furthermore, he was founder and mentor of Yeshiva



Degel HaTorah, an elementary school for boys in Spring Valley, NY.

Rabbi Schwab was appreciated as a model of the greatness in personality that one can achieve through study of *Mussar* and a disciplined adherence to its teachings. His embodiment of the teachings of *Mussar*, along with his warm smile, sparkling eyes, and genu-

ine concern for others won him a large number of admirers and disciples who referred to him as a model of *tzidkus* and *avodas Hashem*, and turned to him for guidance and counsel. His passing leaves a void that cannot be filled.

An article on his achievements and influence is currently in preparation for appearance in these pages.

# RABBI JOSHUA SILBERMINTZ, זוכה לברכה

**K**ol Yisroel mourns the passing of Rabbi Joshua Silbermintz, a man whose love of children and exuberance for teaching Torah left its imprint upon tens of thousands of children—and, it may well be said, upon the history of the Torah community of North America.

By the time of his passing, at age

70, Rabbi Silbermintz had come to symbolize Pirchei Agudath Israel, which he served as a prime leader for nearly half a century and as its official national director for over 25 years. In addition, he served as a *rebbe* at Yeshiva Toras Emes-Kaminetz in Brooklyn and head counselor at Camp Munk for over 40 years.

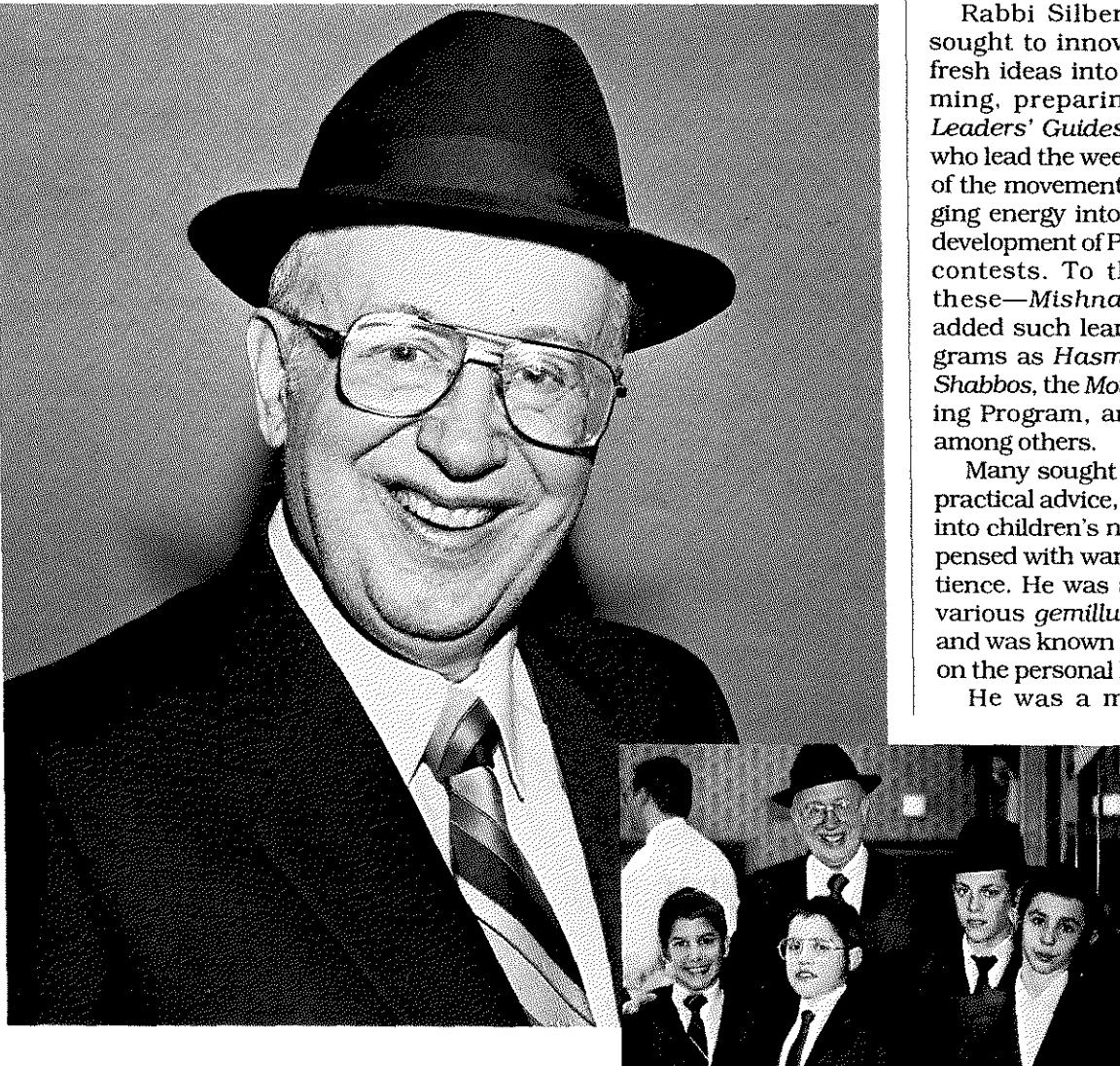
Growing up in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, he attended Mesivta Torah Vodaath. As a young activist and Pirchei leaders' leader, he was deeply influenced by the legendary Agudah figure Reb Elimelech "Mike" Tress, ז"ל. He later studied at Yeshiva Bais Yosef, where he received *semicha* from Rabbi Avrohom Joffen, ז"צ.

Rabbi Silbermintz constantly sought to innovate and introduce fresh ideas into Pirchei's programming, preparing and publishing *Leaders' Guides* for the volunteers who lead the weekly *Shabbos* groups of the movement. He poured unflagging energy into the expansion and development of Pirchei's famed Torah contests. To the best known of these—*Mishnayos B'Al Peh*—he added such learning-incentive programs as *Hasmoda* and *Kedushas Shabbos*, the *Motzoei Shabbos Learning Program*, and *Kibud Av VoEm*, among others.

Many sought out his counsel, his practical advice, and his keen insight into children's needs—which he dispensed with warmth and infinite patience. He was also an organizer of various *gemillus chassodim* funds, and was known as a giant of *chesed* on the personal level.

He was a man who knew his *tachlis* in life, dedicated himself to it to his fullest, and was supremely happy in doing so. *Ashreihu v'ashrei chelko. Yehi zichro boruch.*

A fuller treatment of his life and contributions is planned for a future issue.



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# 2 Letters and...

## QUESTIONS INTERPRETATION OF BALANCE BETWEEN TORAH AND MADDA

To the Editor:

In the second section of his powerful and compelling article, "The Clash Between Modernity and Eternity" (JO Jan. '94), the Novominsker Rebbe, Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, levels a forceful and hard-hitting critique at "a new philosophy of Religious Modernity [that] has emerged, focusing on contemporary culture and how Torah should conform to its standards and dictates." Rabbi Perlow contends that "this philosophy, which has become a powerful force in Modern Orthodoxy, has come to articulate approaches that are diametrically opposed to our sacred ways of life... blurring the demarcations that separate Torah wisdom from secular knowledge." As his final example of this philosophy, Rabbi Perlow offers an excerpt from the book *Torah Umadda*, by Rabbi Norman Lamm, President of Yeshiva University. The excerpt reads:

Torah, faith, religious learning on one side, and *Madda*, science, worldly knowledge on the other, together offer us a more overarching and truer vision than each set alone. Each set gives one view of the Creator as well as His Creation, and the other a different perspective that may not at all agree with the first.... Each alone is true, but only partially true; both together present the possibility of a larger truth. (p. 236)

Now, it is true that this passage, which comes at the very end of Rabbi Lamm's book, may, *if taken in isolation*, seem to blur "the demarcations that separate Torah wisdom from secular knowledge," insofar as it appears to establish a parity between the two domains. However, as Rabbi Perlow knows, and as, I am sure, he would wish the readers of *The Jewish Observer* to know, this is not the case. On the contrary, the clear and unquestioned superiority of Torah wisdom over secular knowledge is a central theme of Rabbi Lamm's book. Already towards the very beginning of the book Rabbi Lamm states, "The primacy of Torah must be given in any Torah Umadda approach" (p.22). Moreover, in two critical passages Rabbi Lamm develops this point at length, and clearly differentiates between Torah wisdom and secular knowledge:

We speak of Torah and *Madda*... because we affirm that both Torah and Nature are the results of divine revelation, [of G-d's] self-revelation in Torah (His word) and His self-revelation in Nature (His world).... This does not necessarily imply the equal value or significance of the two forms of revelation.... Clearly the revelation of Torah is directly a disclosure of the divine Will; the revelation of His creative office is not.... Nature, the world, must not be neglected, and it must be studied and explored as part of man's relationship with his maker. But Torah, as more than a creation of G-d, but His very word, ever remains supreme. (pp. 144-147)

For Torah Umadda to be religiously meaningful, it is imperative that Torah be acknowledged as possessing central value and primacy over all else.... Writing of the righteous,

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the psalmist says, "Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our G-d" (Psalm 93:14). Indeed, only if one is firmly planted within, in the inner precincts of Torah, will he or she spiritually flourish in the outer courtyards of *Madda* as well. (p.202)

Of course, Rabbi Perlow, from his own Torah *hashkafa*, may still feel that Rabbi Lamm accords too much weight and significance to *Madda* within *his* own *hashkafa*. On this issue, as Rabbi Lamm himself states throughout his book, there is room for legitimate and even vigorous disagreement. What I believe is not legitimate, in light of the texts I have cited, is to offer up Rabbi Lamm's *hashkafa* as an example of the Religious Modernity that Rabbi Perlow so sharply criticizes.

LAWRENCE KAPLAN, ASSOC. PROFESSOR, DEPT. OF JEWISH STUDIES, MCGILL UNIVERSITY  
Montreal

## RESPONSE TO PROFESSOR KAPLAN:

*[In response to a request from The Jewish Observer, Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, the Novominsker Rebbe, ניטש, has agreed to comment on Professor Kaplan's letter.]*

A statement as shocking and repugnant to our basic beliefs as the one quoted from *Torah Umadda* (p.236) cannot be defended as "taken in isolation" and appearing "at the very end of the book." Falsehood, like *chometz* on Pesach, is not to be seen or found anywhere in one's system of thought. It is forbidden "*bernashehu*"—even to a minuscule degree.

Moreover, despite the many disclaimers as to the supremacy of Torah wisdom, and the primacy of Torah learning, the total effect of the *Torah Umadda* philosophy, as propounded by its principal spokesman, is to posit *Madda* as the co-equal, or near co-equal of Torah in Hashem's design for the quest of a Jew; simply put, a modernist reform of our hallowed approach to Torah study, and thus utterly unacceptable.

The attempts that were made in past Jewish history, in medieval Spain and in nineteenth-century Germany, to accommodate Torah life with the culture of the times were aimed at precisely that: accommodation, not sanctification. *Madda* and the pursuit of secular wisdom is never, in any Torah viewpoint, accorded the status of even a quasi-religious imperative. The *mitzva* of "*Vedibarta bam*" and "*Vehagisa bam*," and the entire thrust of Jewish soul-commitment is directed exclusively at Torah study as forever understood, completely opposed to the idea of "*Torah Umadda*" (pp.163-165.) Hence our strong rejection of a philosophy that is a radical departure from the tenets and traditions of *Yahadus*.

RABBI YAAKOV PERLOW

*For a more extensive discussion, the reader is referred to "Torah Umadda—the Book and its Ideology: A Critique," by Rabbi Yonason Rosenblum, which was featured in The Jewish Observer, March '92. —NW*

*...2 Responses*

## THE HAREDI PERSPECTIVE ON CONTINUITY: FORTRESSES OF TORAH TO PROTECT PRECIOUS PROGENY FROM "DEMONS"

To the Editor:

For a number of years I have been examining the world of Orthodox Jewry, lately focusing on the haredi community. The haredim claim (as I put it in my book of the same name) to be among the Defenders of the Faith, inextricably attached to the authentic Jewish tradition and fiercely loyal to its demands, both halachic and ideological. They also believe that they are surrounded by a hostile and dangerous contemporary world that, as Rabbi Elya Svei (Yeshiva of Philadelphia and member of Agudath Israel's Council of Torah Sages) put it at the recent Agudah convention, "is spiritually bankrupt" (JO, Jan. '94). Worse still (the *Rosh Yeshiva* continues), this world, which "has sunk so deeply into immorality and preoccupation with the basest instincts," seeks to attract and corrupt those who try to remain faithful and authentic Jews. Worse yet is the fact that, as haredim see it, many of those who are part of those corrupt-

As part of their defensive insulation from this corruption and decadence, haredim place a great deal of emphasis on the yeshiva, a school which, fortress-like, surrounds them and in which they deposit their most cherished assets, their children, their *b'nei Torah*, their guarantee of continuity.

ing influences are (or were) Jews. Most insidious among these are not the reformers who, to the haredim, are so distant as to be Jewishly irrelevant (except when they try to speak for or affect the definition of all Jews).

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Rather, the haredim paradoxically perceive as pernicious those Orthodox Jews who imply that one can "with equal emphasis," be part of "the world of Torah, mitzvot, the Jewish people and its culture" while upholding and embracing the "values of Western civilization and the American democratic heritage" (quoted from the mission statement for the Ramaz School, in Manhattan—but the sentiment is representative of much of the so-called "modern" or "centrist Orthodoxy"). At this same Agudah convention the Novominsker Rebbe, Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, also a member of the Council of Torah Sages, was reported in a press release to have "castigated a modern Orthodox spokesman" who asserted the need to complement Torah with "the concomitant 'truth' of science and worldly knowledge."

### Strategies, Both Defensive and Offensive

To protect themselves and their heritage, haredi Jews have enlisted a number of strategies both defensive and offensive in a culture war over who and what is a Jew and Judaism, as well as how to guarantee the future. Among the most common haredi defenses is the decision to remain in relatively insulated communities and neighborhoods, to turn their backs on the culture of the surrounding world and remain as far away as possible from those who do not share their values or lifestyle. (I say "relatively insulated" since in contemporary society there is no real insulation or escape; we all rub shoulders with all sorts of people, especially in the urban landscape where most haredim choose to live.)

"We must avoid like the plague—to our spiritual selves—such aspects of modern life as television, indecent periodicals, and other literature with all their devastating immoral influence," declared Rabbi Perlow. After all, he noted, "civilization itself—modern urban society with its traffic of people and commerce, its exchange of ideas and passions, 'modernity at its maximum'—breeds corruption and decadence."

As part of their defensive insulation from this corruption and decadence,

haredim place a great deal of emphasis on the yeshiva, a school which, fortress-like, surrounds them and in which they deposit their most cherished assets, their children, their *b'nei Torah*, their guarantee of continuity. Moreover, they seek to keep these precious progeny in the yeshiva as long as possible—even into adulthood. While the manifest reason for this design is that there is no end point to Torah study, the latent purpose is undoubtedly to keep *b'nei Torah* from moral negotiation with and the corrupting influences of the outside world, to bar that world's "entrance into Jewish life," as Rabbi Perlow put it.

### *Demonization of the Outside World*

But defensive postures are not enough; the values and patterns of "modern life," as Rabbi Perlow lamented, "have crept into their own lives." Hence there must be a haredi offensive too. Among the offensive strategies used is the demonization of the outside world and anyone who speaks in its terms, or anyone who

represents its more attractive features. Indeed, while much that goes on in the yeshiva world is positive, a plumbing of the great store of Jewish sacred literature, some of the extra-curricular lessons learned include castigating or at least deprecating those who do not share in that world.

These outsiders are often described as engaging in "chillul Hashem," a desecration.

In this demonization, those who are not part of the haredi world are projected as its enemies, gleefully looking forward to its demise. To haredim there is no grey, no ambi-



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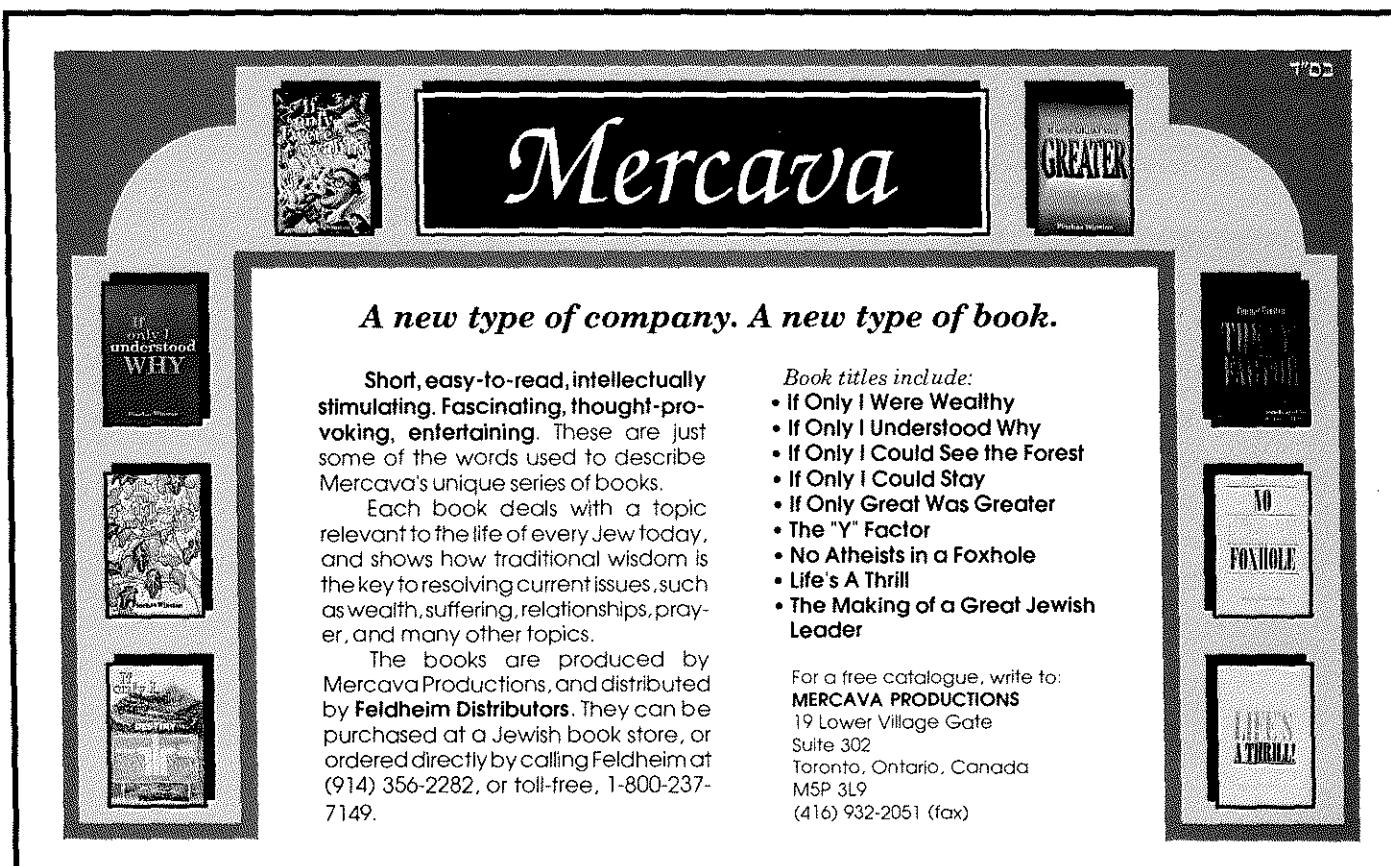
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guity, only black and white, insiders and outsiders, friends and enemies. Thus, citing comments attributed to me in a recent *Jewish Week* report, in which I referred to the threats faced by haredi yeshivas because of declining economic support, Rabbi Svei (who never checked the accuracy of the quotation or contacted me personally, preferring the public arena to talk about me) characterized my analysis as one of "glee," as if to say by seeing and describing the dangers ahead for those in the protected environment of these schools, I who am a "professor of sociology" and obviously not a haredi, must be happy about it. Of course, Rabbi Svei was completely wrong here. But to demonize the messenger deflects attention from the message: that the yeshiva world is and must be threatened by the loss of the funds its students and the culture they represent need to remain in the ivory tower of Torah values, insulated from moral compromise.

As for Lakewood and other yeshivos whom Rabbi Svei holds up as ideals of economic self-sufficiency, whose sole support comes from the parents and loved ones who maintain the men learning in the *kollel* (and which he claims I have never seen or know little if anything about), one must modestly ask where so many of these people would be without the support of various federal programs, such as food stamps? I suspect that if the supply of funds were turned off as were the Pell grants, then the prediction of an economic and social crisis facing the yeshivos with all of the attendant consequences would be even more real—a fact that all of us must admit. To do otherwise is to fool ourselves—and then we are both the victims and the perpetrators of the most serious crime.

But instead of looking at the truth and dealing with it, some rabbis demonize the messenger because they dislike the message.

### ***The Haredi Perspective: "Continuity is Ours"***

All these strategies are of course pursued out of deeply-felt haredi concerns over Jewish continuity, for

haredim are convinced that if they do not win the culture war, if they do not maintain their *yeshivos* and the rising numbers of people who use and depend on them for sustenance, Jewish continuity and authentic Judaism—as they define it—will itself be lost. For these people, this is a monumental battle that requires, as Rabbi Svei called them, “legions.”

Whether the various strategies of the past or new ones suggested will provide sufficient protection in the future, I cannot say. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that many of the “demons,” those who have gone out into the world beyond the *yeshiva*, are the same persons whom these same *yeshivos* turn to for assistance, and support when the *pushke* is empty. Only if they feel a closeness to the *yeshiva* world will they continue to help protect and support it. *Yeshivos* and rabbis need all the friends they can get.

SAMUEL C. HEILMAN  
HAROLD PROSHANSKY PROFESSOR OF  
JEWISH STUDIES & SOCIOLOGY,  
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
New York City

#### EDITORIAL RESPONSE: THE FUNCTION OF INSULARITY AND ITS LIMITS

As a source for his comments, Professor Heilman quotes copiously from the articles based on the convention addresses of Rabbi Elya Svei and Rabbi Yaakov Perlow. He also intimates that he has visited Lakewood. Indeed, he is an observant Jew who is widely acknowledged by the general public as an expert on the *Chareidi* world, having published several studies on us *Chareidim*. Regrettably, in spite of his erudition, his standing in the academic community, and his on-site visitations in Lakewood and other such *Kollel* communities, Professor Heilman, in his letter, reveals an astounding lack of understanding of the American *Chareidi* scene. He declares a genuine, heartfelt concern for the well-being of the *Chareidim* and their goals. All the good will in the world, however, cannot compensate for incomplete or misinterpreted information.

In sum, Professor Heilman charac-

terizes the *Chareidi* world as sensing itself to be under siege. In his view of the *Chareidim*, “there is no grey, no ambiguity, only black and white,... friends and enemies.” The only defense is insularity, depositing their “precious progeny” in Lakewood-type “fortresses,” for “as long as possible.... the latent purpose... undoubtedly to keep *b'nai Torah* from moral negotiation with and the corrupting influences of the outside world.”

This tactic is reinforced by an offensive action, through “demonization” of anyone not part of the Torah world. This is self-defeating, he maintains, since Jews who are conversant with or active in the outside world are a major source of funding for *yeshivos*. As a friend of Torah, Professor Heilman advises us to be nice to our financial supporters, or be prepared to wither away. He further cautions that we cannot depend

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deepest sympathies to the family of  
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the distinguished author of *Late Shadows*,  
the inaugural volume in The Holocaust Diaries Collection

Reb Moshe מ"ע was a man of extraordinarily deep feelings and sensitivity, a survivor who bore the grief and pain of Klal Yisrael in his own boundless heart. In 1989, C.I.S. Publishers had the honor of publishing the classic *Late Shadows*, in which all his talents, experiences, feelings and thoughts came together in one of the most brilliant perspectives on the holocaust ever published from a Torah-true perspective. Reb Moshe's sudden passing has shocked and saddened us, but we are comforted by the knowledge that his life and works have left a lasting impression on many thousands of people.

We extend special condolences to his esteemed wife who, as recounted in the book, saved his life during the war. “From the moment she joined me,” Reb Moshe wrote, “I felt no evil power could be strong enough to destroy us.”

Perhaps the most poignant epitaph to this remarkable man is to be found in the author's introduction to *Late Shadows*: “I am a writer who is deeply interested in every facet of the soul—hope, faith-filled joy, creativity, moods, dramatic tension. I strive to render moral value to my writing, to paint some shiny spot onto the darkest stories where the radiance of the soul can protrude. I would prefer to be remembered as an early sunshine than a late shadow, but this sad role is part of my destiny.”

This was the man. All his writings were illuminated by his faith, hope and irrepressible life, and he will indeed be remembered for the sunshine that streamed from his luminous soul.

MAY HIS MEMORY BE A BLESSING.



on the American government to bail us out.

We will deal with these projections and interpretations in the pages that follow.

#### *"Lakewood" and Insularity*

When Professor Heilman discusses the value system and attitudes of "Lakewood," his primary source of information could not have been the American scene. Most likely he draws from his research of specific *Chareidi* communities in *Eretz Yisroel* that formed the background for his book, *Defenders of The Faith*, and then applies his findings to the American *Kollel* scene. In Israel, the anti-Torah factions—especially in the media—are far more hostile, and the *Chareidi* enclaves are far more defensive. The American scene is much different. There is no parallel; the analogy does not work.

When the *Rosh Yeshiva* suggested that academicians and journalists visit Lakewood, he was not just referring to a spot on the map of New Jersey. Lakewood is a state of mind; and beyond geography, Lakewood inhabits a spiritual dimension. The primary purpose of the Lakewood mentality, insularity and all—just as Professor Heilman says—is to create *bnei Torah*, and then some. Its goal is also to create people who thirst for Torah, who strive for greatness in Torah—providing the setting from which those cho-

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sen few genuine *Gedolei Torah* will ultimately emerge. At the same time, as a subtext, the *Kollelim* are striving to compensate in some small measure for the devastating losses of *Churban* Europe. Lakewood, New Jersey, for all its 1500 resident scholars, is a mighty small contribution toward making up that deficit of the Holocaust—a yawning deficit in loss of numbers and an incalculable deficit in loss of *Kedusha*. Lakewood—the-concept, wherever it exists, calls for long-time learning—no less insular than (*lehadil*) the celebrated Institute of Advanced Studies of Princeton, and other, similarly-focused think-tanks—to create numbers, increase knowledge, and generate *kedusha*. So far, the analogy holds.

But when Professor Heilman interprets long-time learning as a ploy to keep *b'nei Torah* away from the corrupting influence of the outside world, it is a total misreading of the *Chareidi* agenda. At age 18, 20, or more, yes. But not after age 25, 30,

<sup>1</sup>See Dov Borenstein's article on page 40.

or beyond. How would that "ploy" square with the creation and support, by the very same rabbinical leaders, of Agudath Israel's COPE, which is aimed at preparing young people for occupational placement in the commercial world?<sup>1</sup> Or with the community-service placement bureau at Bais Medrash Govoha in Lakewood?

#### *In Retreat From "Moral Negotiation"*

Professor Heilman uses an interesting formulation—that the latent purpose of the *Kollel* "is undoubtedly to keep *b'nei Torah* from moral negotiation with... the outside world." Does Professor Heilman refer to situations where a *ben Torah* would be expected to fine-hone his value system, which after all is based on a 3,300 year *Mesora*, in comparison with the ephemeral values of the contemporary market place of ideas? Toward what purpose? Negotiations usually involve a measure of yielding for some

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ultimate gain. To yield is unthinkable, while the gain would be questionable, at most.

Does he refer to intellectual negotiation with others with an eye toward sharing the Torah value system with them? If so, this alleged reluctance to engage in "moral negotiation" is hardly reflected in some highly effective outreach to non-committed Jews by the members of Beth Medrash Govoha—the Lakewood *Kollel*. Over 200 men and women travel once every week to suburban Jersey communities, from Princeton to Atlantic City, to Twin Rivers, Freehold, Margate, and Cherry Hill, to study Torah one-on-one with the uninitiated. Over the years, some 6,700 young men and women have been sowing seeds of Torah with love, respect, and yes, moral negotiation, with remarkable success. Shalom Torah Centers, Hebrew day schools, afternoon schools, and youth activities (some in conjunction with the OU's NCSY) are the dynamic results of these ongoing efforts.

Then there is Torah Umesorah's SEED (Summer Educational Environmental Development Program) which plucks a miniature live *bais midrash* from such Torah fortresses as Philadelphia, Teishe (Wickliffe, Ohio), Chofetz Chaim and Baltimore, and transplants it to such unlikely settings as Seattle, Dallas, Savannah, and Great Neck. (I have on my desk a letter written by "Ester and Freddy" to the boys from Rabbi Svei's Talmudic Yeshiva of Philadelphia, who were part of the SEED program in Savannah last summer. I quote just three sentences:

*In every lifetime there should be at least one moment where one can reflect and say, "I have made a difference." Each of you are so very fortunate not to have to wait a lifetime to reflect and see if you possess just such a moment.*

*It is with our deepest gratitude to Hashem Yisborach and your Roshei Hayeshivos that you have each come to Savannah and filled our city, our shul, our homes, and most importantly our children, with the strength of your Torah, devotion and individual personalities.*

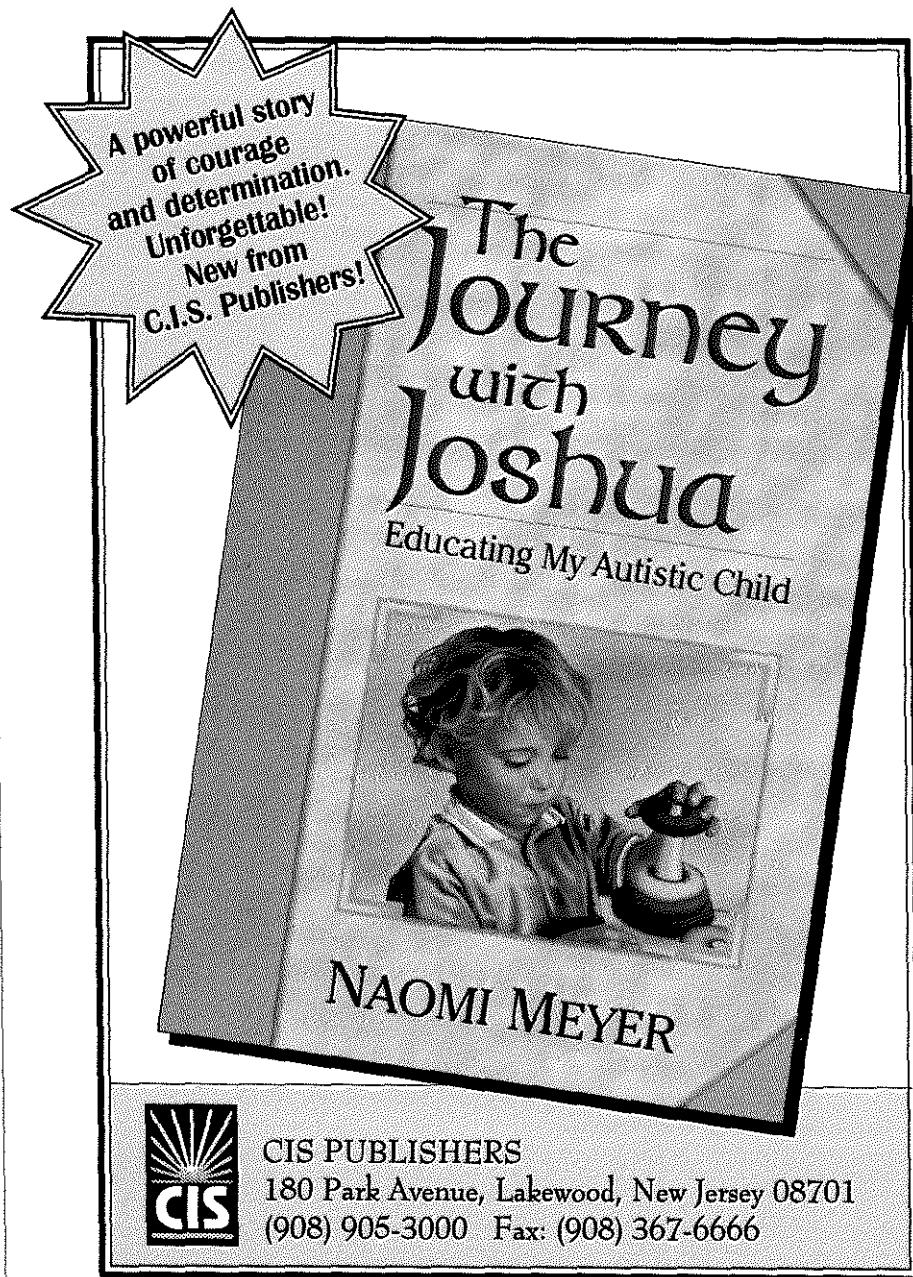
Many of these SEEDlings have blossomed into a year-round *bais midrash* or community *kollel*—distinct in format and purpose from the more insular, scholarly *kollel*—serv-

ing such "impure," alien spots as Seattle, South Bend, Denver and Atlanta, at the pleasure of their host communities. In South Bend, the *bais midrash* bore fruit in the form of a *mesivta* high school. And in Seattle, a *Kollel*, now in its second year, is thriving. At the *Kollel*'s recent dinner, which attracted over 300 participants (note the number—Seattle is not Flatbush), guest speaker Rabbi Yissochar Frand hit the nail on the

head with the following anecdote:

*In Baltimore, he had met a man who travels around the country leading Aish Hatorah Discovery Seminars. This man told Rabbi Frand that after having been in Seattle in 1988, he vowed never to return. There weren't people in Seattle interested enough in or open enough to what Discovery had to offer.*

*In 1993, this man did in fact come back to Seattle because there was no one else available at the time to lead the Discovery Seminar. To his surprise,*



there was an interest in and an excitement about Yiddishkeit that had been absent before. The ideas introduced at the Seminar were told to accepting minds.

What had happened to change things from 1988 to 1993? It was obvious: the Kollel had come to Seattle.

**SEATTLE KOLLEL UPDATE, Vol. No. 2**

And then we must take note of the phenomenal efficacy of such outreach institutions as Ohr Somayach, Aish Hatorah, Arachim Seminars—conceived by members of "Lakewood"-type *yeshivos* and staffed by their alumni. And, of course, the over-400 volunteers who defied safety (and, some say, sanity) to bring

Torah clandestinely to the prisoners of Communism behind the then-USSR in the 1980s, and more who are currently continuing the process.

All of these trends were discussed openly and extensively at previous Agudath Israel conventions, and figure prominently in the world-view of Lakewood people. They are not aberrations.

I'm not quite sure how Professor Heilman views the extraordinary growth of Torah-related publishing, through such vehicles as Feldheim and ArtScroll-Mesorah, as well as Moznayim, CIS, Targum, and Hermon Press. Their efforts have har-

**A**s a subtext, the Kollelim are striving to compensate in some small measure for the devastating losses of Churban Europe. Lakewood, New Jersey, for all its 1500 resident scholars, is a mighty small contribution toward making up that deficit of the Holocaust.

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nessed the talents and tapped the wellsprings of knowledge of scores of former Kollel fellows, and have engaged in moral negotiation with the outside world with history-making success. Of course, much of the writing is done from the ivory towers of the Yeshiva society—but is it any different in other academic publishing? Their innovative, trail-blazing publications are talking to a broad spectrum of Jews, many of them far from Chareidi precincts, and they are doing it articulately, with dignity, employing all the trappings of contemporary design and technology.

Perhaps Professor Heilman uses "avoidance of moral negotiation" to mean that the Chareidi world ignores the great moral issues of the day, instead of applying Torah principles to them. I invite him to peruse the schedule of topics discussed at the annual conventions of Agudath Israel of America, and the themes at the Agudah's periodic seminars for professionals, dealing with such topics as *Ribbis* in business contracts, "Time of Death" in regard to medical practice, triage in health care, integrity in the practice of law, dealing with *rechilus* restrictions and the dictum of *tochacha* (reproof) in the counseling setting, *ad infinitum*. These discussions represent moral negotiation of the highest order.

### **Approaching the New With Caution, or "Demonization"?**

Professor Heilman insists that the Chareidi world shuts out the new. The question is—to what degree? In-

novations, inventions, and creative endeavors *per se* are not rejected. (Nor, for that matter, are all things new deemed desirable simply because they are new, as some groups are convinced, demonstrating their infatuation with newness for newness' sake by going so far as to incorporate "modernity" in their identifying label.) But each such innovation must be examined for what it represents and for what it brings in its wake. Some aspects of modern society are simply rejected by objective halachic criteria; others by more complex considerations of moral acceptability and decency. But does such rejection qualify as "demonization"—assigning supernatural, evil powers to harmless forces—as Professor Heilman characterizes it? Is popular television or MTV really benign? (Ask the House Committee on Education.) Is it "demonization" to retreat from a society that has so degenerated that fifth-grade science teachers are mandated to discuss "safe" dating with their students? Where standard forms of entertainment judged suitable for viewers under 17 would have been rejected as disgusting and insulting to any decent adult a mere 20 years ago? Where Michael Jackson, Roseanne, and hip-hop are cultural icons? Where chastity is a joke, and maintaining marriage is considered a bigger risk than single parenthood? And where thousands of innocent children are killed annually by stray bullets on city streets, drugs are peddled on street corners near elementary schools, and a "gay" marching unit is a point of contention in the Israeli Independence Day Parade? Is the *Chareidi* community guilty of projecting demons onto an innocent landscape, or are there real problems out there?

By the way, Professor Heilman insists on modifying his every reference to Jewish continuity with qualifiers, such as "as the *Chareidim* understand it," as though we have our own exotic expectations from the next generation. In *Cosmopolitan and Parochials: Modern Orthodox Jews in America*, a sociological study that he co-authored with Dr. Stephen M. Cohen, Professor Heilman demonstrates that the *Chareidi* community



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has indeed achieved a higher rate of continuity—no intermarriage, strong fidelity to *mitzva* practice, etc.—than any other group, by any criteria. (I'm confident that he and the *Chareidim* share common ground on their understanding of the crucial nature of these points.)

#### ***In the Shadow of the Great Divide***

There is much to reject in modern society—especially in urban centers—without being obscurantist. In fact, that was the gist of the citation from the *Gemora* (*Eiruvin* 21b) decrying urban life, in Rabbi Perlow's presentation at the Convention (JO, Jan. '94, pp. 9-10). Yet, that does not mean that people in the professions or in business are across some Great Divide that separates them from the *Chareidi/Yeshiva/Chassidic* world as Professor Heilman maintains. All is not either "black" or black. There is a continuum that begins in "Lakewood," and extends through the shops on the main streets of Orthodox urban neighborhoods, to suburban malls, the offices of lawyers, physicians, and stockbrokers, on to academia and beyond. As long as people on this continuum recognize the primacy of Torah—both as a revered object for pursuit of study and as a source of actions and values—the *Chareidi* world feels a kinship of values with them. They're not only

## **Some aspects of modern society are simply rejected by objective halachic criteria; others by more complex considerations of moral acceptability and decency.**

honored at fund-raising dinners, they're appreciated at the breakfast and *kiddush* table. On the other hand, those who equate Torah study with some other pursuit and/or use it as one of several sources of values are indeed on the other side of that Divide.

Professor Heilman seems to suggest that from the *Chareidi* point of view, anyone who is involved in any activity other than Torah study is lost. Were that the case, his term "demonization" would be on target, and any request for funding for *yeshivos* from such quarters would be duplicitous at best. But that is not the case. *Yeshivos* and rabbis are truly blessed with a wonderfully broad array of friends and supporters who feel a closeness to the yeshiva world, from which they draw values,

guidance and strength.

This brings us back to the initial point of contention—Professor Heilman's assertion, as per *The Jewish Week*'s quote, that the *yeshivos*, previously dependent on a multi-millionaire-family's magnanimity, stumbled onto government programs when the philanthropists' fortunes slipped; now that these are at risk, he advises the *Chareidim* to stop rejecting the Modern-Centrist wells from whence they draw financial support. This entire scenario is patently incorrect.

During the past thirty years or so, the broader yeshiva community has grown to include a significant number of dedicated lay leaders—in the business world and the professions—who support the *yeshivos* with great generosity. The *yeshivos*' fate does not ride on the fortunes of any single family. Moreover, there is no state of war between the leaders of the yeshiva world and its supporters of more modern bent. The *yeshivos* historically were established and supported by wealthy Jews because these founders appreciated Torah study and meticulous *mitzva* observance at its purest, even when they did not personally conform to its most exacting standards in their personal life. They were not treated as demons, nor are their heirs-in-philanthropy.

As for government programs, they have been a source of support for needy students of post-secondary rabbinical and talmudic schools for quite a few years. Professor Heilman's "three year" time-table is total fiction. Furthermore, Lakewood has not been disqualified from Pell Grants nor from any other federal programs to support students of higher education.

The *yeshivos* have suffered through many difficult times, and have prevailed. Current financial crises will, *ח"א*, prove no more disastrous than those of the past. One thing is certain. Torah study will prosper.

Working together for Torah study, subscribing to the eternal values of Torah, committed to support scholars of Torah, we may be destined to struggle, but our confidence in the future is undiminished by the vagaries of the market place or the social scene.

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*HaGaon Rav Aharon Kotler Memorial Award for distinguished service to Torah*

A real estate businessman by vocation, Chaim Gross has made *harbotza haTorah* and *kiruv rechokim* the high priorities in his life. A prominent member of the Vizhnitzer community, he comes from a family with a longstanding tradition of service to Torah and the *klal*. His father, Reb Pinchos Gross, was active yet before the war in Agudath Israel and in Keren HaTorah — an organization that established Bais Yaakovs throughout Romania — and today is a tireless volunteer on behalf of Arachim, the exceptionally successful *kiruv rechokim* organization. Inspired by his father's example, Reb Chaim has assumed the chairmanship of Agudath Israel's Chizuk division, which has launched a new program of cooperation with Arachim to bring its seminars to North America and a range of other projects to harness the talents of the Torah layman in support of outreach work. A Pitcher member and Agudah camper in his youth, he continues to play a role in general *klal* affairs as a vice president of Agudath Israel of America, in

addition to his many activities on behalf of a wide variety of *mosdos haTorah ve-haChesed*.

### MENACHEM LUBINSKY

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Menachem Lubinsky began his Agudist activism early in life. His late father, Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Lubinsky, a renowned *talmud chachom* and Gerer Chossid, had played a key role in the spiritual revival of the Shearis HaPleitah as Chief Rabbi of Hanover, Germany, and was a prominent figure in national and global Agudah affairs upon his arrival in the U.S. Young Menachem, a graduate of Pinchei of Crown Heights, was one of a small group of talented leaders who revitalized the national Zeirei Agudath Israel in 1969 at the behest of Gedolei HaTorah. First editor of The Zeirei Forum, he later served as Zeirei's national coordinator, leading in the creation of JEP, TAP, and other noted projects. Joining the Agudath Israel staff, he was founding director of Agudah's first senior center and later directed Project COPE. He went on to serve as director of government and public affairs, spearheading numerous new projects, including SBCO and the Orthodox Jewish Archives. Today the president of Integrated Marketing and Communications and producer of the International Kosher Food Show, he is a national vice president of Agudath Israel, and serves as president of the Metropolitan New York Coordinating Council on Jewish Poverty and a board member of COJO of Flatbush, in addition to his involvement on behalf of Ohel Children's Home and a variety of other communal endeavors.



### YITZCHOK GANGER

*Reb Elimelech Tress Memorial Award  
for preservation of the legacy of the Shearis HaPleitah*

A son and son-in-law of survivors of the Churban, Yitzchok Ganger is imbued with a special sense of purpose in his work to perpetuate the Torah legacy transplanted here from Europe. His father — from a family of devout Belzer and Gerer Chasidim — escaped Poland to Shanghai, while his mother was sent from Germany to England as part of a child refugee transport. While building their own life anew in the U.S., his parents contributed significantly to the rebuilding of Torah institutions, inculcating in their children at the same time the deep *emunah* to which they held fast throughout the bleak years of the Holocaust. Yitzchok is deeply conscious of his special charge as a member of the "second generation." President of Amerex of California, he has taken a prominent and active role in behalf of numerous institutions. He is a board member of Yeshiva Darchei Torah and an active supporter of Torah Academy for Girls. He serves on the

board of Ohel Children's Home and is a benefactor of Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood. He is a patron of the Artscroll/Mesorah edition of the Talmud, and is also one of the leaders of Agudath Israel of Long Island.



Yitzchok Ganger, Reb Elimelech Tress Memorial Award recipient, for preservation of the legacy of the Shearis HaPleitah.



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Eli Rabinowitz

An active member of Bachurim Agudath Israel of Kings Highway in the 1980's, Eli Rabinowitz recognized the special spark of spiritual energy that animated this group of young *bnei Torah* and, as its members began to marry, refused to let them disband. With remarkable foresight, he approached Rabbi Yaakov Reissman to become their Rav and began seeking facilities and a larger committed membership. Agudath Israel of Madison was thus born, in spite of many obstacles, with Eli Rabinowitz as its founding president. Today the *kollel* has over 100 members and has embarked on a \$1 million building campaign. Eli is also a board member of Cheder Am Yisroel for Russian immigrant children, and is also active on behalf of his alma mater, Mesivta Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin.



Jonathan Rikoon, Esq.

An attorney with Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, Jonathan Rikoon has contributed exclusively of his expertise in trusts and estates to efforts to protect the interests of Orthodox Jews. He helped develop Agudath Israel's pathbreaking Halachic Living Will, and later oversaw its adaptation to the laws of 41 states. He has further drawn the attention of the legal profession to Orthodox Jews' special needs in lectures and in his own published work. Long involved in Jewish communal affairs, he currently serves on the planning committee for Agudath Israel's National Halacha Conference. A founder of Congregation Ohel Yaakov in Monsey, he is currently active on the executive boards of Agudath Israel of West Lawrence — a vibrant new Agudah branch — and Torah Academy for Girls in Far Rockaway.



Jeno Herschkowitz  
on behalf of the volunteers of Tomche Shabbos

Nineteen years ago, on one of his regular *bikur cholim* visits to the hospital, Jeno Herschkowitz discovered that one of the patients was more sick with worry over his family's lack of food for Shabbos than with his physical ailments. He immediately prepared a package of food provisions for the family. He soon realized, however, that many others were similarly in need of help, and with several friends began preparing cartons of Shabbos meals each week. This was the now legendary Tomche Shabbos organization created, joined eventually by scores of volunteers who purchase, pack, and discreetly deliver the parcels each week to hundreds of needy families. The network today distributes one million dollars worth of food each year.

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Programmers purposefully produce light, forgettable fare that invites passive, disengaged viewing and nearly simultaneous dismissal from the viewer's mind. Patrick O'Flaherty, a Canadian University professor, lament-

ing the level of students' reading ability, surmised that the nature of television viewing is "so destructive to the alertness and retentive faculties demanded by the study of books that it constitutes a real handicap."

And his classroom observations are confirmed by numerous studies. One of the most extensive, encompassing a half-million students, was conducted among sixth and twelfth graders in California. Math, reading and writing abilities were measured in relation to television viewing habits. For both grades, and for each skill, performance declined as television hours increased.

#### THE BRAIN SLOWS DOWN

Television inhibits learning. Unquestionably. Plots are presented through short, fragmented bits. Camera angles change by the second. Viewers are required to remember nothing for longer than 60 minutes. Naturally, the viewer's attention span and powers of concentration rapidly pare down to the simple-minded task at hand. The brain idles ever more slowly.

The reading time that television may well usurp is lost, as are the thinking skills that reading would hone. Language skills, vocabulary, long-term

memory, imagination, comprehension, are all sacrificed. The New York Times reports that even "educational programs" like Sesame Street set up a no-win situation for classroom learning. If information isn't presented with a song and a dance in a 60-second spot, the television-trained child loses interest.

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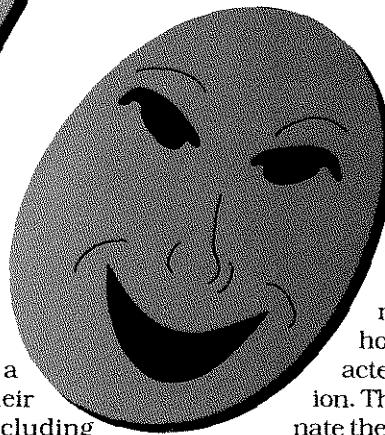
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The above ad, one in a series, was prepared by the Committee for Concerned Parents, an ad-hoc committee of leading Jewish educators.



# Good News From Israel?



## I. THE FINDINGS

The recent publication of "Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction Among Israeli Jews," a sociological study conducted by the Guttman Institute, was something of a media event. The central conclusion of the researchers was:

*...[The rhetoric of secular and religious polarization generally used to characterize Israeli society is highly misleading. It would be more accurate to say that Israeli society has a strong traditional bent, and as far as religious practice is concerned, that there is a continuum from the "strictly religious" to the "non-observant," rather than a great divide between a religious minority and a secular majority.*

To judge by the widespread coverage of the Guttman study, and the largely favorable editorial comment, Israelis were delighted to find that they are not quite so irreligious as they believed themselves to be. The challenge frequently leveled at them to identify what about their lives links them to the continuity of Jewish history stings, and the Guttman study seems to provide a rebuttal of sorts.

The Guttman study found that 78% of Israelis always participate in a Seder, including 59% of those who characterize themselves as completely non-observant; 72% light Chanuka candles and fast on Yom

Kippur; 98% have a mezuzah on their front doors, including 92% of the non-observant. In addition, a large majority of Israelis feel it important to mark the major life stages—bar mitzva, marriage, and death—in some form of traditional observance.

Perhaps most surprising of all were the findings concerning the beliefs of the population. Sixty percent of Israelis say that they believe in G-d, 55% that the Torah was given to Moshe at Sinai, 47% that Torah and mitzvos are G-d's commands, and 52% that good deeds are rewarded (though interestingly only 44% believe that bad deeds are punished).

Of course all was not rosy. Nearly two-thirds of the population has had no religious education of any kind. (Indeed, two-thirds attribute their failure to be more observant to the lack of a better Jewish education.) Forty-five percent of the Ashkenazi population does not attend synagogue on Yom Kippur. Less than a fifth of the population prays daily or participates in any type of Jewish learning.

Almost half of those who describe their parental homes as strictly observant consider themselves less observant than their parents, a trend which

is particularly marked among Sephardim. Moreover, there is a pronounced correlation between academic training and nonobservance. While only 20% of the population describes itself as completely non-observant, 40% of those holding academic degrees characterize themselves in this fashion. This latter group tends to dominate the media and government.<sup>1</sup>

The report contained, in addition, a number of other interesting findings. One was that those describing themselves as strictly religious are four times as likely as those describing themselves as non-observant to engage in any type of volunteer activity (35% versus 9%), suggesting a clear connection between *mitzvos bein adam l'Makom* (relating to G-d) and *mitzvos bein adam l'chaveiro* (interpersonal). Another interesting finding was that the completely non-observant are the most socially isolated, and are far less likely than any other group to have a friend who differs from them in his or her level of religious observance.

## II. ANOTHER LOOK

Unfortunately, a closer look at the results of the Guttman study—both in terms of what it reveals and what it elides—suggests

<sup>1</sup> In addition, the study may systematically overstate the extent of religious practice and belief by excluding from the sample both Russian immigrants, who comprise 10% of the Jewish population, and those from *kibbutzim*, where the strongest ideological opposition to religion has always been found.

**Yonason Rosenblum** is a regular contributor to JO, most recently with his biographical appreciation of Rabbi Yehuda Zev Segal, the late Manchester Rosh Yeshiva, 5751, in Feb. '94. He is the author of *Reb Yaakov*, a biography of Rabbi Kamenetsky, 5751, and co-author of the recently released *Lieutenant Birnbaum*, both published by ArtScroll. His translation of Rabbi Bezalel Landau's classic biography of the Vilna Gaon is scheduled to appear soon.

far less cause for optimism. As one of the academic reviewers of the study put it, "If things are so good, why are they so bad?"

Any evaluation of the religious practice of modern Israeli society is basically a question of "compared to what?". Compared to American Jewry today or to the Jewish communities of much of Western Europe and South America, it may well be that Israelis maintain more traditional religious symbols and observe, in some fashion, more of the Jewish holidays. But it is also clear that compared to

virtually any Jewish community that has existed over the past two thousand years, that their level of knowledge and practice is shockingly low.<sup>2</sup>

The fatal flaw in the Guttman study is its continuum model of religious observance, with those who ob-

<sup>2</sup>There are several explanations for the relatively higher level of Jewish observance in Israel vis-a-vis the Diaspora. The most important is that as citizens of the "Jewish State," Israelis feel a greater need—on both a collective and individual basis—to maintain symbols consistent with that definition of the state and their citizenship in it.

A second explanation is that unlike their American Jewish counterparts, secular Israelis

serve all the *mitzvos* at the top of the ladder and those who observe none at the bottom.<sup>3</sup> In fact, there is one basic dichotomy. On the one side are those for whom the *mitzvos* are precisely that—commandments from the Creator of the universe, binding upon each Jew. For these Jews, the *halacha* is a total system guiding every moment of their lives. On the other side are those for whom the various aspects of the tradition—regardless of how much or little of the tradition is maintained—are primarily matters of identification with the Jewish people.

To ignore this distinction is to end up comparing apples and oranges, as the authors of the study do. They structure the questions so that the lighting of the candles on Friday night is all the same, regardless of whether it is done before or after sundown; there is no difference between *Sedarim* which center on the reading of the *Haggada* and those to which the participants all drive, and in which the meal is the primary focus of the night; there is no difference between watching videos while fasting on Yom Kippur and spending the day in *shul*.

What the authors of the study term the "traditional" nature of Israeli society is nothing more or less than the civil religion of Israel, in which the tradition has been transmogrified to serve civil and political purposes, and has lost its function as means of drawing close to G-d either as a people or individuals. Evidence of the civil aspect of Israeli religious observance abounds throughout the Guttman study. Thus the likelihood that some aspect of the tradition will be observed by the average Israeli bears no relation whatsoever to its halachic importance. The only clear rule seems to be that the less frequently some event occurs—e.g., life

have contact with, and are aware of, those who are scrupulously observant. This latter group retains its position as the authentic bearers of the tradition. Most American Jews, by contrast, have never met an Orthodox Jew. In a pluralistic society, in which every opinion is entitled to equal weight, they may actually believe that the ballot box or individual whim is the ultimate test of the legitimacy of any religious practice.

<sup>3</sup>This point was made by many of the academic reviewers of the study at a conference sponsored by the Van Leer Institute.

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cycle events—or the easier its performance—e.g., putting up a *mezuzah*—the more likely it is to be observed. Inasmuch as the vast majority of those observing any part of the tradition have virtually no Jewish knowledge and do not live in faith communities which imbue the rituals with meaning, their observances are primarily rituals of national identification.

Consistent with this picture of civil religion is the study's finding that the vast majority of Israelis—with the exception of the most religious—perceive the rest of the society as pretty much like them in their degree of religious observance. They are comfortable with their level of observance—though a substantial number even among the completely non-religious express the wish that their children be somewhat more observant—precisely because they see themselves as doing whatever is necessary to be part of the national consensus.

Thus there is little basis for the "optimistic" view expressed by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, spiritual advisor to Avi Chai, the charitable foundation which sponsored the research, that the study reveals: "Although there are fundamental theological and behavioral differences between [those who observe the culture of Israel and those who observe the commandments of Israel], there are far more points of contact between them, with shared practices, vocabulary and values that can and must serve as a basis for a united people."<sup>4</sup> Because the study was limited exclusively to multiple choice answers, and involved no in-depth interviewing, it in fact provides no basis for concluding that there is such a sharing of values. For one group, the Torah provides a complete worldview, sets their priorities in life, and determines the way in which they will raise their children. For the other group, it does nothing of the kind. Only at the level of trivialities denuded of any specifically Jewish content—e.g., one should help his fel-

<sup>4</sup> In one remarkable statement, Rabbi Riskin describes the problem in Israel today as the fact that "the Israeli mentality generally confuses Jewish culture with Jewish religion, and is increasingly apt to reject both together, throwing the baby out with the bath-water." Note that in this metaphor it is Jewish culture which is the baby and Jewish religion which is the bath water.

Unfortunately, a closer look at the results of the Guttman study—both in terms of what it reveals and what it elides—suggests far less cause for optimism. As one of the academic reviewers of the study put it, "If things are so good, why are they so bad?"

low man—is it possible to speak of shared values.

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch's description of German Reform applies with equal force to the Israeli civil religion of today:

*[They] vaporized the ancient, world-shaping spirit of the Torah into such a*

*volatile drop of aromatic essence that there was no longer any need to be ashamed to carry the spirit of that religion as a delicate perfume in a dainty flask small enough to fit into one's vest pocket. Out of the massive, ancient, rock-like Tablets of the Law, [they] carved miniatures so tiny that people happily place them as ornaments on their most exquisite dressing tables, in their drawing rooms, and in their ballrooms.*

### III. THE LIMITS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

The Guttman study is a classic illustration of the limits of sociology to tell us anything about the internal reality as experienced by the individuals under scrutiny. Even after we have the multiple-choice answers, we have little feeling for what they mean. Thus the study's authors cheerily skate by internal contradictions in the data as if nothing were amiss. Only 59% of those who characterize themselves as

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strictly observant refrain from turning on electricity on *Shabbos*; only 70% of the women thus described cover their hair. In a study which relies as heavily as this one on self-definition of the population, the failure to explore the disparity between self-perception and reality is crucial.

Even more important, and centrally related to the study's conclusions, what do the 60% of Israelis mean when they say that they believe in G-d, or the 55% who profess to believe in

Torah from Sinai? Do these professions of faith mean what they have always meant, or are they rather affirmations that these are things which Jews are supposed to believe? How do the vast majority of those who profess these beliefs square them with their much lower level of religious observance? Does this create tension for them? Fill them with fear of Divine punishment? Is it experienced as a fundamental contradiction?

For that matter, what kind of theo-

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logical system makes it seem more likely that G-d rewards good deeds than that He punishes bad deeds? Is this merely wishful thinking projected on the cosmic level? When 70% of Israelis say that they are living their lives in a manner that is consonant with Jewish values, what values are they talking about, and what values do they see as animating their lives?

One interested in any of these matters—without the knowledge of which so many of the “findings” are worthless—will find no guidance in the Guttman report.

The authors found that the public perceives the strictly religious as being less "accepting" of those with different levels of religious observance. But they do not explore the meaning of "acceptance" or the ways that its definition might vary from group to group. They do not consider the reasons why the religious might be less accepting or the possibility that their lack of acceptance, rather than being a sign of contempt, arises from their view of the innate holiness of their fellow Jew and their unwillingness to countenance his spiritual suicide.



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#### IV. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The central problem to which the Guttman study addresses itself is the public perception that relations in Israel between the religious and non-religious are not good. The report's finding of the existence of a continuum of religious observance rather than a sharp dichotomy is thus meant to be part of the cure. But if, as we have argued, that model is seriously flawed, then the public perception of a wide gulf between the religious and non-religious is more accurate than that of the report's authors. Most Israelis know that the "mitzvos" they observe have nothing in common with those performed out of conviction that they are Divine imperatives.

But for all our criticism of the methodology and conclusions of the Guttman report, there nevertheless remains an essential nugget of truth which we must not ignore. The majority of Israelis continue to identify themselves as Jews, and what is more, this identification is a matter of importance to them. They neither seek to hide their Jewishness nor shed it. (Abroad, removed from the decidedly anti-religious bias of the Israeli media, many, in fact, return to their religion.) Moreover, there are deep-seated "sparks" of *emuna*—particularly among the Sephardim—which can be fanned.

That being the case, we must not slacken our efforts to reach out to the non-religious Israeli public and to provide them with the knowledge of their heritage. At the same time, we must use whatever leverage we possess to maximize the Jewish content in the Israeli secular educational system, and to keep it out of the hands of those who are contemptuous of all we hold most dear. There were those who may have questioned the United Torah Judaism's refusal to consider participation in a government in which Shulamit Aloni served as Minister of Education. "What damage can she do to a population already irretrievably lost?" they wondered. The Guttman report is an answer to that question. Most Israelis are not irretrievably lost.

True, there is something self-serv-

For all our criticism, there nevertheless remains an essential nugget of truth which we must not ignore. The majority of Israelis continue to identify themselves as Jews, and what is more, this identification is a matter of importance to them.

ing about the claim of two-thirds of the public that their lack of religious education is the primary reason that they are not more observant. A lack of education is not irremediable, and certainly not if one believes that education to be necessary to do *Hashem's* will.

But be that as it may, we hear in this statement a clear recognition by the majority of the Israeli public of their ignorance of their own religion and an expression of regret over that ignorance. That, by itself, is enough to spur us to greater efforts. ■

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# Shmittah 5754: An UPDATE FROM THE HOME FRONT



## THE CHOICE: DIVINE REWARDS... OR EXILE

On the one hand, the Torah bestows a promise of plenty and happiness for observance of Shmittah, with permission given for man to test Hashem through the fulfillment of this promise, while on the other hand, we are strongly warned against profaning the land's rest, to the extent that violation of Shmittah incurs the harshest of punishments—exile of the people and desolation of the land. Could we imagine any greater, more beautiful or more glorious demonstration of Hashem's sovereignty than that of a people which supports itself on agriculture and yet hearkens to His directives and refrains from farming its land for the duration of an entire year? Could there possibly be a clearer or more explicit declaration that "the land and all that fills it is Hashem's"; that it is not the power and might of a man's hands that amass plenty, rather that man's lot, including his economic standing, is determined by Divine Providence? It is a difficult test—one which demands sacrifice from the entire community. Yet it confers on us the character of a chosen people, a treasure of a nation—sons who eat from their Father's table....

FROM AN ARTICLE BY RABBI MOSHE SCHEINFELD, IN KOL YISRAEL, 1937

Rabbi Goldblum lives in Jerusalem where he studies in a kollel. This is his first appearance in these pages.

**T**hen, as now, it was necessary to galvanize world Jewry to meet the challenge of being partners in the full observance of this mitzva. At that time, practical observance of Shmittah was limited to the handful of members on Agudath Israel's three *Kibbutzim*. Stirring appeals were made at the Third Knessia Gedolah, held in the months before Shmittah began, for Agudah members to contribute the substantial financial help that was needed to enable the *kibbutzim* to survive.

Today, *Baruch Hashem*, the number of Shmittah observers has greatly multiplied and many of the parents of the generation that is growing up now have their own childhood memories of Shmittah having been kept. Nonetheless, Shmittah has not yet become reinstated to its rightful prominence in our national consciousness, even in *Eretz Yisroel*.

## I. AGRICULTURAL LIMITATIONS

**T**he best known feature of Shmittah observance is, of course, the cessation of agricultural work, in accordance with the Torah's command that "the land shall rest." Thus, sowing, plowing or other preparations for sowing, fertilizing and irrigating land are all proscribed, subject to the principles enumerated by *Chazal* in *Maseches Shevi'is*, explained by the *Gemora*, the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*, down to the *Chazon Ish*, whose practical rulings on the modern application of these *halachos* provide the basis for today's Shmittah observance.

If these laws are ignored and sowing is carried out in Shmittah, no benefit may be derived from the resulting produce. (According to some opinions, even the mere performance of any of the other forbidden *melachos*

also renders the produce forbidden.) The Chareidi community follows the rulings of the major halachic authorities of this and preceding generations, who deny the validity of the "hetter mechira," upon which the Chief Rabbinate's sale to a gentile of all Jewish-owned farming land in Israel is based. As a result, the kashrus supervisory organizations are faced with the onerous task of providing fresh produce throughout Shmittah for a population numbering hundreds of thousands, *kein yirbu*. (The agricultural produce used by Shmittah observers constitutes over

ten percent of the total consumed by the country's population.)

Produce of the Shmittah year is invested with a special *kedusha*, which limits the uses to which that produce may be put. (Our comments about *kedushas Shevi'is* are concerned primarily with tree fruits. While grains or pulses which germinated spontaneously are permitted by Torah law and therefore also have *kedushas Shevi'is*, they were forbidden by the *Rabbanan* to discourage dishonest people from sowing and then claiming that the produce had grown by itself.) These *Shevi'is* fruits may not be

traded in, wasted or put to any other than their principal use. For example, fruits usually consumed raw may not be cooked, while those usually eaten may not be squeezed to extract juice. Produce that is fit for human consumption may be neither damaged, discarded, nor fed to animals. The first of these limitations clearly causes problems in the distribution of the fruits.

To honor *Shmittah* restrictions, one must first determine to which year a particular harvest belongs. The *Gemora* derives that vegetables belong to the year in which they are picked, the year beginning at Rosh Hashana. The status of tree fruits depends on the year in which the tree budded. For trees, also, the year begins on Rosh Hashana. It follows that for the first few weeks of *Shmittah*, vegetables that were sown and picked before Rosh Hashana may be used, but due to their relatively short lifespan, even in storage, produce must be obtained very soon from some other source. On the other hand, the tree fruits on sale throughout *Shmittah* budded well before 5754, and therefore belong to the sixth year. It is only in the summer of *Shmittah* that fruits with *kedusha* make their first appearance. These harvests then last for most of the eighth year, a fact which has consequences for farmers and consumers alike.

#### *Finding Produce For Hungry Consumers*

**S**everal options are available to the *kashrus* organizations. Produce can be obtained from lands outside the halachic boundaries of *Eretz Yisroel*, from land that was never sanctified, neither by the Jews who arrived from Egypt, nor by those returning from the Babylonian exile. Even though it is within the political boundaries of modern Israel, it may be farmed as usual.

An alternative is to buy produce from non-Jews who genuinely own land inside *Eretz Yisroel*. (The gentile's title to the land is carefully investigated before any produce is acquired from him.) A third resort is to import produce from abroad.

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The first option is used for certain crops. The southern Arava, between the Dead Sea and Eilat, is accepted as being *chutz l'Aretz*, although there is a slight difference of opinion as to exactly where the halachic border lies. The ruling of the late Dayan Weiss, *z"l*, head of the *Eida Hachareidis*, places it slightly to the north of the point that Rabbi Elyashiv holds it to be. The *Eida* consequently notify the public as to which types of vegetables on sale in their shops come from the "disputed" territories.

One can, of course, verify whether or not a piece of land in *Eretz Yisroel* is Arab-owned. Using this second option, a large amount of produce is brought in from Gaza. Ordinarily, *mashgichim* on the spot make certain that the produce indeed grew on the Arab's land and was not slipped in from Israel by unscrupulous Jewish hands. This *Shmittah*, it is impossible for Jewish civilians to enter Gaza for supervision; the transactions between the representatives of the *kashrus* organizations and the Arab farmers thus take place at the Erez roadblock, at the exit from Gaza. The lack of supervision is compensated for by ascertaining that, firstly, the types of produce bought are commonly grown on Arab lands, such as cucumbers, most of which are grown by Arabs anyway; and, secondly, that the prices paid are so low that it would simply not be financially worthwhile for a Jewish farmer to smuggle his forbidden produce over the Green Line to have it sold back to the Israeli side.

#### Restrictions on Non-Jewish Crops

Even *bona fide* Arab produce, however, is not automatically free of *Shmittah* restrictions. Although a non-Jew is permitted to farm his land inside *Eretz Yisroel*, there is a difference of opinion as to whether his acquisition of the land supercedes the laws that apply to the produce that grows there, in line with *Yesh le'akum kinyan lehafshia midei ma'aser*. The custom in the old *Yishuv*, which was virtually confined to *Yerushalayim* and *Tzfas*, was always to rely on the lenient opinion that no *Shmittah* restrictions apply to

such produce, whereas the *Chazon Ish*, whose rulings guide all the new centers of religious population, concluded that the stringent opinion should be followed and the laws of *kedusha* be observed. Accordingly, in

the *Shmittah* shops of the *Eida Hachareidis*, which supply *Yerushalayim*'s large *Chareidi* community, business is conducted as usual during *Shmittah*. None of the merchandise, which originates either in a non-

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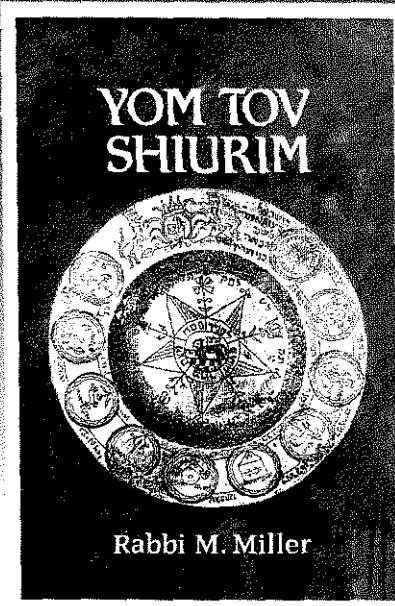
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Jew's field, or in *chutz l'Aretz*, is regarded as having *kedushas shevi'is*.

In Bnei Brak, on the other hand, the *Chazon Ish*'s rulings are binding, which means that produce from a non-Jew cannot be traded normally. Instead, a strategy known as *sh'lchus* is adopted, whereby the Jewish wholesaler and storekeeper are appointed by each customer as his emissaries to purchase produce from the Arab grower. Since the storekeeper is acting as the customer's agent, he never actually owns the produce, thus no trading between Jews in *peiros Shevi'is* is involved.



The amount the wholesaler and retailer receive is usually a fixed percentage of the price paid to the grower. Rather than profit, as is made

on an ordinary sale, this represents their compensation for their work, outlays, etc. The prices to be paid by the customer are fixed in advance so that while the Arab can raise his prices, this cannot be passed on to the customer as would be usual in the case of a shortage, for example.

Another consequence of the fact that the produce does not belong to the storekeeper is that he has no right to prevent a customer from taking produce. If the customer does not pay, the storekeeper can then take him to a *beis din*, but he has no right to withhold the produce, which is not his. *Sh'lchus*, by the way, is helpful only as a way of avoiding trading in produce with *kedushas Shevi'is*, where the produce belongs to a non-Jewish grower from whom it must ultimately be purchased. The harvests of tree fruits that grow on Jewish settlements are subject to another Torah law that does not apply to the non-Jewish grower: the Torah declares these fruits to be *hefker*, ownerless, so that anyone may come and take a portion. By protecting his "property" in the normal way, the owner transgresses a negative commandment (and according to some *Rishonim*, the fruit becomes forbidden too).

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One interesting development that this *Shmittah* has caused is the increased number of natives of Bnei Brak who have moved to Yerushalayim. According to *halacha*, even after moving to a town where a more lenient custom prevails than that observed in one's former abode, one must continue to adhere to one's own more stringent practice. There are thus considerable numbers of those who follow the *Chazon Ish*'s rulings and who wish to obtain and use non-Jewish produce in keeping with

# Charting a course through the opinions of the *Rishonim*, the *Chazon Ish* laid the foundations for the operation of today's *batei din* in managing the distribution of *Shmittah* fruits.

the requirements of *kedushas Shevi'is*. Because of this, the Bnei Brak-based *She'etris Yisroel* organization has opened several special *Shmittah* stores in Yerushalayim and even the *Eida* has introduced an option for arranging *sh'lichus* between the customer and middlemen.

Importing from *chutz l'Aretz* proper has sometimes been necessary in past *Shmittah* years, when it has been impossible to obtain sufficient supplies of permitted onions and potatoes in Israel.

## *The Gush Katif Initiative*

One further possible way of obtaining produce that is free of *Shmittah* prohibitions is through the type of cultivation developed in the Jewish settlements in Gush Katif, near Gaza. The basic aim of this approach (which in fact relies more on a combination of factors that make a lenient ruling possible than on one definite and conclusive *heter*) is to grow vegetables that derive no nourishment from the ground and are therefore subject to none of the laws applying during *Shmittah*. Inside giant hothouses, double plastic sheets are laid over the ground upon which the seedlings are placed, each in its own plastic wrapping.

Opinion is divided amongst present-day authorities as to the acceptability of this practice. A primary concern of the *poskim* is the danger of the situation becoming a free-for-all, enabling crops to be raised almost

as normal during *Shmittah*; if consent is given today, within certain very specific guidelines, for the present cultivation (for example, *halacha* may well view Gush Katif as being *chutz l'Aretz*), this consent may come to be exploited under conditions that are far less halachically tenable. Even the permission granted by the lenient authorities extends only to those types of vegetables that are commonly infested by bugs whose consumption Torah law forbids.

In recent years, the growers of Gush Katif have successfully applied new strategies of cultivation to crops of leafy vegetables, eliminating forbidden insect pests from the produce. In this way, thousands of Jews are saved from transgressing the Torah's prohibitions against eating those insects. In this case, since the consensus of opinion among the *Acharonim* is that the obligation to keep *Shmittah* today is of a rabbinical nature, there is a good case to be made for ruling more leniently on a matter that is rabbinically binding, in order to facilitate obser-

vance of a major Torah precept.

Ultimately, how much of an issue the Katif initiative becomes depends on whether the *Chareidi* public purchases the produce. Without sales, even halachic sanction will not be able to support the venture.

## II. MEETING THE DEMANDS OF THE MARKET

**A**s the *Shmittah*-observant population grows from one *Shmittah* to the next, as is clearly visible to anyone who has spent several *Shmittos* in *Eretz Yisroel*, how are the *kashrus* organizations able to arrange for there to be sufficient reserves of produce upon which to draw?

Part of the answer lies in the current political situation. The Israeli farming community has been having a very rough time in recent years, partly because of fierce competition for export markets and partly because of the ever-increasing amount of cheap Arab produce grown in the

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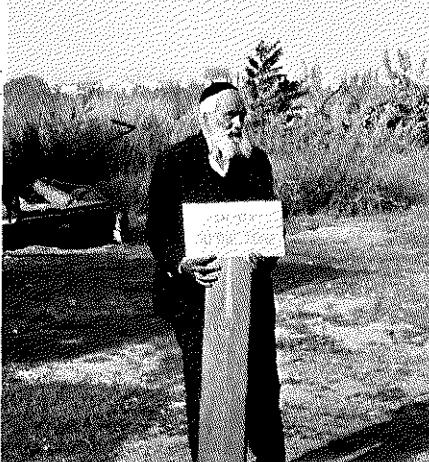
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Gaza strip and smuggled into Israel. An estimated three and a half thousand square dunams of land in Gaza are covered with hothouses where techniques (that in many cases have been gleaned during years of employment on Jewish settlements in neighboring Gush Katif) are used to grow



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large amounts of produce. The work of Jewish farmers is thus seriously undermined, for the Arab produce is subject to none of the limitations that are imposed by government production quotas. Although bringing the produce into Israel is illegal as well as damaging, the Government tacitly approves of the situation because employment for the residents of Gaza means less unrest and violence in the territory. While none of this is the doing of the *Chareidim*, one of the results is that there are much larger amounts of non-Jewish produce available, whose purchase by the *kashrus* organizations is specially authorized.

### *The Expanding Role of the Otzar Beis Din*

**A**nother institution that is becoming increasingly familiar to *Shmittah* observers is that of

"*otzar beis din*." (See Rabbi Shmuel Bloom's article, JO, Oct. '93.) Special rabbinically-controlled agencies are set up to manage the care, picking, processing and distribution of the *Shmittah* fruit harvest. These *batei din* are acting on behalf of the community, not the farmers; even when a vineyard or orchard has been given over to a *beis din*, individuals are still entitled to take small amounts of the produce for their own needs. Mention of the *otzar beis din* is made in the *Tosefta (Shevi'iis, 8:1-3)*, which describes how representatives of the *beis din* would hire workers to enter the orchards and harvest figs, olives and grapes, press them and keep the fig cakes, oil and wine in communal stores, distributing portions to each family every *Erev Shabbos*.

Charting a course through the opinions of the *Rishonim*, the *Chazon Ish* laid the foundations for the operation of today's *batei din* in managing the distribution of *Shmittah* fruits. Where *beis din* has incurred expenses in the care of the trees and fruit, in the picking, processing, packaging and distribution, it is entitled to compensation from members of the public who benefit from its efforts. This sum is fixed at the start of the season, and since it does not represent the price of the fruit, it is not subject to the usual market fluctuations. (Thus, during one period, this amount may be lower than the market price, while during another, it may be higher.)

Furthermore, the farmers themselves can be hired by the *beis din* to do the work, thus enabling them to derive some financial return while honoring the laws of *Shmittah*. One of the key aspects of the *beis din*'s work is making sure that all its operations are clearly seen to have no relation to the ordinary marketing of the fruit as it takes place during the remaining six years. For this reason, the fruits and wines are usually distributed weekly in the *Chareidi* population centers, rather than being brought into the *Shmittah* stores, and are clearly labelled as being under the care of the *otzar beis din*.

The *otzar beis din* last *Shmittah* headed by Rabbi Nissim Karelitz was in charge of the large grape harvests from

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the settlements of Poalei Agudas Yisroel. Hundreds of thousands of bottles of wine and grape juice were prepared and distributed throughout the end of the seventh year and the entire eighth year, in a massive operation that proved to be highly successful. Moshav Komemius operates a central *bais din* for all the settlements connected with the National Center For Shmittah-Observant Farmers. Several settlements in Gush Etzion, which had previously relied solely on the *hetter mechira*, organized the care and distribution of their fruit harvests under the supervision of a *bais din*, according to the rulings of the major poskim.

It is hardly possible to overestimate the role of the *otzar beis din* in spreading full *Shmittah* observance. It is much, much easier for a farmer to contemplate accepting the sacrifices that *Shmittah* observance will demand if he has a prospect of recouping some of his lost income by working for a *bais din*. (Obviously, very stringent investigation and supervision are necessary to ensure that the system is not exploited by dishonest farmers.) This is where the response of the *Chareidi* community is crucial. If members of the public complain about the quality of the fruit (which, in view of the fact that the permitted work is substantially curtailed, can hardly be expected to maintain its usual high standard), or about the amount they are asked to pay, they are missing the point. Adopting a "What's in it for me?" consumer mentality when obtaining *Shmittah* fruits can contribute to a farmer's regretful decision that he cannot observe *Shmittah* fully.

#### HARVESTING THE BOUNTY OF THE SHMITTAH YEAR'S BLESSINGS

In a passage in the *Sefer Chazon Ish* on *Shevi'is*, the author discusses the bountiful blessings that the Torah promises for observing *Shmittah*. He observes that these blessings are not promised as a substitute for the ordinary measures that we must always take in order to provide our own sustenance. Rather, they are a Divine assurance that we need not fear the seemingly impossible demands that *Shmittah* makes upon us; *Hashem* is telling us that if we observe His commandments wholeheartedly, we will benefit from His blessing and will not go hungry. Accordingly, *Chazal* themselves refrained from sanctifying certain areas

It is in the power of the *mitzva* of *Shmittah* to act as a potent spur to the progress of every aspect of the Torah *Yishuv* that is blossoming so profusely in *Eretz Yisroel*.

of conquered territory so that the poor could continue to farm them during *Shmittah*. We must therefore not expect to see open miracles before we support *Shmittah* observance, subsidizing, if need be—whether directly or indirectly—the efforts of the "mighty of strength" who are prepared to fight on the front lines. With no long-standing tradition of practical *Shmittah* observance over the centuries, we, as a united community in both *Eretz Yisroel* and *chutz l'Aretz*, must continue to work our way back to restoring the glory of this *mitzva*, fighting unfamiliarity and overcoming indifference. We must be aware that it is in the power of the *mitzva* of *Shmittah* to act as a potent spur to the progress of every aspect of the Torah *Yishuv* that is blossoming so profusely in *Eretz Yisroel*. ■

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# SECOND LOOKS

## IN SEARCH OF A LIVELIHOOD

**A**llow me to introduce myself. My name is Dov Borenstein, I am 31 years old, a resident of Lakewood, New Jersey. Up until March of 1992, I was learning full time in the kollel of Beth Medrash Govoha. At that time, with the approval and blessing of my Rosh Yeshiva, I embarked on an odyssey and journey which would last eleven months: the search for a job.

### **The Problem**

**I** did the usual things that people who are looking for a job will do. I spoke to all my relatives and friends and subsequently to all their relatives and friends. I followed up religiously on all the Help Wanted ads that seemed suitable in the papers, and closely monitored the bulletin board adjacent to the coffee room in the Yeshiva.

For the first time in my life I felt I was up against a barrier that seemed insurmountable. Here I thought myself to be a mature and responsible person who was honest, intelligent, articulate and very ambitious, and yet I could not seem to get past that first question: "Yes, I understand, Mr. Borenstein, but what sort of work experience have you had until now?"

### **The Shot in the Dark**

**A**fter a few months of looking, with only one job interview under my belt, I approached a job counselor at Project COPE for assistance. He suggested I attend the course training people in the skills and knowledge necessary to become assistant comptrollers in health care facilities, being offered

**Dov Borenstein** lives in Lakewood, NJ, from where he commutes to his position in Brooklyn.

by COPE Institute.

I was skeptical but felt I had nothing to lose. I was not making headway in my search for a job any other way. All the other hot tips had not produced results.

The course was very intense, teaching us basic accounting and computer literacy skills as well as how to process receivables for nursing homes. While the course was only ten weeks long, it required a full-time commitment and was very challenging.

After the course ended, the personnel at COPE Institute arranged an internship for me at a nursing center in Hazlet, New Jersey, where I was involved in the accounts receivable, accounts payable, payroll and Medicaid reimbursement.

While I had done well in the assistant comptrollers' course and nearly all of my fellow students found employment in the field, I wasn't happy. I needed to find a position where my interpersonal skills would be used, so I began looking around for other options.

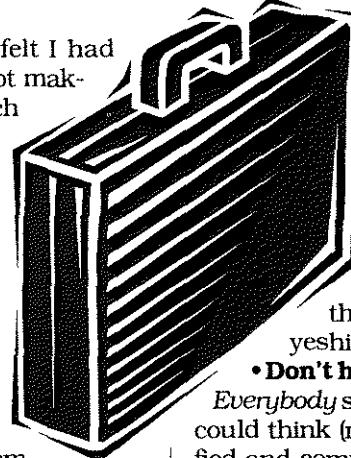
### **Home At Last**

**I**n January of 1993, I was interviewed for the position of Personnel Specialist at Project OHR (a vendor agency contracted by the City and State of New York, to provide home care for the elderly and handicapped). As they say, the rest is history... which leads me to the purpose of this article. My job search, the hiring, and subsequent promotion at Project OHR was an experience and education which I would like to share.

**• Make yourself employable.** When you are looking for a job, you are actually a salesman trying to market a product—namely, yourself. Therefore,

you must attempt to make yourself attractive to the prospective employer.

The work I had done with adult education at the Twin Rivers Learning Program, which is staffed by Lakewood Kollel fellows on a volunteer basis, and the



fund raising for Shalom Torah Center during its Elul campaign in Lakewood, proved to be valuable aids in landing me the job. These activities were performed during a period when I was still learning three sedorim a day in the yeshiva.

#### **• Don't have false expectations.**

Everybody starts at the bottom. You could think (rightfully so) how qualified and competent you are, but the point is that there are a lot of people out there who are looking for work, many with years of experience. You will have to prove yourself before you can move up the corporate ladder.

A few months after I started working a position became available at my company. I approached some of my friends and the standard answer was, "I can't work for \$450 a week. I'll lose my government entitlements. Coupled with the cost of commuting and the deductions for taxes, I will be working for practically nothing!"

When I mentioned the job to someone who had been working, his response was completely the opposite: "\$450 to start! That sounds very good!"

**• Upward Mobility.** People who are qualified and work hard, do move up. After a few months, the Personnel Specialist Supervisor position at Project OHR became available. I applied for the job, was interviewed, but someone else was hired. Was I disappointed? No. The person who was hired was much older than I, with much more experience, but at least I showed my willingness to take on more responsibilities at work. Two months later the position of site-coordinator opened up. I applied and was hired.



**I** feel grateful to all those individuals who helped me, advised me and gave me moral support during my search. With our *tefilos* to Hashem and our efforts in this direction, we will be on our way to fulfilling one of the basic *mitzvos* in the Torah—the *mitzva* of *gemillus chassodim* in the form of supporting one's own family. ■



# Letters to the Editor

## BOOKS FOR THE FAITHFUL: HOW DO WE BANKROLL THEM?

To the Editor:

Suppose you were to assemble a group of Orthodox women writers, authors of books put out by the Orthodox publishers. What would they talk about? I ran that experiment in Jerusalem a few times, so I can tell you. We talked about the frustrations of not being able to reach the wider secular audience, and about the difficulties of wending one's way through a mine field of forbidden topics without sacrificing honesty and depth.

In Rabbi Fyvel Shuster's review article of an anti-Orthodox novel (JO Jan.'94), he ends on a note of challenge: "Somehow, the Torah community must find in its midst talented individuals who will be able to 'stir the emotions and spirit' of the rapidly shrinking Jewish population with images of *kedusha*. If we write articles, book reviews and fiction that will be read only by our community, we are surrendering the global battlefield to our enemies."

After a year of investigating the distribution problem, I do not think that the problem is a lack of talented authors, loyal readers or dedicated publishers. The two barriers to wider distribution of Orthodox books are prejudice among secular intellectuals and the economics of trade publishing.

Most secular opinion-makers can be presumed to have minds hermetically sealed to favorable views of Orthodox Jews, but a few might be susceptible to influence by well-written, carefully edited and impeccably produced Orthodox literature. The more serious problems are economic. The Orthodox publishers run on tight budgets, in which every book has to pay for itself. The difference between getting 60% of list price from a Jewish book store, or 42% of list from a

trade distributor is crucial to them. They can't pour \$4000 into promoting a book in the secular press, nor do they all distribute review copies.

Because of the financial exigencies, Orthodox publishers are very conservative about publishing any book which might be criticized in the JO, or which is aimed more at the secular Jew than at the religious market. I wrote a novel which has come out only in French translation. Why? Because French Jewish publishing is subsidized and outreach-oriented, concerned about how the

book will go over in Paris and Marseilles, where the English publisher has to ask how it will go in Boro Park and Monsey. The main purpose of that book was to convince not-so-university graduates that Orthodox Jews are not troglodytes—just the sort of message that Rabbi Shuster wishes we could put across, but not a message aimed at the religious strongholds.

Outside funding of promotion and trade distribution for a few high-quality Orthodox books could be the key to reaching estranged Jews whose

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Jewish spark still guides their reading. A well-written adult novel with solid Jewish outlook will sell its 3000-5000 copies in the religious market. The point to a promotion subsidy would be to sell an additional 10,000-20,000 copies to less committed Jews. Who knows what opportunities are being missed because the burden of advertising and promotion is left to publishers who cannot afford it on any significant scale? The Orthodox writers would surely put more time and effort into their work if there were a chance of reaching that wider audience.

RACHEL POMERANTZ

Bnei Brak

Mrs. Pomerantz is a published author, whose books include *Wildflower* (a novel), *Wings Above the Flames* (Holocaust stories also published in Hebrew under the title *Mikur HaBarzel*), *The World in Flames* (A Short History of the Holocaust), and *Un Temps pour Refaire*, described in her letter. She has also written stories that have been published in anthologies.

### PROBLEMS WITH SOLUTIONS TO THE "FICTIONAL" ASSAULT

To the Editor:

Rabbi Fyvel Shuster has articulated an anguish felt by many at the perverse success of *kofrim* and *malshirim* (heretics and slanderers) in smearing Torah Judaism with lies and deadly distortion. His solution to combat this evil is not too comforting, however.

At the close of his article, Rabbi Shuster asks that the Torah community "find in its midst talented individuals" who can "stir the emotions and spirit" with images of *kedusha*, that will be read by the global Jewish community (i.e., not only by "our community"). The author does not dispute that the Torah view has been presented and enhanced in the English language during the past several decades by numerous works in both conventional and creative format. The fresh format of *This Is My G-d*, by Herman Wouk, made it a best-seller, and, although the book would probably not pass muster in the more careful scrutiny of the Yeshiva World, it certainly presented a positive picture of classical Judaism that was discussed in the salons of estranged American Jewry. Likewise, *Go, My Son*, by Rabbi Chaim Shapiro, spun an unusual tale of *Yiddishkeit* holding true in bizarre circumstances and under severe pressure. This book, too, found a readership in wider circles. Both of these, however, are examples of non-fiction. Since the bulk of Rabbi Shuster's article deals with the current spate of novels that distort Torah Judaism, the reader assumes that he is asking for religious Jews to produce novels that will accurately portray Torah values. I respectfully submit that Rabbi Shuster's proposal is fatally flawed. His proposed tactic would surrender

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the battlefield before a shot is fired.

Students of literature will attest that a novel is, almost by definition, a tale about human weakness. Just a cursory study of the "novel" genre will instruct the objective observer that, indeed, without the *yeitzer hora* there is no novel. The reading public is specifically attracted to the emotions portrayed in a novel, and gets into such a work to experience such emotions vicariously (or voyeuristically). The *yeitzer hora* is obviously attracted to books with a sexual theme. But he is also riding high when the story revolves around greed, jealousy, power, or other human failing, or when it dabbles with idolatry or the occult. I have heard that the *Ari zal* said that merely speaking of a sinful act strengthens the hand of the *sitra achra* (the "other side"). A novel involves the interplay between the forces of morality and corruption. A story will have no place in the marketplace of recreational reading unless the author has harnessed some *ruach shtuss* to appeal to the baser aspects of the reader's personality. Even if the good "wins" at the end, the reader has given his feelings a sinful workout.

Thus, a *ben Torah* who would enter the cultural fray with an offering of a novel has chosen the wrong weapon, and he cannot win. If his story is "Simon Pure"—that is, if evil is clearly banished from attaining any standing on the pages of his cre-

ation—the work will be viewed as a polemic, and will not be read except by those already in the *frum* community. If the author adds the essential spice to his creation, giving validity and respectable standing to romance, conflict, corruption, or some other human failing, he has added to the corruption of his readership. Just as importantly, the writer has had to get into the mud with his enemy. By allowing those who worship culture to choose the weapons, the good soldier becomes a casualty before his creation ever hits the printing press.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

#### ORTHODOX WRITERS: UNDERESTIMATING THEIR PIVOTAL ROLE

To the Editor:

If Orthodox writers ever get worked up enough to sit down at our computers and successfully counteract books such as Eric Segal's ridiculously ignorant novel, *Acts of Faith*, Fyvel Shuster's wonderfully eye-opening article in the January issue of *JO* may later be recognized as the catalyst that inflamed us.

As a writer, I needed to hear Rabbi Shuster explain that it is their "Jewish spark" that prompts non-observant Jews who are "curious about the mysterious world of the Orthodox," to read such novels, and that this one

book has "reached more Jews than the combined efforts of all *kiruv* activities in America in the past year."

What stops Orthodox writers from writing for their non-religious brethren? As anyone who has tried writing for both worlds will tell you, there is an expression, "Too *frum* for the *frei* and too *frei* for the *frum*." In other words, if his true religious perspective is too explicit, a writer will be rejected by secular publishers, and if it is not explicit enough, he will be rejected by the religious ones. There is a fine art

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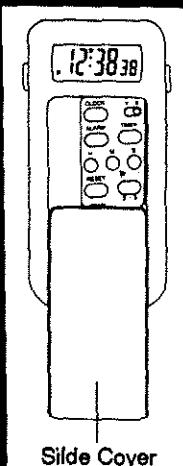
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involved in excluding from one's work anything that will not be elevating, while at the same time reflecting enough of the world that the reader will find his own self truthfully mirrored there. It is an art that has not yet been mastered by Orthodox Jewish writers.

That is why we cannot really be said to have produced our own great literature, one that serves as a genuine *kiddush Hashem* before the world. And it is why the field is left wide open to those who have benefited richly by stereotyping us cheaply.

The hundreds of talented Orthodox writers in our midst grossly underestimate their role in the grand scheme of things. May they be prompted to overcome all the formidable stumbling blocks involved in getting published by bearing in mind Rabbi Shuster's remark: "If we write articles, book reviews, and fiction that are read only by our community, we are surrendering the global battlefield to our enemies."

SARAH SHAPIRO  
Jerusalem

*Mrs. Shapiro is a published writer, and editor of the ArtScroll Judaicope volume, Of Home and Heart, an anthology of Jewish Observer articles on women's issues.*

### Rabbi Shuster Responds:

The author of the anonymous letter seems to base his criticism of my proposal that we create authentic Jewish fiction that will enter the mass market on two assumptions:

1. "Without the *yeitzer hora* there is no novel.... A story will have no place in the marketplace of recreational reading unless the author has harnessed some *ruach shtuss* to appeal to the baser aspects of the reader's personality."
2. "Merely speaking of a sinful act strengthens the hands of the *sitra achara*."

While the author is correct that much fiction (not to mention theater, films, and popular music) can attribute its popularity to the glorification of sin or sinful tendencies, a sig-

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nificant portion of it does not. Advertisements may resort to pornographic displays in order to attract the attention of a jaded public, but there is still room in the marketplace for a clean, honest, intelligent ad campaign. Similarly, a talented author can still write a meaningful novel which offers the reader a powerful emotional and intellectual experience that is neither vicariously or voyeuristically sinful. True, without a *yeitzer hora* there would probably be no novel, because there would be no human beings as we know them. Without the *yeitzer hora*, there would be no *mussar seforim* as we know them either! Quality fiction written by a *yirei Shamayim* will generate a healthy interest in Torah Judaism among the broader Jewish community.

The author's second assumption, which he heard "in the name of the *Ari zal*," is even harder to accept. If merely speaking of a sinful act strengthens the hands of the *sitra achra* he would have to eliminate large sections of Torah Shebichsav and *Sheba'al Peh*. Should we not study the "sins" of *Adam Harishon* and *cheit ha'eigel*? Should we skip the confrontation of *Eliyahu Hanavi* and *Neviyye Haba'al* on *Har Hacarmel*? Is *Meseches Sota* to be eliminated from *Shas*? Are the great *mussar shmuessen* of *mashgichim* and the stories of the *maggidim* and the *rebbes* through the generations to be censored? All of these discuss "the interplay between the forces of morality and corruption." I suggest that the authenticity of the statement attributed to the *Ari zal* be investigated. Clearly, sin must be put in the proper perspective in all formats, including fiction.

Rachel Pomerantz voices the frustration of many authors' inability to reach a wider public. It seems to me that a symposium for writers, publishers, *Rabbonim* and *kiruv* professionals could result in the recognition of Jewish fiction, written for the mass market, as a necessary component of our efforts to reach Jews worldwide. Perhaps this could result in the support necessary to create and market authentic Jewish fiction.

RABBI FYVEL SHUSTER  
Skokie

**CONSORTIUM OF ORTHODOX  
JEWISH GROUPS OPENS  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELFARE  
PROGRAMS IN FORMER USSR**

Two cracker and matzoh factories, two kosher meat processing plants, the beginnings of a network of day care centers, a job apprenticeship program and a publishing enterprise are among the first projects of a new endeavor being launched this year by a consortium of American-based Orthodox Jewish groups working in the former Soviet Union.

The consortium, founded and led by Agudath Israel of America, has won the backing of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) and World Learning Inc. for the series of projects, which are designed to create jobs for local residents and promote general economic welfare, and to provide a financial base for local community service and social action programs.

The cracker and matzoh factories, in Kiev and Moscow, are already operational under the consortium's auspices, producing inexpensive products that are much in demand throughout

the year. Before Pesach, at peak season, as much as 6 tons of matzoh a day were baked at these factories. The two kosher meat processing plants, also in Kiev and Moscow, are also up and running, supplying a growing market. Together, these facilities have created scores of new jobs, and earnings from their sales have been earmarked to fund specific community needs.

Modern day care centers have also already been opened by the consortium in Kiev and Moscow, providing excellent early childhood education while affording parents of enrollees the opportunity to find gainful employment. Still in the planning stages are tourist and international trade service bureaus in Kiev, Kishinev, Moscow and Tbilisi, a publishing house and a newspaper in Kishinev, and a business apprenticeship program in a location to be determined.

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
VOTES TO RETAIN CHAPTER 2  
PROGRAM OF SCHOOL AID**

WASHINGTON—Yet another hurdle was overcome in the fight to preserve a measure that has provided desperately needed resources to yeshivos throughout the country, as the full House of Representatives in late March approved the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended in committee to retain the aid program known as "Chapter 2".

The Administration's version of the bill as sent to Congress sought to eliminate the existing Chapter 2—which allows schools to utilize its funding in a variety of ways—and replace it with an aid program focusing on teacher development. Yeshivos, which by nature of their needs tend to use Chapter 2 funding most heavily in other areas, could

have suffered substantially if the proposal was passed in its original form.

In an early showdown over the issue, a House sub-committee rejected an amendment designed to restore Chapter 2 in slightly modified form. But after a high-gear campaign by Agudath Israel and other school groups, the full House Labor and Education Committee voted to overturn the sub-committee decision and approve the amendment. Agudath Israel again went to work to avert any erosion of support for Chapter 2 in the full House. The battle now moves to the Senate, where hearings have already commenced on the bill.

**MID-ATLANTIC CONFERENCE FOR  
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"The Interface of Ethics, Halacha, and the Professional World" will be the theme of the forthcoming Mid-Atlantic Conference on Halacha sponsored by Agudath Israel of America's Torah Projects Division.

The keynote session of the event, on the topic, "The Observant Jewish Professional: Challenges and Opportunities," will feature an overview by Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Ner Israel of Baltimore, and an address by Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Telshe-Chicago.

General session topics to be addressed are: "Confronting the Challenge of Shabbos in the Hospital, the Office, the Factory and the Parking Lot" and "The Observant Jew in the Secular Workplace". Symposia on topics relating to specific fields include: "Halachic Issues at the Beginning and End of Life"; "Interest and Investments: Halachic Parameters"; and "An Halachic Look at Dispute Resolution: Arkaos, Batei Din,

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#### NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN 2ND AGUDAH-SPONSORED KIRUV SEMINAR

After a gratifyingly successful first undertaking in February, Agudath Israel's newly-formed committee for Kiruv Rechokim projects is sponsoring its second four-day Arachim Seminar this May. The Arachim program is a highly acclaimed and effective series of lectures introducing Torah Judaism to Jews from non-observant backgrounds, presented by well-known Torah scholars and professionals from various scientific fields.

Members of the Torah community are urged to take advantage of the opportunity to offer a true glimpse into Torah belief and practice to a non-observant neighbor, friend, co-worker or relative. The retreat takes place over Memorial Day weekend, May 26-30, at the White Plains Hotel in White Plains, New York. Speakers providing detailed information on the retreat can be arranged by Agudath Israel to address gatherings of prospective participants. For more information, call Agudath Israel's outreach hotline, 1-800-KIRUV-84.

#### JURY VERDICT ON FUNERAL HOME SENDS "POWERFUL MESSAGE," SAYS AGUDATH ISRAEL

In a notable court case, a jury has found a Manhattan-based funeral home chain liable for releasing the body of an observant Jew for autopsy without permission of the deceased's family.

A New York State law passed in 1983, drafted by now-Speaker of the Assembly Sheldon Silver, generally prohibits the performance of an autopsy when the family of a decedent objects to the procedure on religious grounds or—if they are not present—when there is reason to believe they would object.

In the case before the court, employees of Riverside Memorial Chapel had released the body of an 82 year old man, known to be an Orthodox Jew, to the New York City Medical Examiners' Office for autopsy without contacting any member of the family.

The court awarded \$1,350,000 in punitive damages against Riverside, plus \$75,000 for emotional anguish suffered by the plaintiff, the decedent's daughter, who was represented by attorneys Gary S. Mayerson and I. Jeffrey Corbin of the

Manhattan law firm of Graubard Mollen Horowitz Pomeranz & Shapiro.

According to reports, Riverside said that it has since updated its practices and in the future will insist on a written court order before releasing a body to the Medical Examiner against a family's wishes.

"A powerful message has been sent with this verdict," said David Zwiebel, general counsel for Agudath Israel of America, "putting funeral homes and medical examiners on notice that the religious beliefs of a decedent must be respected, and that there will be a steep price to pay when they are not."

#### 1300 YOUNGSTERS ATTEND PIRCHEI AGUDATH ISRAEL NATIONAL SIYUM MISHNAYOS

Over 1300 boys gathered in Monsey in March for the 31st National Siyum Mishnayos of Pirchei Agudath Israel, a memorable event that underscored the concept of personal dedication to Torah learning and honor for Torah and its students and scholars.

Just to gain admittance to the event, each participant was required to learn a prescribed number of Mishnayos. Top awardees of the evening had committed to memory thousands of passages by heart as part of Pirchei's Mishnayos B'Al Peh Contest or had studied the entire *Shisha Sidrei Mishnah* as part of the youth movement's Mishnayos L'Chvod Bar Mitzvah project.

The keynote message at the event was presented by Rabbi Zechariah Gelley, Rav of Khal Adath Jeshurun. The Rav of Skver, Rabbi Moshe Neuschloss, graced the gathering with *divrei brocho*. Rabbi Naftoli Friedler, Rav of Khal Adath Jeshurun of Monsey, who had personally tested the winners, was also present to pay the children tribute. The top honorees: Chaim Shneur Waschman of Monsey, Yehoshua Zev Olshin of Lakewood, and Shimon Waxman of Lakewood. Over 600 children from throughout the Middle Atlantic states and from as far away as Los Angeles participated in a festive Shabbos convention leading up to the event.

#### NEW MINCHA MINYAN MAP

The 1994 Mincha Minyan Map for the New York metropolitan area, published by the Community Services Division of Agudath Israel of America, is now available to the public.

The location map/directory lists locations where *Mincha* services are held during the workday, including sites in midtown and downtown Manhattan, as

well as addresses in Brooklyn, Washington Heights, the Bronx, Queens, Long Island, New Jersey, Staten Island, and Westchester. Each address is listed along with the time of the *minyan*, a contact person, and a phone number for more information. The directory is available from Agudath Israel, 84 William Street, New York, NY 10038, tel. (212) 797-9000. The next edition of the guide is scheduled for publication in Fall 1994.

#### Rabbi Aryeh Schechter SOFER S'TAM



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