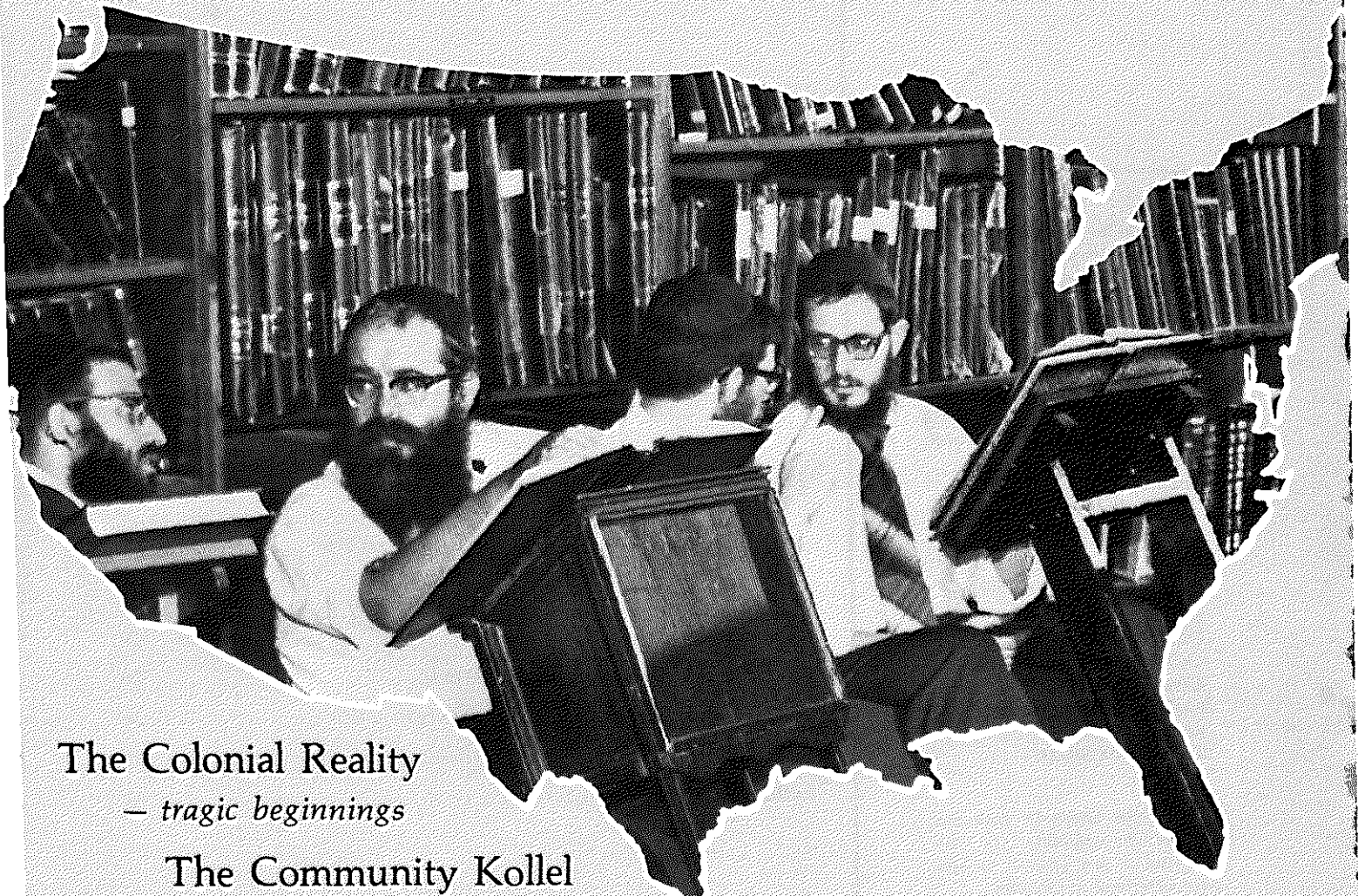


THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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The Coming of Age of the Torah Community in America



The Colonial Reality
— *tragic beginnings*

The Community Kollel
— *reaching out with Torah*

An Appreciation of Rabbi Gedalia Schorr זצ"ל
— *an American-bred Torah giant*

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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The Colonial Reality: A Message For Our Time

It was the time of the Baal Shem Tov and the Vilna Gaon: an epoch of explosive ideas and profound erudition. It was the age of geographic fame, when names like Mezeritch, Karlin, Frankfort, and Prague took on universal meaning. To the Jew of our day, the eighteenth century symbolizes a sterling era, one in which our ancestors surely enjoyed a level of Torah observance and learning currently unsurpassed.

Yet when we look to our own continent, the image of daily Jewish life is blurred. We sense that in crossing the Atlantic, Judaism suffered more than mere transference; the echoes of colonial attitudes have a curiously hollow sound.

Most of our assumptions about colonial life are formulated on secular standards. We laud Jewish soldiers who hoisted our banner

as patriots; we praise the ingenuity of industrialists and craftsmen who opened a new range of occupations; we revere the colonial Jew's tenacity in attaining his rights—and ours—to live on American soil free of official persecution.

Impressed by all of this ethnic vigor, observant Jews today may have lost sight of the most important questions pertinent to this period: What was the quality of religious life of these early settlers? How was their identity transformed from Jews who chanced to live in America—to Americans who chanced to be Jews?

Innocuous when casually read as history, their story takes on power and relevance when scrutinized in the light of its striking modern parallels.

The Sephardic Myth

Though a few individuals had previously migrated from Europe, the first known Jewish group in North America arrived in New Amsterdam (New York City) *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, 1654. Consisting of 23 refugees from the Portuguese takeover and Inquisition in Brazil, the weary band had fought hard and lost much.

These Marrano descendants established themselves at the tip of Manhattan as an ethnic entity not easily overcome. While select civil liberties were accorded them by the Dutch, communal prayer was outlawed as "offensive" until a British sanction in 1695. The group lost no time in founding Congregation Shearith Israel (known today as the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue), which was to wield its Sephardic influence over American congregations for the next 130 years.

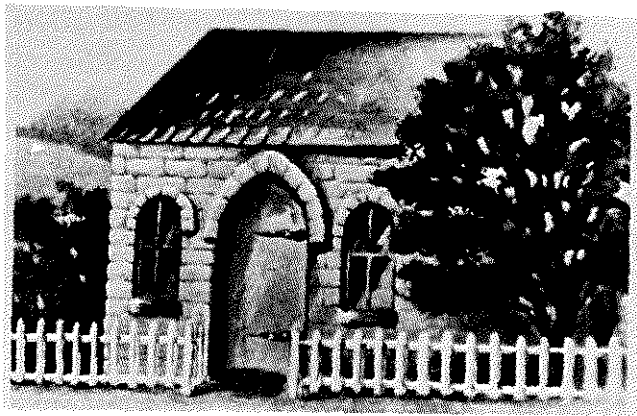
So pervasive was Sephardic emphasis in custom and prayer during this period, many of us today assume

that all early Jewish settlers were of Sephardic origin. The fact is, however, that 50% of the Shearith Israel congregants in 1695 were Ashkenazim, newly emigrated from Holland and England. By 1729, Ashkenazim were in the clear majority, but had agreed to comply with Sephardic traditions as the "American way" of worship.

It was no compliment to be labeled "Tedesco," the Judeo-Spanish term for an Ashkenazic Jew. Despite their scanty religious education, Sephardim considered themselves cultural heirs of poets and philosophers, in a class far above their Ashkenazic neighbors.

Yet the traditional distance previously kept between the two groups in large European cities shriveled quickly in the microcosm of American life. The barrier gave way when the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue, anxious for members, welcomed their Ashkenazic brethren to their *kehilla*. Faced with the choice of intermarriage to gentiles or alliance with "Tedescoes," the original settlers generally chose Jewish marriage partners. This pattern was to change in later years.

Mrs. Friedland lives in Monsey, N.Y. This is her first appearance in these pages.



Shearith Israel Synagogue on Mill Street in New York, 1730-1817.

The New Jew

As the lines of their Old World heritage disintegrated, the settlers realized they had bred a new variety of Jew—the American. As a rule, Marranoes had come to the continent seeking safety, Ashkenazim seeking fortune. From the start, the effort to “Americanize” seemed mandatory to achieve both of these goals. Yiddish, Portuguese, Spanish, German and Dutch were rapidly discarded for the King’s English.

Though respected as businessmen, they were still lacking social acceptance. Snubbed by the exclusive clubs of their wealthy town, prominent Newport Jews formed a society of their own for the express purpose of weekly sessions of dinner and cards. As these same gentlemen were also building the Touro Synagogue (Congregation Jeshuat Israel, now a national landmark), their club constitution banned “synagogue talk” as it inevitably led to heated bickering! Fines were imposed on any distinguished member who incited “brawling.”

The dedication of their synagogue in 1763 was a typical example of American-Jewish ecumenism. Church leaders and Christian lay authorities attended the Touro opening amidst great ceremony and pompous declarations of mutual respect. In New York, Jews helped finance the building of the Trinity Church steeple. Several years later, Gentiles were called upon to support the failing Philadelphia synagogue, the largest sum, five pounds, donated by Benjamin Franklin.

The term “minister,” applied to New York’s Chazan, was not a voluntary emulation of Christian clergy. State law, established in 1684 prior to the creation of synagogues, required that every congregation designate a legal “minister” to officiate at religious-civil functions. The role of the Chazan-Reverend, “Minister” or “Pastor” was that of religious functionary, teacher, and organizer of communal services. And he was often barely better educated than the people he advised.

Questions of *halacha* were usually sent to the Chazan of New York, the most famous of whom was

*See JO, Jan. '77.

Gershom M. Seixas.* With the aid of his German-educated son-in-law, I. B. Kursheedt, he dispensed *piskei din* based on his understanding of *Shulchan Aruch*. With becoming modesty and a realistic sense of his limitations, Seixas forwarded all complicated matters and divorce petitions to the *Bet Din* of Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue in London. He steadfastly refused to attempt conversions, even when pressured by synagogue officers who sought to bring in gentile wives. It is largely to his credit that the New York *kehilla* achieved both prominence and permanence despite its increasing secularism. Though Seixas’s education was threadbare compared to European counterparts, his flair for public relations stands unsurpassed.

Mitzvos in the Colonies—A Brief Glory

What was daily life like for the observant Jew in the colonies? To be sure, he had no luxury of choices as do Jews in major cities today. In his town, there would be one synagogue, one teacher, perhaps a *mikva*. A *mohel* would travel from one community to the next, often arriving months after a child was born.

He could always depend upon the hospitality of fellow Jews in every colony. So well known was the *hachnosas orchim* and generosity of American Jew, that *meshulachim* (charity collectors) from Palestine and the world over made frequent trips to the colonies.

Newport, Rhode Island, is known to have had a *mikva*, as did New York, Philadelphia and Savannah, Georgia, though their use declined as the years went on. Yet similar to today, even the most estranged Jew was meticulous about observance of *shiva* and *yahrzeit*.

Though far from observant, most Jews still retained a clear idea of what traditional Judasim entails. Unlike later generations who ascribed to the conscience-calming concepts of the Reform movement, their frame of reference for observance remained the Orthodox standard.

The temptations to abandon *mitzvos* were numerous and powerful. Yet isolated stories have come down to us of individuals who displayed outstanding *mesiras nefesh* to preserve Judasim intact in their own lives. As early as 1658, Jacob Barsimson battled Dutch authorities and won the right not to testify in court on *Shabbos*. Twenty years later, his fellow Jew in New Amsterdam, Asher Levy, challenged the colonial government to license him as a butcher, omitting the usual oath taken “on the faith of a Christian,” and was “excused from killing hogs, as his religion does not allow him to do it.”

A most poignant example of personal struggle is documented in a letter dated 1790 from a young Jewish mother in Petersburg, Virginia to her parents in Germany. As the only *Shomer Shabbos* family, she and her husband feel overwhelmed battling the assimilationist environment surrounding them. She has labored to teach her three-year-old daughter, Schoene, to say “*Birchas hamazon*” and “*Shema*,” yet her fears for the

child haunt her. She writes:

Dear Parents,

I know quite well you will not want me to bring up my children like Gentiles. Here, they cannot become anything else. . .

She concludes that for the sake of her family, they must leave Petersburg and emigrate to Charleston, South Carolina, where a stronger community of 300 Jews exists. Perhaps there, they will have a fighting chance to remain Jews.

One of the most illustrious examples of an observant Sephardic Jew was Aaron Lopez. Refugees of the Portuguese Inquisition, the Lopez family arrived in the colonies in 1750. Aaron quickly made his way to Newport, where he prospered in international trade. At the height of his empire, he owned over thirty ships, each with orders to its captain never to set sail on *Shabbos* or holidays. His persistent refusal to conduct business on *Shabbos* ultimately won him widespread respect. Synonymous with honesty and refinement, the name "Aaron Lopez" was entered in the diary of Yale University president, Ezra Stiles, as "without a single enemy and the most universally beloved . . . of any man I ever knew."

Fully aware of the terrors of the Inquisition, Lopez used his vessels to smuggle Marranoes from Portugal to the colonies. His most treasured success was in bringing over his own brother, sister-in-law, and their three sons. Immediately renouncing the Christianity which had been forced upon them, the couple remarried in accordance with *halacha* and renamed their sons with Jewish names. Aaron personally sent for a *mohel* to perform *bris milah* on all four men. Like other Marranoes, the Lopez family joyously celebrated all *Yom Tovim* and paid scrupulous attention to fasts.

With his sudden death after the Revolution, Newport lost its leadership and inspiration. Judah Touro and other young people migrated elsewhere. Only the elderly founders remained, and Newport rapidly became a relic of colonial Judaism.

It was at this post-Revolutionary point that a distinct decline in religious observance became noticeable in every colony, particularly among the youth. A telling letter, dated 1785, reached Rabi Saul Lowenstamm in Amsterdam from Philadelphian, I. W. Carpeles. His precise words were: *רב בני מדינות הים אינם בני תורה ואינם מכינים בלשוננו הקדושה*

Most people who live overseas are not Torah Jews, and do not understand our sacred language.

A New Look at the Revolution

It is a popular notion among historians that the Revolution made many Americans to defect from all religions. Claiming that a general "spirit of freedom" permeated society, they argue that it was natural for religion to be regarded as any other undemocratic

authority.

This explanation is entirely too facile concerning Judaism, which has never been antithetical to freedom and could not be equated, even to the American mind, with tyranny. It has also been suggested that of the 2000-3000 American Jews, hundreds joined state militias and the Continental Army, where they became accustomed to breaking tradition. But why would one who is sincerely scrupulous about religious practice volunteer in the first place?

There is one example known to us. An observant French Jew arrived in 1777, volunteered for military service and immediately informed his commanding officer that he could not work on *Shabbos*. His manner was so convincing and direct, this unprecedented order was issued:

Benjamin Nones, being of the Jewish religion, and having signified that it is inconsistent with his Jewish religion to perform military duties on Friday night, it is ordered that he be exempted from military duties that night of the week.

It is not recorded how he managed on Saturday. Yet, this recognition, in an age when Jews were still fleeing the torch, had enormous impact on all American citizens and helped set the stage for official establishment of freedoms once the country was independent.

Ironically, a second milestone was provided by the British. Joseph Darmstadt, a Jewish Hessian soldier imported to fight the colonists, decided to remain in America after the war. Because of his energy and charisma, he attracted twenty-nine families to Virginia, where they created a model community in Richmond. Instrumental in founding their synagogue, Beth Shalom, in 1790, Darmstadt remained at the center of Jewish activity all his life, helping many to settle in the area and providing whatever Jewish services possible.

Did the Revolution weaken Judaism in 1776? It is more likely that the decline was in motion long before the war due to several factors in American Jewish life. Not the least of these elements were (1) the erosion of *mitzva* observance, (2) the disintegration of *kehilla* cohesiveness, and (3) the jumbled effect of the Marrano experience. The simplest way to trace the waning of *mitzvos* is to focus on one in particular: *Kashrus*.

From "Egg-eaters" to Inside-Out Kashrus

Though often poorly educated, many early settlers had the foresight and determination to familiarize themselves with the laws of *shechita* before emigrating to the New World. So many people were knowledgeable in this area, that it was common for families to provide their own meat or hire one of the numerous freelance *shochtim* available. This advantage was particularly important on the frontier, where it was difficult to import meat provided by the synagogues. So well-known was the traveling peddlars' insistence on *kashrus*, Cherokee Indians nick-named the Jews "egg-eaters."

The most efficient and productive meat source was Shearith Israel. Under the direction of the *Beis Din*, the *shochet* was frequently tested and admonished to adhere strictly to law. Unfortunately, such reprimands were justified, for kosher meat was sold to the public through licensed gentile butchers. The *shochet* placed a tag on the meat indicating day of slaughter: after three days, the butcher was to remove the tag and sell the meat as non-kosher. Needless to say, this system invited abuse and several incidents of negligence or fraud are recorded.

Unaware that such confusion existed, the Jews of Curacao and Jamaica depended on exported meat from New York. When Shearith Israel took the shortcut of shipping untagged meat in barrels simply marked "K.S.H.I. KOSHER," the *Chacham* of Kingston complained angrily, pointing out the obvious probability of theft or substitutions.

A particularly American phenomenon was the large numbers of settlers who had lived quasi-Christian lives before arriving in the colonies. As a result, they had become habituated to maintaining kosher homes, while availing themselves of every food in public.

A Swedish traveler, named Peter Kalm, noted incredulously in his diary that the Jews of America . . . *"commonly eat no pork; yet I have been told by several men of credit that many of them (especially among the young Jews) when travelling did not make the least difficulty about eating this or any other meat that was put before them."*

The warped concept of "inside-kosher, outside-treife" had begun to take root in the American mind.

The Plague of Inter-marriage

Following hard upon the decline of *mitzva* observance, intermarriage became increasingly common. The once proud Marrano heritage, often intact for seven generations under adversity, gradually gave way to intermarriage in the light of freedom. Difficult indeed was the quandary of congregations whose members, sometimes officers, introduced gentile wives and children. The Philadelphia synagogue had the uncomfortable distinction of having as its founder David Franks. Married to a Christian, he raised his daughter, Rebecca, to be the "belle" of the city and the delight of the British military; all the while maintaining his status as a prominent Jewish leader.

Of course, the causes of intermarriage are deep and complicated. But a significant factor in the pattern here is that, unlike later Jewish migrations of entire families to the New World, young men of the eighteenth century came alone. Sometimes, they would send for a waiting bride from their native land. More often, they sought wives after arrival.

We must note here with admiration that American Jewish women rarely intermarried. Even in situations where choices were few, most Daughters of Israel preferred spinsterhood to union with a non-Jew.

The Crumbling Kehilla

Like the European *kehillos* of its day, Shearith Israel originally required total obedience from its congregants. Observance of *Shabbos*, *kashrus*, marriage regulations and synagogue attendance were expected of every member. Fines were imposed for talking during the davening, or even for raising one's voice louder than that of the *Chazan*. Though the *ezras nashim* (women's section) was completely concealed, married women were prohibited from occupying the front rows. If a member was particularly obstinate in serious desecrations, the *kehilla* could resort to "*cheirem*," excommunication.

But such power was short-lived in America. Unlike the European *kehilla*, Shearith Israel had no authority to tax its citizens, nor call on state enforcement of its regulations. The congregation lost its role as sole proprietor of the American "*kahal*" as soon as synagogues were created in Newport, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah. While looking to New York for guidance, these communities soon developed their own standards of adherence to *halacha*.

One of the last great shows of power in Shearith Israel occurred in 1757, when a publicly read edict proclaimed with alarm:

... Several of our brethren in the country have and do violate the principles of our holy religion, such as trading on the Sabbath, eating of forbidden meats and heinous crimes . . .

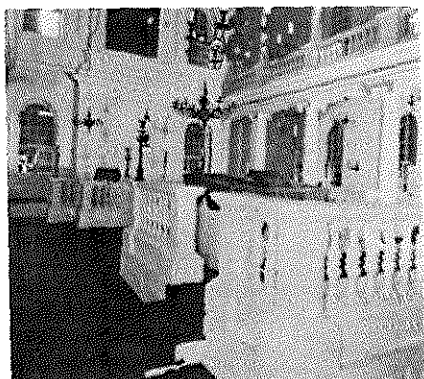
and therefore would not be accorded rights of Jewish burial, an advanced stage of excommunication. This threat did have some impact on the assembled populace, as there was a brief religious upsurge after the decree.

It did not last long. Little by little, respect for the authority of the synagogue and observance of *mitzvos* eroded until Shearith Israel trustees could only note infractions, but do little to correct them. By 1790 a feeble announcement declared that public transgressors would not be called to the Torah, nor be permitted to hold official synagogue titles. But the days of required conformity were long over.

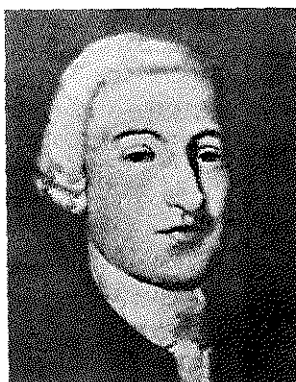
Eventually, the synagogue itself took on the aspect of its Americanized members. When Shearith Israel was rebuilt in 1817, an emotional debate ensued over the question of the *ezras nashim*. The result was that the original *mechitza* (separation) was torn down and replaced with "handsome mahogany bannisters" over which the women were more easily viewed. Soon after, Jacob Seixas organized the synagogue choir, consisting of nine men and sixteen young women.

The Marrano Influence

Fleeing oppression, the Marranoes brought with them a motley bundle of religious observances, never quite sure where Judaism left off and Christianity began. Previously forced to violate the *Shabbos* and eat *treife* meats, some never adapted to a totally Jewish way



Newport: Interior of Touro Synagogue. The famous trap door under the bimah is said to be a carry-over of the Marrano founders' fears of sudden attack. Actually, the tunnel leads nowhere and may have been used only as storage space . . .



Aaron Lopez (1731-1782), leading figure in Newport. . .



. . . Rabbi Chaim Isaac Karigal, who lectured the Jews to return to tradition.

of life. Portuguese women were observed mumbling Hebrew prayers with inaudible ardor, while fingering beads resembling a rosary. While anxious to perform *bris milah*, Marrano parents placed equal importance on the naming of "godparents" for the newborn. Most lamentable was their assumption that Judaism could be passed intact to future generations without benefit of book or teacher.

Education was entrusted to itinerant Polish *rebbe*s: the only objective was satisfactory performance of the Bar Mitzvah Torah and Haftarah reading. Occasionally, a gifted student was taught to read prayers, but rarely to understand them. In return, the *rebbe* received a paltry salary, a free room and Passover *matza*. Often, the *rebbe* spoke only Yiddish; the student only Spanish, Portuguese or English. The *rebbe* was poor, "foreign," and a lowly Ashkenaz. His student was a genteel American.

For advanced instruction, one could attend Yeshivat Minchat Erev in New York, where classes were offered in Hebrew, Spanish, English, writing and arithmetic. Because he uplifted these slim educational standards, mention should be made of Abraham Israel Abrahams, who taught at the yeshiva from 1762 to 1775, for the grand salary of 20 pounds.

He surely would have been painfully aware of European criticisms of American levels of education. Visitors to the colonies frequently commented openly on the sparse knowledge evident.

A Warning Ignored

One such orator was Rabbi Chaim Isaac Karigal,* who addressed the Touro congregation in Newport on Shavuot, 1773. He told his complacent listeners that the present *galus* is no "accident," but the direct result of their neglect of learning. In no uncertain terms, he observed the "contempt" for Torah and those who study it in his American travels. He urged the congregation to give greater attention to teaching its youth in

order to provide leadership for the future. His pleas were received politely, and ignored.

His words were neither prophecy nor threat, but a simple statement of fact. Within but a few generations, the ignorance he had foreseen earned America its reputation as a spiritual wilderness.

While Americans had busied themselves organizing synagogues and creating service organizations, they had done little to insure the survival of religion in their offspring through teaching them Torah. Greatly concerned with their *rights* to religion, they took few pains to guarantee its continuation. It became apparent that their religious privileges, fought for with such persistence, were increasingly tossed aside by their children.

In itself, this process is not astounding. Thoroughly disappointing, however, is that the great European centers, aglow with the fire of continuous learning, failed to supply their rescue. Surely, it was known that the colonists floundered religiously: letters, documents, eye-witness accounts all described the same *amoratzus* (ignorance) that spread like weeds in the fertile soil of neglected minds. Tales of assimilation and intermarriage were rampant.

Individuals with knowledge and courage occasionally did come to these shores in those early years, only to be swallowed in the vast American tidal wave. Perhaps a more effective attempt might have been group settlements: a minimum of ten families with clear-headed Torah perspective and fortitude, with the declared aim of providing education and leadership.

Such a group did arrive in the mid-nineteenth century, in order to establish a European-style yeshiva. They found that American parents had received a minuscule Jewish education themselves, and wanted even less for their children. The young Europeans labored to build their yeshiva and struggled to attract students. But 200 years had passed since the first Jew had set foot on the American challenge. 200 years of isolation from the warmth of Torah had chilled the naive American into sterile acceptance of a secular life. The fledgling yeshiva closed its doors: Torah had no takers. It was simply too late.

*See JO, Dec. '75.

Nosson Scherman



An Appreciation of Rabbi Gedalia Schorr

זכר צדיק לברכה

An American-Bred Torah Giant

The last day of Rabbi Schorr's life was typical of so many others, especially in his later years. It should have been a quieter day than most. The official yeshiva school year was over. Nonetheless, Rabbi Schorr had gone to the yeshiva to arrange personal favors for a few of the young people under his care. Such private favors were an essential part of his life; they had always been a major component of his broad definition of his duties and responsibilities, both as a Jew and as a Rosh Yeshiva. While there, he became engaged in an impromptu discussion that involved another of those duties and responsibilities.

Someone had sharply criticized another person. The Rosh Yeshiva responded with the calm and good humor that were his trademarks. The conversation was not pleasant; he maintained his composure with difficulty, but would not permit another human being's worth to be dragged down. Such experiences were especially taxing for him, because of the nature of the discussion and because he could recognize the justice on both sides of a seemingly unbridgeable chasm. . . . The person he defended that Sunday would never learn what happened. Rabbi Schorr never told people what he had done for them because they would have been embarrassed, and because he understood helping a fellow Jew as an obligation to G-d, not as a means of accumulating the IOUs on which power is built. . . . Other yeshiva matters were brought up, and then left for tomorrow.

Rabbi Scherman, an editor at Art Scroll Mesorah publications, is a frequent contributor to these pages. He was last represented by "Chanukah Gems," culled from the writing of the late Gerer Rebbe זצ"ל, which appeared in the Dec 78 JO.

Tomorrow would have been another busy day; in fact, it may well have become a historic one for Torah institutions throughout the metropolitan area. Rabbi Schorr had become the acknowledged leader and principal spokesman for yeshivos in a new initiative with Federation which, if successful, could have resulted in a major victory in the constant struggle to stave off financial catastrophe for Torah education. It was not his style to call meetings, but these institutions looked to him as the one who could best represent them. In his quiet, unassuming way—and with the characteristic shrug that said, "Couldn't you find someone better?" he acceded. In an informal meeting on the issue with a Federation leader, his combination of Torah aristocracy, passionate sincerity, gentle wit, and winning personality had achieved a significant breakthrough. Another meeting with another key leader was to be arranged later in the week. For the next day he had called a meeting of representatives of major yeshivos with Federation officials.

But that would be tomorrow. Tonight—Sunday evening, *Tammuz*, July 1—he would be at the *Sheva Berachos* of a *talmid* and his bride.

Rabbi Schorr was asked to speak. The aggravation of the day and the tension of the morrow disappeared from his consciousness as he immersed himself in the world he knew and loved best—the world of Torah. The riches of his vast treasury of knowledge would be culled for appropriate verses, passages, thoughts. Some famous speakers captivate the majority of their audiences, but generally, the greater the scholarship of the individual listener, the more unimpressed—even bored—he will be. With Rabbi Schorr the opposite

was true. So quick were his thoughts, so profound his insights, so complex his tapestry, so original his ideas, so well-documented his references, that only the most learned of his listeners could truly comprehend and fully appreciate his mastery of content.

At his particular *Sheva Berachos*, most of his listeners were Polish Chassidim of scholarly background. They could appreciate better than most his command of *Sfas Emes*, Reb Tzaddok of Lublin, *Maharal* and the other masters whose thought Rabbi Schorr expounded and interpreted in a manner both unique and awe-inspiring. . . . A few days before, he had spoken at the *Bris Mila* of the infant of a former *talmid*, now a prominent yeshiva educator. Then, his most enthralled and admiring listener had been a senior *Rosh Yeshiva* in one of America's most distinguished Lithuanian-type yeshivos. That *Rosh Yeshiva*, a distinguished European *talmid chacham* and exponent of *Mussar*, unabashedly expressed his esteem for the American-trained Rabbi Schorr. . . .

He spoke, as he always did, with his head cocked slightly to one side and his eyes closed. He seemed to shut out the world. He was communicating G-d's Torah; the orator's techniques—eye contact, voice modulation, dramatic effects—held no interest for him. He was thinking as he spoke because his brilliant mind was never at rest, adding asides and new flashes of insight. Though he eschewed rhetoric, the beauty of his thought would frequently find expression in felicity of phrase. As he spoke then, he smiled and

said that forgiveness of sins on the wedding day is G-d's *drosho geshank* (gift) to *chassan* and *kalla*.

Delivering both these talks—at the *bris* and at the *sheva berachos*—must have been difficult, for he had not been well either day. But his listeners detected no weakness either time. Torah was his life, and gave him vigor. Perhaps that youthful exhilaration was G-d's gift to him, in return for the pride, glory, and growth he gave the cause of Torah in this New World where people said it could never take root.

He finished his talk and sat down. The fatigue showed. The Polish-bred *rosh yeshiva* next to him expressed appreciation. A former *talmid* and current friend—Rabbi Schorr never learned to keep people at the arm's length that engenders awe—approached smilingly and extended his hand. He had left the Beis Medrash of Torah Vodaath over twenty-five years earlier, and was now a grandfather. He shook hands with his *rebbe* and said, "When I hear you speak it reminds me of my yeshiva days." Rabbi Schorr smiled and said, "*Takeh, takeh. Emes.*" (Indeed, indeed. True).

His head fell forward. The American Torah world had lost its greatest product. World Jewry had lost one of its greatest, best-rounded *gedolim*. And the still unfinished process would begin of attempting to reveal the true picture of a man who devoted much of his genius to concealing his greatness from even his closest intimates.

Years of Promise

He was born to Reb Avrohom Halevi Schorr and his wife in Istrick, a Galician *shtetl* near Pszemiszl, in Cheshvan 5671 (1910). They named him after his paternal grandfather, Gedalia, a highly respected *talmid chacham* and close *chassid* of the Sadigerer Rebbe, grandson of the holy Reb Yisroel of Rizhin. Like his father and grandfather, the young Gedalia became a diligent scholar and devout *chassid*. The Schorr family came to America when he was twelve years old, settling first on the Lower East Side and then moving to Williamsburg. Gedalia dedicated himself to learning with a passion that he maintained throughout his life.

On the fast of 17 *Tammuz*, when he was fifteen, he learned through the *entire* tractate *Succah*, not leaving his *Gemora* from morning until *Maariv*. . . . For a period of over a year, he remained in an upstairs room of the family home, studying Torah without interruption. His mother, always solicitous of his study, brought him meals. He completed several tractates that year, but he would not discuss details. . . . From the time he reached his middle teens, it was his practice to study all through Thursday night and Friday, deliver a *shiur* after the evening meal to fellow *mispallemim* at the Ziarei Agudath Israel of Williamsburg, and only then go to sleep.

Word spread that in America a youngster was developing into a Torah giant of European proportions. That was astonishing and inspiring for a country where one could count the high school-level yeshivos on the fingers of one hand and still have fingers to spare. The revered *Rav* of Lublin, Rabbi Meir Shapiro, spent many months in the United States when Rabbi Schorr was not quite twenty. As was his wont, the Lubliner *Rav* sought out promising young men and discussed their studies with them. Of the young Gedalia Schorr he said, "He has the most brilliant mind I have come across in America, and one of the most brilliant in the world."

Freshness and Brilliance

During those formative years, he developed the all-embracing range of Torah knowledge that was almost uniquely his. His lightning grasp and incisive comprehension were complemented by a phenomenal memory. Recently, in a casual conversation, he remarked to a nephew that he had not seen a certain *sefer* since he had learned it through at the age of nineteen. He then proceeded to casually quote from it as though he had seen it only yesterday. That sort of intellectual brilliance is the bane of many a genius; things come so easily to them that they seldom use their full potential. But, although he grew up at a time when the American yeshivos

offered little stimulating competition, Rabbi Schorr was driven by a relentless desire to achieve Torah greatness. His mind was inquisitive, voracious and fresh.

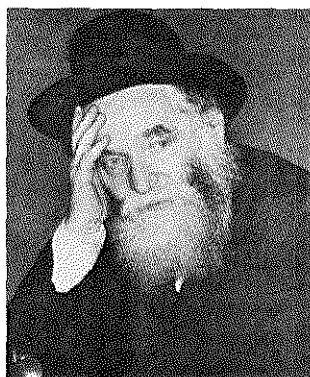
Always ready to praise others, pinpointing their precise area of excellence, he once said of someone, "He has the unusual ability to look at a passage of Talmud as though he had never seen it before; his approach is never stale." The same thing might have been said of himself.

Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, ל"ט, *menahel* of Torah Vodaath and the prime architect of the Yeshiva movement in America, looked to Rabbi Schorr as his own successor and as one of the principal leaders of the next generation.

When Rabbi Schorr was only twenty-one years old, Rabbi Mendlowitz appointed him to conduct the highest *shiur* in Mesivta Torah Vodaath. In later years, when Rabbi Shlomo Heiman, ל"ט, Rosh Yeshiva of



Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz



Rabbi Aharon Kotler

Torah Vodaath, became ill and was unable to carry on his duties for a year and a half, Reb Shlomo asked that Rabbi Schorr replace him for the duration of the illness. Those were the years when heads would turn in Williamsburg at the sight of a tall, handsome, youthful man striding energetically down the street surrounded by others barely his junior who addressed him as "*rebbe*" while peppering him with questions on the day's *shiur*.

A Man of Here and Now

Despite his scholastic achievements and the awe in which he was held by people two generations his senior, he was never a cloistered, other-worldly figure.

In Williamsburg, like other American Jewish communities of yesteryear, most Jews confined *Shabbos* to the mothballs with the other family heirlooms. Rabbi Schorr and another young man would prepare make-shift platforms of milk boxes or garbage cans on Friday afternoons at the corner of Lee Avenue and Hewes Street. On *Shabbos*, Rabbi Schorr would mount the platforms and speak in Yiddish in behalf of the Holy *Shabbos*, followed by his colleague who spoke in English.

Although Rabbi Schorr was the teacher, acknowl-

edged *talmid chacham* and prime spiritual force of the Williamsburg Zeirei during those years, he was not above sweeping and mopping the *shul* on Friday afternoons when it was his turn. . . . And when Rabbi Shlomo Heiman and his Rebetzin were coming to America to become Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaath, Rabbi Mendlowitz assigned Rabbi Schorr the task of finding them a suitable apartment and furnishing it.

Kletzk

In the 1930's, Rabbi Schorr had reached the virtual zenith of his profession. Still in his twenties, he was a leading Rosh Yeshiva in the western hemisphere's premier Torah institution. But that sort of "making it" was not his goal. His definition of "success" was constant striving to grow in Torah and fear of G-d. He had met many European *roshei hayeshiva* who had been forced to raise funds in America for their impoverished institutions and destitute students, heard their lectures, and spoke with them; but was most attracted to Rabbi Aharon Kotler. Soon after his marriage to Shifra Isbee in 1938, Rabbi left Torah Vodaath, accompanied by his wife, to study in Kletzk under Reb Aharon.

By the standards of Kletzk—without indoor plumbing and other rudimentary necessities of any American hovel—the Schorrs were well-to-do. Rebetzin Schorr had to use water pumped up from an outdoor well like everyone else, but at least she and her husband had mattresses to sleep on! To his distress, Rabbi Schorr discovered that the family of his *rebbe*, Reb Aharon, slept on straw. That the young rosh yeshiva-turned-student could not tolerate, so he dipped into his meager savings to purchase mattresses for Reb Aharon and the Rebetzin. For the rest of his life, Rabbi Schorr considered Reb Aharon his *rebbe*. On his desk at home he kept Reb Aharon's picture. . . . During 1940, when the Kletzker Rosh Yeshiva was making his way through Siberia to Japan and finally to the United States, he corresponded with Rabbi Schorr, relying on him to secure visas, papers, and tickets for his arrival in America. The letters and documents of those harrowing months are still in the possession of the Schorr family.

Reb Aharon had described Rabbi Schorr as the first American *gadol*, and it was not an empty appellation. He respected him and consulted him. Once Reb Aharon suffered severe intestinal pain and consulted three well-known specialists. Upon returning home from the last doctor, while taking off his hat and coat, he said to the confidante who had arranged the appointments, "Call Rav Schorr, I must discuss this with him. *Er hot nit nor a gutte kop, nor a glatte kop* (Not only does he have a good head, but he has a clear, logical mind)."

The Roots in Rizhin

During the Succos and Pesach that he spent in Europe, Rabbi Schorr experienced his family's Chasidic roots. He spent one Pesach *seder* at the table of

Reb Moshe'nu Boyaner of Cracow, a scion of the Rizhiner dynasty. He was a widely renowned *talmid chacham*; *chassidim* came to him as a *rebbe* and *misnagdim* came to him for his Torah. Rabbi Schorr was deeply moved by that *seider*; undoubtedly it influenced his own family *sedorim*, occasions that formed indelible memories of seriousness, joy, and uplift to all who were present.

He met his relatives in little Istrick, among them his mother's brother Yitzchok, who died later that year and whom he described as an unusual *gaon*. . . . He heard more about a *dayan* concerning whom his mother had spoken, a man who wrote a brilliant commentary on *K'tzos Hachoshen*, and of whom it was said, "When he serves as town *dayan*, no one can believe he is a *chassid*; and when he sits humbly at his *rebbe's tisch* in Chortkov, no one can believe he is a great *talmid chacham*." Perhaps Rabbi Schorr was inspired by that description; certainly it could have been applied to him as well.

Powerful influences came to play on him that year. They reinforced his convictions and aspirations: there must be an uncompromising dedication to rigorous growth in Torah scholarship; public acceptance is a dangerous chimera that can impede, but never advance, one's personal growth; a moment is too precious to waste; each fellow Jew is part of one's own being and destiny. . . . His road toward G-d's service had been charted by Reb Aharon and by the Rizhiner *Chassidus*, particularly its Sadigura branch.

The War Years

When the war broke out, Rabbi Schorr returned to Torah Vodaath, also beginning a parallel chapter of his life. Europe's Jewry was on the brink of destruction, while in America little was being done to save it. The Williamsburg Zeirei at 616 Bedford Avenue became a beehive of *hatzolah* work. Funds, food packages, immigration affidavits, intervention with Washington—every possible avenue was pursued, and thousands of lives were saved, thanks to the work of the idealistic, unselfish young activists of 616. The leader of the



Rabbi Schorr with Elimelech Tress, ZT"L, in later years.

hatzolah work was Reb Elimelech "Mike" Tress; and the spiritual leader of the Zeirei, and of Mike, was Rabbi Schorr. Close friends, they gave one another inspiration and support, each in his own way.

Scores of people still remember the *Shabbos* when Rabbi Schorr received a report about exterminations and the need for rescue efforts. He spoke to the *minyan* during the services until every single person there was weeping, and determined to give first priority to rescue work. . . . On a sub-freezing January *Shabbos* he walked from Williamsburg to Boro Park to make an appeal. He arrived, numb and frozen but the freezing in the ghettos was worse, so he came. . . . He owned one personal treasure: a Vilna *Shas* that he had purchased in Europe several years before the first *Shas* was published in America. He sold it for \$80, which he contributed to the rescue effort.

In later years, he refused to discuss his wartime *hatzolah* work. To the pleadings of his children to tell them he would reply—as he did to similar pleas:

"The Rizhiner used to say that G-d is *zochair nishkachos*—He remembers what is forgotten: He remembers what *we* forget. If we forget our sins, as though they had never occurred, He will remember them. If we forget the bit of good we have done and think instead of how we must still perfect ourselves, He will remember our accomplishments. What is remembered below is forgotten Above. What is forgotten below is remembered Above."

The Man

A Torah-Based Compassion . . .

Rabbi Schorr combined compassion for the suffering of an individual with a strong sense of community—not simply as a matter of extended sensitivity or warm emotions, but rather from a fully-rounded conception of the Torah's demands upon him as a Jew—as teacher, leader, husband, father, and member of *Klal Yisroel*. He acted as a Jew fulfilling G-d's mission to serve others—with or without their request or even their knowledge—even those who had abused his friendship and good nature.

—As teacher, Rabbi Schorr went with impoverished students to purchase Pesach outfits for them. He often expressed surprised disappointment at the idea that a *rebbe* had no obligation to tend to the personal needs of his students.

—Twenty-eight years ago, he secretly arranged for a successful professional man to "happen to pass by" the store of people whose son was a promising high school senior in Torah Vodaath. The boy hoped to remain in the yeshiva, but his parents wanted him to leave for college. Rabbi Schorr felt that a layman could more effectively influence the parents than a Rosh Yeshiva.

The visit was successful, but, because he had promised to remain silent, the emissary told no one of his mission until after Rabbi Schorr died. Only then did the former student, now a noted Torah educator, learn of the incident.

—Rabbi Schorr was travelling with a professor who had had no yeshiva background but who attends a Daf Yomi session every morning. He had not been able to attend his shiur, and was attempting to learn the daf on the train. Rabbi Schorr asked, "Would you mind if we learned together? I didn't learn today's daf yet, either." Recalling the trip, the professor says, "He surely didn't need me, but he knew I was struggling, so he gave up his time to teach me a blatt Gemora, and made me feel that I was doing him a favor."

—Students often needed help in arranging suitable matches, finding positions, and solving myriad other problems—professional, personal, emotional, and financial. He was always ready to help with advice, a telephone call, and personal invitation. Many of those who eulogized him were former students who are now at the top of their professions. A common thread in their appreciations, and in the private conversations of many hundred others, was that he was like a father. One distinguished rabbi, who lost his own mother shortly after Rabbi Schorr's passing, likened the two in terms of his sense of personal loss.

—When the beloved cook of Beth Medrash Elyon, Reb Leib Apfeldorfer, passed away, Rabbi Schorr was one of those who escorted the niftar to Kennedy Airport to be taken to Israel for burial. Rabbi Schorr was shocked to learn that the niftar was to remain on a cargo truck unattended until loaded onto the plane by non-Jews. He asked for permission to stay in the truck but was told that El Al security guards ran flashlights across the truck bed when it reached the plane and were authorized to shoot if they came across people without clearance. For a suitable "consideration,"

however, the driver would park the truck so that people with the coffin would not be seen—provided they lay flat on the floor. So the elderly Rosh Yeshiva climbed into the truck with three students, and set aside his dignity for the more glorious task of paying a final honor to a man who had served the yeshiva with loyalty and dedication.

All of these incidents are typical of the man's mind and heart, as is the fact that they were done quietly or secretly.

His Influence as Rebbe

He was appointed *menahel* of Torah Vodaath in 1948 and began functioning as Rosh Yeshiva in 1958, delivering weekly *shiurim* in Beth Medrash Elyon. Even when he was not formally teaching, however, his greatest satisfaction was as a *rebbe*. Throughout his long tenure as *menahel* and Rosh Yeshiva, he was conscious of the need to broaden the Torah horizons of American yeshiva students, so he made a point of teaching subjects that were outside of the regular yeshiva curriculum. In Talmud, for example, he gave late afternoon classes in tractate Mikvaos or in the complex "Reb Chaninah S'gan HaKohanim," (Pesachim 14a-21a), which are invariably omitted from the yeshiva curriculum.

His greatest impact on American-Torah life, however, came from his horizon-stretching classes and lectures in *hashkofo*/perspective. He regularly taught Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto's *Derech Hashem* to Beis Medrash students. Many students attended voluntary classes in *Kuzari*; often he would return to the yeshiva for late-night sessions in other *limudim* (topics), to accommodate the schedules of interested students. For many years, he taught *Chumash* every morning. Those half-hour classes were classic examples of his mastery of text and commentaries. He would offer major interpretations, spicing them with incisive elucidations and relevant asides. It was not uncommon for him to cite fifteen or twenty sources in a single half-hour class—all important to a clear understanding of the text. The pace was quick, the content tightly reasoned, the manner, like much of his speaking and teaching, had a lightness and ease that belied its penetrating depth. He had a way of choosing the essence of a commentary as it related to textual interpretation, and of categorizing each thought—whether as basic, as a witty aside (a "vitz"), or as any number of inbetween varieties of elucidation.

Seeing The Shiur—Live

His regular weekly and pre-holiday *shmuessen* were dazzling. The reaction of any seasoned scholar who heard him for the first time was invariably one of awe that so much could be compressed into so brief a



Celebrating a talmid's wedding.

time: "There is enough content in one *shmuess* to provide someone else with material for five difficult one-hour lectures." Scriptural verses, *Midrash*, *Ramban*, *Maharal*, *Sfas Emes*, *Reb Tzaddok*—commentator after commentator, with one verbatim quote after another, streamed forth.

So casual was his style and so involved was he with the ideas he was developing, that the uninitiated thought he spoke without preparation. No, the preparation was there—not only a lifetime of intense study, but forethought for the particular talk. But as he spoke, new flashes of brilliance came to mind. He would often smile at a new thought, sometimes share the thoughts with his audience, sometimes not—and always punctuate his remarks with a wry touch of humor.

He was a perfect illustration of one of his major themes. He often cited *Mabit*, *Reb Tzaddok*, and others who explain that the reason it was forbidden to commit the Oral Law to writing was because paper cannot capture the live process of a teacher transmitting knowledge through the agency of his personality. The essence of a human being cannot be put on paper; the transcription of his words can never adequately capture the soul which is part of the teaching process. For those who lived through a learning experience with Rabbi Schorr, the best illustration of the concept is the mere thought of seeing his words on paper robbed of the sight and sound of his unique delivery, the total sincerity of his demand that *b'nei Torah* not be satisfied with "getting by," the eloquent expression that the study of Torah is the utmost privilege. . . . To those who had the wisdom to hear him rather than merely sit before him, those memories are an Oral Torah to which no pen can do justice.

Planting the Seeds

He often spoke of *z'riah*, planting. "The deeds of the Patriarchs were like seeds planted in antiquity that bore fruit in their posterity. . . . The Psalmist sings of 'light implanted for the *tzaddik*,' representing the idea that spiritual illumination does not come and disappear like a flash of lightning; it takes root in a suitable host and continuously grows within him, producing ever higher levels of spiritual accomplishment." Rabbi Schorr's students of a generation ago still reap the benefits of ideas and thought-processes that he implanted within them. The spiritual seeds seemed to be esoteric and incomprehensible, even tedious, when first they were presented, but after constant nurturing, they took root imperceptibly and produced rich crops that continue to be replanted and reharvested.

His effectiveness as leader of a yeshiva seemed to suffer because harshness was foreign to his nature, and students often respond better to the fear of punishment or displeasure than to emotional or intellectual appeal. Nevertheless, his gentle but totally sincere blend of heart and mind molded students in quiet ways that they frequently recognized only later, as adults, when in

positions of community or family leadership.

There is a common denominator among them that, upon honest analysis, can be attributed to his influence—scholarship with a breadth as well as a depth . . . that *Sfas Emes-Reb Tzaddok* approach to Judaism . . . informality and friendliness . . . humor aimed at helping rather than hurting . . . reluctance to accept honors . . . gentle mocking of the perquisites of position . . . dedication to Lithuanian *lomdus* and Chassidic warmth, joy, and introspection . . . a sense of responsibility and generosity.

Elevating One's Goals

Many young people face the difficult choice between dedicating their lives to Torah study and education, and turning to more lucrative careers in secular life. As Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Schorr's opinion was important to many. Typically he would say:

G-d says, *I have separated you from the nations to be Mine (Vayikra 20:26)*, to which *Rashi* comments that if Jews are separate from the nations, they are G-d's people; but if they do not hold themselves unique, they will be prey to Nevuchadnezzar and his ilk. Our essential goal cannot be only to avoid the massacres of Nevuchadnezzar. Rather, it is to fulfill the mission for which we were chosen. The question is *not* whether the world requires doctors, lawyers, accountants, bricklayers, and mechanics. It does. But we were designated to be G-d's nation—the nation of the Torah. And each individual yeshiva student must recognize that it is his privilege as well as his responsibility to live up to his role as one of those whom G-d wishes to be His.

Such was his emphasis. Students should elevate their own sights, not denigrate others. The goal of the yeshiva was to instill a dedication to Torah study because it made its adherents closer to G-d, not because it is impossible to be a Torah Jew in the professions of business. He was pained by the polarization that began to cause a cleavage between those who chose to be exclusively in G-d's service, and those who sought to keep a foot in the outside world even while maintaining their primary allegiance to the *beis medrash*. The result of his efforts was imbuing some with heightened aspirations based on a perception of the greatness of Torah, while causing others not to feel alienated despite their choices of careers in other areas.

In the same elevating manner, he urged *talmidim* to study with all their strength and concentration as well as with all available time: "Learning half the time with full concentration is better than learning all the time with half concentration, because the latter is not truly learning." And: "How can a *bachur* yawn? Torah study demands interest and enthusiasm; then, there can be no yawning boredom." He would cite the Talmudic passage interpreting the Scriptural verse that describes

Benayahu ben Yehoyada as having killed a lion on a snowy day. The Talmud comments homiletically that Benayahu studied all of *Toras Kohanim* in a short, wintry day. Rabbi Schorr noted the comparison between a man in battle and a scholar taking on a difficult study. "Just as a man fighting a lion, especially in the cold, slippery winter, must give the fray his total concentration, so must a Torah scholar dedicate himself totally in order to emerge victorious in his struggle to master Torah."

Surely, too, it was no accident that ten years ago in Beth Medrash Elyon (in Monsey) a group of his students unobtrusively organized an all year, around-the-clock learning schedule so that people were studying in the Beis Midrash every hour of the day and night. Or that among the significant number who studied all of

Thursday night until dawn, some took a brief nap to be at the *minyán* Friday morning, in response to his insistence that greatness in Torah must never be purchased by the negation of *tefilla* or other responsibilities.

The Other Role

As the numbers of kollel candidates grew, so grew the financial burdens of yeshivos. Now that the struggle to gain allegiance to the kollel concept had been won, how could young men be told that their yeshivos could not provide even the minimal kollel stipend? Rabbi Schorr began to take increasing personal responsibility for financial matters—first for part of the Beth Medrash Elyon Kollel; then for the yeshiva's

A Talmid Remembers

SECOND SEDER had just come to an end in Torah Vodaath. I had arranged to tutor someone at the other end of Flatbush in less than half an hour. It was a lovely day in *Tamuz*, and if I started to walk, I would just make it. Then I heard a familiar voice from behind: "Walk me home, Shmuel, and we'll have a *shmuess* on the way." I turned around to face Rabbi Gedalia Schorr זצ"ל who extended to me his usual heart-warming smile. I would walk the Rosh Yeshiva home, then take a taxi to my destination. It would be worth it.

WHY HAD THE Rosh Yeshiva chosen me? In truth, he was friendly to anyone who approached him. I noticed this from the first day that I entered the yeshiva, five years ago. Since then I often took the opportunity to speak with him in Torah and *hashkafa*. Before long, he extended me an invitation to his home for *Shabbos*—and it soon became a steady invitation. He was open to anyone; one merely had to take the initiative.

And what *Shabbosos* they were! The Rosh Yeshiva would constantly cite the *Gemora*: G-d said, "I have a wonderful gift in my treasure house, and '*Shabbos*' is its name,"

(*Shabbos* 10b), pointing out that the *Shabbos* remains in the confines of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. The gift is the elevation the Jew experiences to enable him to partake of this celestial *Shabbos*. Indeed, such was the atmosphere at the Rosh Yeshiva's home on *Shabbos*. I'll never forget the first time I heard him sing his soul stirring *nigun* for "*Kol mekadesh*." With his eyes closed, his concentration and *dveikus* increased from one moment to the next. With the words "*Yom kodosh hu* (It is a sacred day)," his intensity peaked, and he repeated them over and over again, as if unable to part with the *kedusha* of the *Shabbos* that these words represented.

"Say a *dvar Torah*," the Rebbeztin would implore. "Say something on the *parsha*." The Rosh Yeshiva would lift his head with an expression of genuine humility: "*A za shvere parsha, vus ken ich zogen?* (Such a difficult portion. What can I say?)" He would offer a short *dvar Torah*, and then begin another *nigun*. But many times the Rebbeztin would not be intimidated, and she would insist on more. And then the well-springs of Torah and *chachma* (wisdom) would begin to flow. *Meshech Chachma*, *Sfas Emes*, *Pri Tzaddik*—how these *seforim* radiated when the Rosh Yeshiva would expound on their contents! And yet most of the conversation was casual in

nature. The Rosh Yeshiva was tactfully able to lead a conversation that suited the interests of his guests. And he retained the *Shabbos* spirit regardless of the topic of conversation.

And then there were the "special *Shabbosim*," when *talmidei chachomim* would grace his table. I would witness a remarkable scene: *Shas*, *Rishonim*, *Poskim* and *sifrei machshova*—all sorts of sources would flow, with the greatest mastery, while the serenity of the *Shabbos* prevailed throughout.

I recall one such *Shabbos* in particular when the entire conversation of both *seudos* was saturated with scholarly Torah discussions between the Rosh Yeshiva and one of his guests. Just before *bentching* the Rosh Yeshiva became pensive, and then he smiled saying, "I recall a *ma'aseh* from the Rizhiner:

Once after *Yom Kippur*, the Rizhiner announced that he was prepared to tell anyone what he had prayed for on the *Yom Hakadosh*, and also how the Beis Din Shel Ma'aloh (Heavenly Court) received these prayers. None of the *Chassidim* had the audacity to "test" the Rebbe, but one person, not a *Chassid*, challenged the Rebbe. The Rizhiner closed his eyes, and began, "You are a fine Torah scholar, and in your youth you learnt with great diligence. Recently, however, family respon-

dining room; finally for the Torah Vodaath Kollel in Brooklyn. This voluntary acceptance of obligations was characteristic of the *rebbe* who had felt it his duty to buy Pesach suits for his students, and sell his *Shas* to help Jews trapped in Europe.

In 1952, he dispatched a group of Torah Vodaath students to help found an out-of-town yeshiva. When the yeshiva was in a state of financial collapse and could not provide for the personal needs of the students, Rabbi Schorr took a personal loan of \$3800 for the institution. It took him three years to repay the debt from his own limited salary. . . . Scores of Kollel fellows and yeshiva students received personal checks from him when institutional budgets could not fulfill their obligations. The extent of these private generosity and of personal debts incurred to cover institutional respon-



sibilities have forced you into business, and you're perturbed that you no longer can afford long stretches of uninterrupted study and prayer. You implored G-d to grant you success in your business so you might once again immerse yourself in Torah and tefilla."

The man was visibly shaken by the accuracy of the Rizhiner's statement, and meekly asked, "And what was the verdict in the Beis Din Shel Ma'aloh?"

The Rizhiner solemnly proceeded, "The Beis Din Shel Ma'aloh declared that although your undisturbed Torah and Tefillah was a great accomplishment, G-d has greater nachas ruach (pleasure) from the effort you exert to learn despite difficulties."

The Rosh Yeshiva concluded with tears in his eyes, "Who can say for sure who in Klal Yisroel gives G-d a greater nachas ruach!" . . .

OUR WALK TOGETHER finally came to an end. The Rosh Yeshiva invited me to come in to his home for refreshment, but I excused myself, explaining my commitment. He apologized, "If I had known, I would not have let you walk me." I assured him that it was my decision and ultimately my gain, and I turned to leave. The Rosh Yeshiva then called me again, "Shmuel, wait another moment. I heard an interesting *ma'aseh*. You know that

the Sadegerer Rebbe (fifth generation from the Rizhiner) was recently *niftar* in Israel. A few days ago I met someone who was present the night of his passing. He recounted that in the middle of the night the Rebbe awoke and asked for a glass of water. The Rebbe made a '*Shehakol*'; lay back down to sleep, and in a few moments returned his *neshama* to *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. *Seforim* say that a *tzaddik* who lives his entire life with a vibrant *emuna* that everything that transpires is by the word of G-d, merits that his last words testify to just that: '*Shehakol nehiye bidvoro*—all exists by His word."

There was a shadow of envy in the Rosh Yeshiva's eyes, a longing for that *madreiga* of living . . . and passing. The Rosh Yeshiva paused for a moment then quickly smiled and waved me on.

A FEW DAYS LATER, I was standing in the Torah Vodaath Beis Medrash waiting for the *hespeidim* (eulogies) to begin. I could not believe what had transpired. Hundreds of memories rushed through my mind, but my thoughts kept reverting back to my last encounter with the Rosh Yeshiva. What had he meant by his last words to me? Then I reminded myself of a story he had once told me:

A talmid of the Rizhiner was

with the Rebbe before Shalosh Seudos. The Rizhiner casually asked him, "Can I be yotzeh with peiros (fulfill my obligation—i.e., to eat the third Shabbos meal—with fruits)?"

The talmid quickly cited the halacha that this was permissible. The Rizhiner remained silent and suddenly the talmid realized that the Rebbe was hinting at his forthcoming passing from the world, whereby his children ('peiros') would take his place. "No, Rebbe!" the talmid protested, "the world still needs you!" But it was too late. The Rebbe sighed, "But they are very good peiros."

Can the *talmid* be blamed for not realizing immediately the implication of the Rebbe's words? No. Even had he understood them, would it have made a difference? G-d counts the days *tzaddikim* must stay in this world, and when the time is up, He calls them back to Himself . . . זכורנו יגן עלינו.

— Shmuel Weinbaum

Shmuel Weinbaum, a native of Montreal, currently studying in Bais Medrosh Govoha in Lakewood, was until recently a student in Mesivta Torah Vodaath, Brooklyn.

sibilities is unknown. At his passing, however, a drawerful of stale checks was found in his desk; he had covered them for others with his own and borrowed funds.



Rabbi Schorr with Rabbi Boruch Sorotzkin, יצ"ל, late Telsher Rosh Yeshiva; they served jointly in many communal endeavors.

To the public at large, Rabbi Schorr was the Torah genius and educator; but he played another role that, especially in the last decade, made him one of the most important Torah personalities in the country. He had increasingly become one of those men to whom people turned for guidance and leadership in matters of the utmost gravity. One colleague in AARTS (Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools) said, "When a new problem arose—one to which we had not yet formulated an approach—he was suggesting solutions when the rest of us had still not fully assimilated all aspects of the problem. His grasp and power of analysis were phenomenal."

When he was confronted with a responsibility, he would not shirk it. Often he attended meetings when he was ill, and turning aside inquiries about his haggard appearance with a joke, participated actively while only his closest friends knew that he was not at his best. So much so that key meetings were not scheduled unless he was available.

What was so unique about him? One major figure in the Torah world, a person who has been at the center of decision-making for decades, put it this way: "He was a *gaon* in both *Niglah* (revealed Torah) and in *Nistar* (the hidden Torah). What is more, he had a wealth of stories about, and insights into, the great Torah leaders of past generations. He scrutinized a situation through the eyes of Torah and its perspective of history. To say that he was a genius is to tell only part

of the story. He was a *Torah* genius who combined everything that was needed to make life and death decisions."

A Committed Agudist

It was this same all-embracing perspective that he was a conscious, committed Agudist. His mind encompassed Agudath Israel as a logical and essential outgrowth of the Jewish past. Agudath Israel can be regarded as a necessary vehicle in today's organized, politicized society; or as a means to make honest and dignified use of availability of public funds; or as a means to rally the community behind the banner of Torah; or as a means to propagate the ideology of *Gedolei HaTorah*. While it is surely all of these, such considerations are but transitory. Rabbi Schorr saw Agudath Israel as he did everything else: in terms of Israel's historic role. Because he was a Torah genius, he could understand the motives of those Torah geniuses who had conceived Agudath Israel at Katowitz (1912), and brought it to fruition at Vienna (1922). When speaking at recent Agudah conventions—once projecting a Torah-view of Agudah, the other time delivering an appreciation of the late Gerer Rebbe—in both presentations he painted broad strokes beginning at Sinai and going through the ages. Seen through his eyes, neither



Eulogizing the late Gerer Rebbe, יצ"ל. The Rebbe's brother יצ"ל, Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Alter sits at right.

Agudath Israel nor its leaders represented mere tactics or tacticians. They were worthy of allegiance and sacrifice because they were the bearers of a mission developed by analysis of Scripture, *Chazal*, and commentaries. Because Rabbi Schorr saw Agudah in those terms, he was a loyal Agudist. The organization had value because it was an expression of Torah's eternity, so it was *his* organization.

Greatness: Its Hallmark and its Mask

An examination of his public career reveals one characteristic that was at once a stamp of greatness and its mask. Call it modesty, call it self-effacement, call it disinterest in fame—whatever its name, he displayed a total disregard for the minimal marks of status with apparent indifference to his position on a program or at a dais, the honor at a wedding or a *bris*: what did it matter whether or not he received personal credit, as long as G-d was served, the community benefited, and an individual uplifted? It was thus all too easy to think that because he put his friendly arm around a shoulder and *was* a friend, that he need be treated *merely* as a friend. Indeed, such was his wish; but it often resulted in many of us not recognizing his greatness, and as a result we may well have deprived ourselves and our communities of the benefits of his greatness.

It was said of the *Chofetz Chaim* that his piety was so great that it obscured his scholarship. And it was said of Reb Chaim Brisker that his scholarship was so great that it obscured his piety. Of Rabbi Schorr we may justly say that his brilliance was so dazzling that it obscured his dedication to study; and his humility was so profound that it obscured his greatness.

Perhaps he wrote his own epitaph. Many years ago, he made the one and only notation he ever wrote in his copy of *Sfas Emes*. It was on one of the last pieces of *Chukas*, the *sidrah* of his passing. All he wrote were the words *הפלא ופלא*—*truly amazing*, with reference to this thought:

Zos Hatorah: Adam ki yamus ba'ohel—the Torah associates dedicated Torah study with purity from the contamination of death. Just as Torah brings purity, so each Jewish soul—which is a microcosmic part of Torah—brings life, and hence purity, to the otherwise lifeless and impure clod which is the body. Every word and letter of the Torah has within it the capacity to give life to the dead—but we do not know how to utilize that capacity.

Rabbi Schorr's life gave added purity to a continent. It provided a precedent and set a standard. If we take for granted America's capacity to produce Torah greatness, if Chassidic youths study Lithuanian *lomdus* in depth, if yeshiva youths find new perspectives in *machshavos haTorah*, in good measure it is because he was placed here by the Divine plan to bequeath his capacity for life.

Russian Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight

In the editorial postscript to the article "And Now That They're Here," in the last issue of JO, it was mistakenly stated that a new school for Russian children in Brooklyn *was opened* by JEP. While it is true that JEP personnel were of great value and service in the initial stages of its planning, the new school Be'er Hagolah is actually a joint venture of *Klal Yisroel*, where individuals, organizations and yeshivos have pooled their efforts in a great new educational undertaking for our Russian brethren.

Also among those serving the new Russian immigrants, the name of Rav Tov was inadvertently omitted. Rav Tov is the Satmar community's service agency, which has been very active for a number of years in serving new immigrants in this country and abroad.

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The Community Kollel: Reaching Out With Torah

The Kollel Comes to America

Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz זצ"ל, early builder and *menahel* of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, and founder of Torah Umesorah, was convinced that *Chinuch*—education of the young—was the primary means of securing the future of American Jewry. At best, the pulpit rabbi could serve as a holding force in a swiftly deteriorating situation. He could be creative in so far as he uses his office to establish and support a day school for his community, but his role as teacher and guide of the adult generation was extremely limited. The function of American yeshivos, in his view, was to produce "*ehrlische baalei-battim*" (well-learned laymen of religious commitment), and as its optimum goal, to train *mechanchim*—Torah educators.

In 1942, Reb Shraga Feivel purchased an estate in Monsey, New York—then a sleepy rural community about thirty miles from New York City—to serve as the home of *Beis Ulfana*, a teachers' seminary for men. Its first year was an auspicious one, but an encounter with Rabbi Aaron Kotler convinced him that in view of the on-going annihilation of European Jewry, he should reorder his priorities. Hitler was destroying Torah centers of Europe and systematically wiping out their leaders in the process. Where would the Roshei Yeshivos, the Torah leaders of the next generation come from? Obviously, it was time for America to seriously plan on producing its own outstanding scholars—for a source, of future leadership, yes. But more important to create in America and to maintain for the entire world the highest possible levels of Torah scholarship. . . . Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz's pioneering work until then revolutionized *Yiddishkeit* in America, and had actually prepared the soil for the next stage.

In response to Reb Aharon's prodding, Reb Shraga Feivel changed the purpose of the estate in Monsey,

which instead became the home of Beis Medrash Elyon—Mesivta Torah Vodaath's graduate school for advanced Talmudic study and kollel for young married men continuing their studies. At that same time, Reb Aharon organized a group of outstanding young scholars to form Bais Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, a winter resort in Central New Jersey. These additions to Monsey and Lakewood were to change the spiritual geography of America.

An American Jew visiting the Chofetz Chaim complained that he had trouble finding his way to Radin—it wasn't even on the map. The Chofetz Chaim replied, "You consulted the wrong map. On your map, Warsaw, Paris and Moscow—all three national capitals—are marked by stars. Regional capitals, like Kovno, Posen, and Vilna, are marked by concentric circles; and smaller towns, by dots. In the Shomayim there is a different map, based on the Mishna in Megilla: 'To be considered a city, a community must have asara batlanim—ten men exclusively engaged in Torah study.' With less than ten, it is not a city but a village, regardless of how large its general population is. On the Shomayim's map, Paris, Moscow and Rome are non-existent. Frankfurt has its dot, as does Nickolsberg. But Warsaw, Vilna, Mir—and yes, Radin—these have stars, for each is a Torah capital."

In 1943, Lakewood and Monsey became "capital cities" in the Western Hemisphere.

New Stars on the Map

Today, many more communities have assumed star status in the spiritual sense, with astonishing results. Names—some old strongholds of Orthodoxy, others hardly associated with Orthodox life, let alone advanced

Torah scholarship—are becoming regular points of reference in discussions of *Makomos HaTorah*: Baltimore, Toronto, Detroit, Los Angeles . . . Deal (NJ), South Fallsburg (NY), Scranton, New Orleans . . . Stamford (Conn.), Pittsburgh, among others—all homes of *kollelim*, demonstrating that no setting is really an unlikely home for Torah.

In addition, a radical change has taken place in the spiritual landscape of the communities, and as a result, in the nation as a whole. First, the time-horizon for Talmudic studies has been extended for a number of years. Before the advent of *kollelim*, a young man was forced either to terminate his full-time studies in his early twenties, to prepare for earning a living and marriage; or to postpone marriage for several years. How much could be accomplished during the four short years between high school graduation and entering a career? Since the emergence of the kollel, it has become accepted in yeshiva circles that those who are so inclined, devote at least the initial years of their married life to full-time Torah study.

This change has very much conformed with Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler's description of the ripple effect of a kollel in a community. In a letter published in the third volume of *Michtav Me'Eliyahu*, he writes:

"When the Kollel in Gateshead had opened its doors, only five young men applied. Others did not think themselves worthy of kollel, or simply never entertained the thought. Their period of formal study ended arbitrarily, prior to marriage. Within several years of Gateshead's founding, the bachurim's vistas were broadened and the number of kollel aspirants increased five-fold. Not all carried out their plans, but the presence of an active kollel in their midst at least raised their sights."

Here, in America, the same has come to pass. Instead of a mere thirty or so young men extending their period of Torah study into their marriage years, as was the count in 1950, the figure today has approached the thousand mark. Years of serious study is not only a real possibility for many young men, but a "son-in-law in kollel" has become a status symbol in many circles—often on the insistence of the young ladies, who will settle for no less. As a result, *kollelim* have proliferated, both as independent institutions and as special programs attached to senior yeshivos.

This has effected the traditional yeshiva curriculum, which has expanded to include other, more difficult areas of study, previously not included. In addition, specialized *kollelim* have emerged, concentrating on various fields that had been largely neglected, such as mastery of *halacha*, or familiarity with the entirety of *Shas*, as opposed to knowledge of only certain sections of the Talmud . . . And the top-level *shiurim* in a goodly number of American yeshivos are being given by American kollel graduates, in addition to their European-bred colleagues.

This development signals a coming of age of sorts

for the American Torah community, and needs no justification or praise beyond the simply stated facts. There are some aspects of this story, however, that carry a certain immediacy to the reading public, and beg for elaboration; that is, the emergence of the community kollel and its profound effect of uplifting the sights of the broader community, with an incredible effect in some unexpected quarters by bringing seasoned scholars into the very midst of grass-roots Jewish America. These *kollelim* have appeared in some cases as an outgrowth of Torah Umesorah's Operation SEED, which brings groups of 10 or 12 senior Beis Midrash students to American communities for a six week visit during the summer (see JO, Oct. '75); or acting on the impetus of *yeshivos gedolos* (particularly Bais Medrash Govoha), which sponsored the founding of some of these *kollelim*, often with the encouragement and guidance of individuals, such as Rabbi Dov Lesser, of Torah Umesorah; or responding to the invitation of far-sighted leaders of the host community, who saw in the kollel a primary means of upgrading the community in any number of ways.

The Distinctions

There are several distinctions between the first generation of American *kollelim*, which for most purposes are post-graduate extensions of the yeshivos that sponsor them, and the community kollel. While the primary purpose of "yeshiva-kollelim" is the development of the *avreichim* (fellows) as outstanding scholars, they also serve to set an example for younger *talmidim*, to strengthen and inspire them. Like the yeshivos, the *kollelim* are generally best situated away from densely populated areas. By contrast, the "community kollel" is ideally located in the center of the major Jewish community it serves.

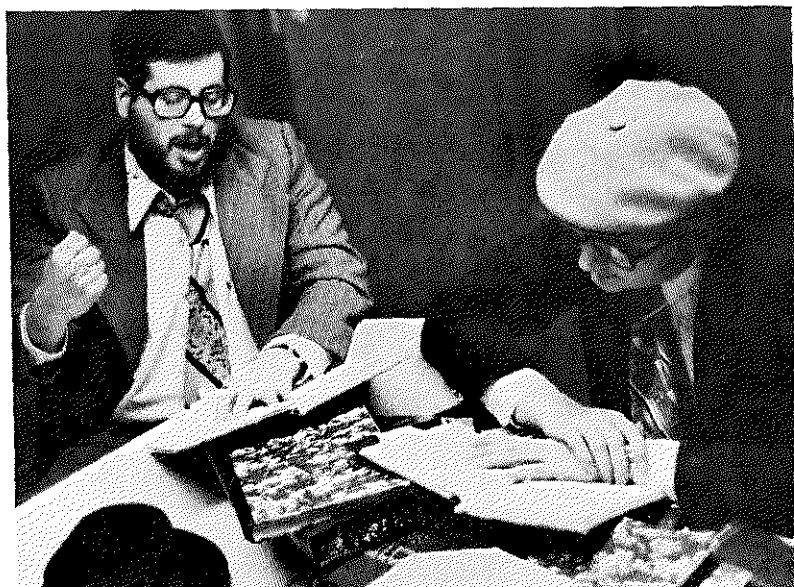
The yeshiva kollel often finds that younger *avreichim* are of greater value to the institution, because of their ability to relate more easily to the younger students. The community kollel, however, requires older and more mature young men to be more successful in inspiring the respect and enthusiastic endorsement of the community.

In the final analysis, however, it must be underscored that the kollel—any type of kollel—performs its primary function by promoting the Torah study and growth of the fellows it maintains, with the prime benefit to the community emanating from the kollel's mere existence and function in its midst . . . like the stars on the Chofetz Chaim's map.

Beginnings: High Aspirations

Each of the various community *kollelim* that dot the map has its own unique story.

□ In Toronto, for instance, a concerned citizenry saw its thriving community suffering a youth drain, common to most American Orthodox communities: many of the best of its young people leave home to



The primary purpose of the community kollel is the same as any kollel's—the growth of its members in their studies . . . but its location and schedule are different—designed for optimum interaction with community members.

study in out-of-town yeshivos and Bais Yaakov schools, marry, and do not return. Justifiably or not, the new generation does not see the old home town as conducive to a way of life that involves devoting a major portion of the day to Torah study (—when? —with whom?), and many of those who emerge from years in yeshivos in America and Israel do have this aspiration.

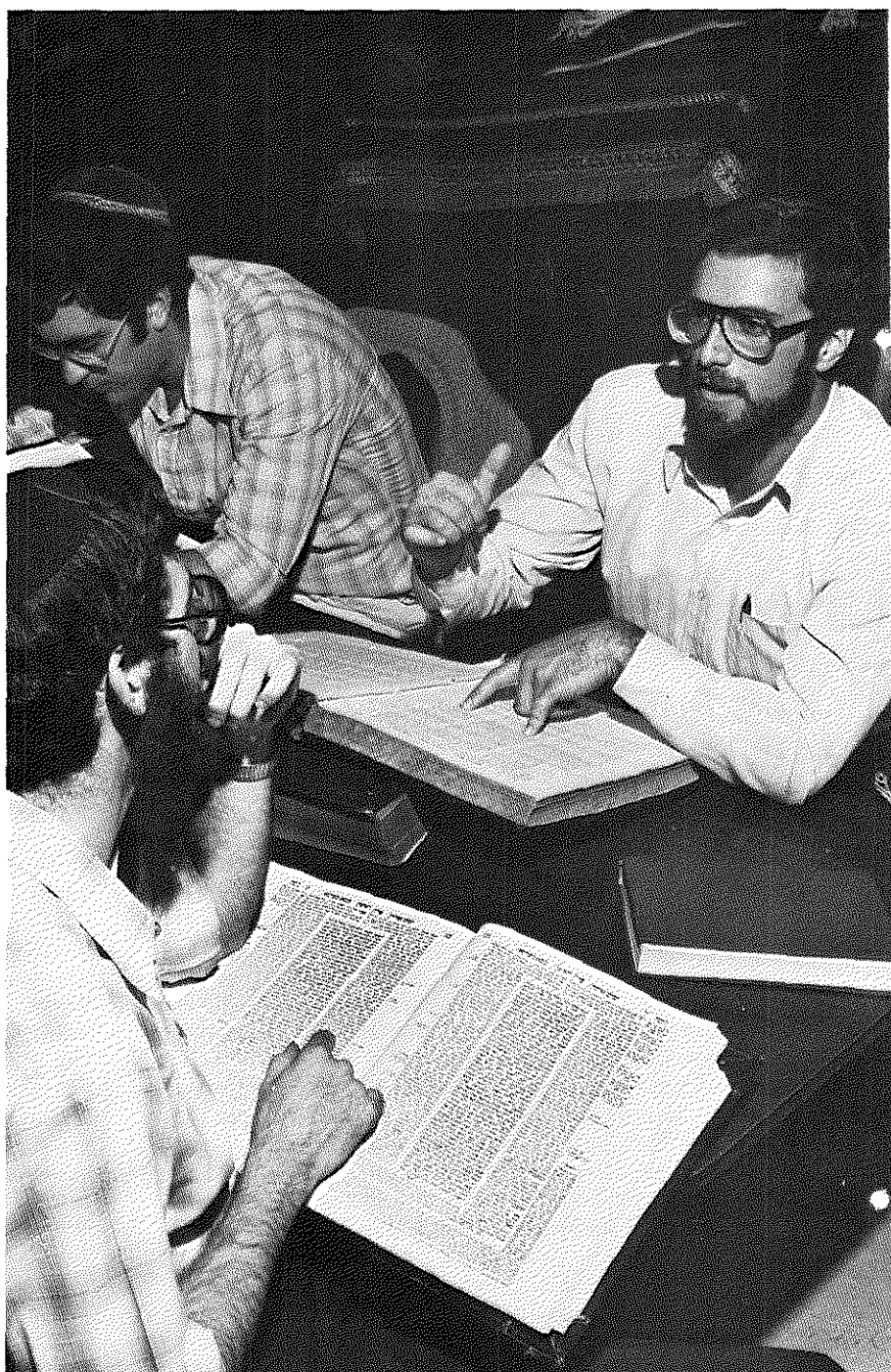
Since its kollel opened ten years ago, Toronto has enjoyed an encouraging influx of young families not directly connected with the kollel, as well as some who left the kollel, but stayed on in a gracious host community. The difference, in numbers alone, is apparent. One local school, for instance, had erected a new building with small classrooms, each with a mere fifteen desk capacity, and now finds itself overcrowded.

□ In Deal, New Jersey, the situation was the reverse—it was a question of an institution searching for a host community. A group of Roshei Yeshivos and lay leaders wanted to create an American center of advanced Torah learning for Sephardic scholars, who until then had been spread out in yeshivos and kollelim throughout America and abroad. The kollel's goal would be to awaken once again the glorious Torah heritage of the Sephardim, to develop Sephardic teachers and rabbis who would not only serve the major Sephardic communities of Deal and Brooklyn, but also Sephardic communities world wide. (Indeed, several of the kollel members were active in the SEED programs in Panama, Toronto, and Brazil, and are keenly aware of needs elsewhere.)

Eventually, interested laymen from Brooklyn and Deal joined in support of the kollel, and decided to

locate the kollel in Deal. This is basically a Sephardic community, whose members are mostly from the mother community in Brooklyn, and whose growth is increasing yearly, as ever more families are leaving Brooklyn and settling in Deal year round. One of the primary reasons for choosing the smaller location was that at that time, only one synagogue served the sprawling community, which had no other religious institutions besides an elementary school. Also, Deal consists of young families who seemed interested in a center where they could learn Torah and seek guidance. The kollel members are all of Sephardic descent and the community was thus assured that all their teachings would be in accordance with the Sephardi custom and halachic tradition.

□ In another Sephardic community—Mexico City—the impetus for founding a kollel came from the *Chacham* of the Aleppo community, Rabbi Abba Badouch, a native of Morocco who has studied at the yeshiva in Sunderland, England. He convinced his congregants, most of whom had never even set foot in a *yeshiva gedola*, that the only hope for their children's survival as Jews was by exposing them to advanced Torah scholarship, by establishing a kollel in their midst. Otherwise, their children would become totally secularized and lost to their heritage. Even though nothing in recent Sephardic experience approximates the kollel concept, the *baalei battim* accepted their rabbi's prescription for their community's elixir of life. By contrast, the major problem in founding the Aram Zoba Kollel in Mexico City was convincing eight families from Mir-Brooklyn that their destiny of *har-*



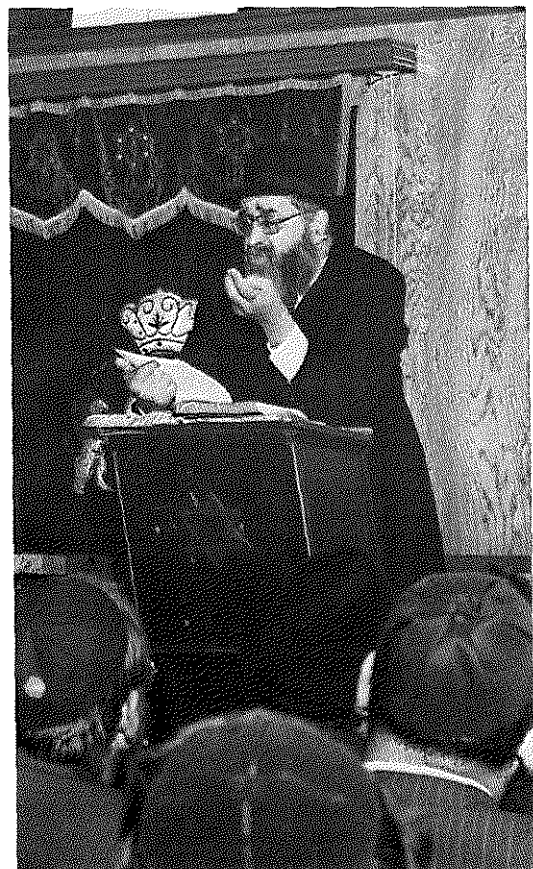
botzas Torah could be fulfilled out-of-town . . . out-of-the-country . . . in a Sephardic community . . . where the people speak Spanish, Arabic, and Hebrew, but not much English.

The young families picked up roots and emigrated Southwest-ward to create a Torah vitality that is increasing in its impact day by day.

□ Los Angeles also had to be sold on the concept of kollel. A prospectus issued by a sponsoring committee, which included most of Los Angeles's Orthodox rabbis and educational leaders, spelled out the unique role and contribution of a kollel. Just two points among many:

"To the competent scholar in Jewish studies, Los Angeles has been a transient community at best. The high rate of teacher turnover in local Jewish schools has been both financially and educationally damaging. A growing and well-rooted community of Torah scholars, however, will make Los Angeles attractive to growing numbers of educators.

"Eastern communities such as Chicago, Baltimore and Cleveland know well that an advanced institute of intensive Talmudic study has a powerful impact upon the quality of its Jewish life over the years, aside from being a wellspring of leadership and personnel in the



field of education."

It took a full year of fundraising to enable the Kollel Bais Avrohom to open in Los Angeles, with forty percent of the funds raised outside of the California area. Apparently the kollel concept is a stranger to many Asheknazim as it is to Sephardim. Today, 95% of the kollel expenses are covered by funds raised from local sources.

The Format

A kollel is by its very definition an institution of

study, and this is reflected in the schedule of virtually all of the community kollelim. Morning and afternoon *sedorim* (study periods)—more or less from 9 AM to 6:30 PM—are devoted exclusively to study—no teaching or reach-out activity. In most cases, the night *seder*—usually from 8 to 10 PM—as well as early mornings, are devoted to the community. The range of subject matter is as broad as one could imagine: nightly classes in *daf yomi*/folio-a-day, *amud yomi*/page-a-day, daily or weekly classes in the *Sidra*, *halachos*/Torah law, *hashkofo*/philosophy; special groups for women on *Tanach*, philosophy—the full gamut.

Every kollel has its own approach to this "extra-curricular curriculum." In Los Angeles, for instance, the kollel fellows are committed to devote every evening to community service, and offer some 20 different classes and lectures during the week. In some of the other places, this involvement is optional, but most men respond to the call when it comes.

Thus, in addition to more than a dozen different classes for adults, the Kollel Institute of Greater Detroit (in Oak Park) sponsors a Torah for Teens program, consisting of several different classes for public high school students, which has resulted in a large number of its members enrolling in yeshivos as full-time students . . . In Mexico City, the emphasis is on Friday evenings, *Shabbos* mornings, afternoons, and evenings, and Sundays, with large groups meeting in the Aram Zova Kollel Building, the Magen David Synagogue, and the Ketter Torah Yeshiva . . . Aside from evening lectures, and the night *seider* in Deal, when the kollel members study with *chavrusos* on a one-to-one basis, many Dealers also come to the kollel from 6 to 7 AM to study.

Every kollel has its own eyebrow-raising story of the doctor/professor/cabdriver who happened by and

The Sephardic Torah Center Kollel in Deal has no summer intersession, so as to be of maximum benefit to its summertime population—Deal is an oceanside resort. One summer night, "Mr. Ben-David," a vacationing accountant, dropped into the kollel and was set up with a chavrusa. At summer's end, Ben-David returned to Brooklyn, so his chavrusa arranged with a kollel fellow in the city to continue the sessions. The following winter, Ben-David invited the kollel members to join him in a siyum celebrating his completion of a mesechta (a tractate of the Talmud). He also informed them that he had interested several of his friends to organize a study group in Brooklyn. . . . Until his visit to the kollel that summer night he had never studied Torah before on a consistent basis.

Special Reach-Out Efforts

One might appreciate a kollel's attraction to former yeshiva students, or to people close to *Yiddishkeit* who want to enhance their knowledge and commitment. One might also expect that the kollel fellows interact with people who aspire to their religious level, while—one might assume—they would have difficulty relating to people of little or no background. It is thus of note that some of these kollelim's most auspicious accomplishments have been with people far removed from Torah Judaism. For example, the Detroit kollel's *Yarchei Kallah*—a summer retreat basically designed for experienced *lomdim* (Talmudists)—ended up hosting a number of college age youths, as well. Detroit kollel members also sponsor a winter weekend Torah Retreat for Collegians and the Teens for Torah program men-

tioned before, in addition to other such activities that they carry out with student groups such as *Ayshel* and *Hillel* . . . Los Angeles's *Yarchei Kallah*, which "imports" a prominent Torah personality from the East, is held in the city, attracting some 150 participants to special sessions, including participants of an ever widening range of backgrounds.

Two of the most striking reach-out efforts by *avreichim* are sponsored by kollelim that are not "community kollelim."

□ *Etz Chaim Center for Jewish Studies* in Baltimore, which was started on the initiative of two Ner Israel Kollel fellows, is an evening school for adults with little or no background, meeting twice a week. The lectures and classes, which are conducted by some of Baltimore's foremost educators, attract hundreds of participants to its sessions, with large numbers assuming a greater degree of religious practice and commitment.

□ *Shalom Torah Centers* and *Chai Seminars* dot the suburban landscape near Lakewood, New Jersey, as the result of the initiative of Bais Medrash Govoha *avreichim*. Their constituency comes from the thousands of urban refugees—young professionals and academicians—who settled in neighboring developments that are literally spiritual wastelands. The spur for this undertaking was the need of several kollel wives to enhance family income. They had been teaching in Conservative Talmud Torahs, with immeasurable frustration as their main dividend: employing limited goals and non-traditional curricula, irreligious boards of directors seemed intent on cheating Jewish children of a Torah education . . . So they decided to change the situation.

After canvassing the area, the young men leased quarters in an office building in Twin Rivers, New Jersey, with only six children registered—winding up with 56 children that year, 1972. Five years later, Shalom Torah Centers has a network of religious Talmud Torahs; a nursery, kindergarten and first grade program; a *shul*; adult classes; a day camp; and a strong influence on the four communities that it serves.

The Shalom Centers are a new approach to the old Talmud Torah system. With young, vibrant, well-learned men administering the program, and ladies of similar caliber teaching the classes, the children in their charge come to love Hebrew school. The abundance of Bais Yaakov graduates in the community is a major advantage to these programs, providing every school with a choice of experienced teachers. And the fact that the thirty people involved with this institution are still part-time kollel members helps them cope with the inevitable influences that afflict most people that are involved in such work. *Shabbatons*, which brings children to the kollel homes for *Shabbos*—an experience unparalleled in any other environment—gives these children memories of a *Shabbos* that they endeavor to bring back to their own homes.

Shalom also sponsors *Chai Seminars*, series of

lectures given by kollel members and guest speakers in the different neighboring communities; and the *Pardes* program, a one-on-one-*chavrusa*-type-set-up, which meets once a week in Lakewood, catering to all interested from *Gemora lomdim* to the struggling *Siddur* reader.

The impact on the communities is almost tangible. The number of homes turned kosher (partly and completely) and the number of people who walk to *shul* on *Shabbos* is steadily growing.

Running a Shabbaton in Twin Rivers two years ago, two young kollel men davened Kabbolas Shabbos alone. Within one square mile of their hopeful tefillos lived 3,000 Jewish families—not one of whom attended a synagogue or Temple, much less a shul . . . Within two years, a shul has been established where they have minyanim every single Shabbos. This past Pesach nearly all the shul members refrained from going to work, and spent the holidays as would any Jew in Boro Park: two sederim, tefillos, shiurim . . . 200 people came to shul this past Rosh Hashana—not one driving!

The Spill-Over

A kollel will inevitably raise the level of its community in many ways—some predictable, some unpredictable.

- *Chinuch*—Torah education: Understandably, the local day schools experience an upgrading of standards: kollel wives teach with quality, professionalism and commitment; their children bring keener motivation into the classroom; and new opportunities are created for expert *melamdim*, who otherwise would never have come to the community: They teach morning and study afternoons with the kollel, receiving a stipend for their effort. This grants them increased income, kollel stature, and a yeshiva social environment and group membership.

- Specific *chinuch* programs have been initiated in some communities: A Deal kollel member runs a special Sephardi *minyan* every day at the Hillel Day School in nearby Wanamassa, and plans have been made for another member to give special classes on a voluntary basis to students interested in advanced studies.

- In Mexico City, the kollel wives run a Bnos group (pronounced "Ba-not") for some sixty local girls every *Shabbos* afternoon. In its enthusiasm for this project, the community has leased a building at great expense for the sole purpose of housing these once-a-week groups.

- For three decades since the war, Los Angeles had been a major Jewish community without a successful talmudic institute and yeshiva high school. The kollel came to the city with the commitment to extend its development to include a Beis Midrash and high school: the yeshiva high school and Beis Midrash have now been established by former members of the Los Angeles Kollel as an independent institution—and have earned

enviable reputations for their close guidance and supervision of students.

- *Kashrus* is upgraded—either by virtue of the greater demand for more fastidious controls, as is the case in Detroit and Toronto (as well as Baltimore). *Cholov Yisroel*, *Shatnez* testing, *mezuzos* and *tefillin* checking, and new *mikvaos* have become features of communities with kollelim.

- To better meet the *kashrus* demands of the kollel people, the Mexico City community flew in an expert butcher from Bnei Brak, Israel, to review pertinent laws and procedures with the local butcher.

- The Detroit Kollel was instrumental in helping establish a Glatt Kosher Meat Market in Detroit (there was none previously), arranging relocation for the butcher and financing for the store. Today that store is servicing more than 500 families in Detroit and surrounding areas.

- The rabbis of the Deal area have engaged a former Lakewood Kollel fellow to supervise the *kashrus* of a large number of food establishments, in response to higher standards.

- Some kollelim have opened libraries of *seforim*, English-language Judaica and tapes of *shiurim* and lectures.

- Kollel members provide moral support for Orthodox rabbis who need backing for some of their more controversial (i.e. intensive) undertakings.

- Physicians and other professionals consult with kollel members on ethical and career questions.

- Local *baalei teshuva* returning from yeshivos in Israel come home with the address of the kollel in hand, finding a haven of support in continuing their return to *Yiddishkeit*.

- The Jewish neighborhood in Detroit, which has been leap-frogging from three to five miles further from city center every ten years, seems to have stabilized in Oak Park-Southfield, with the kollel as a definite factor in this stability.

A businessman who moved from his home in the more distant wealthy suburb of West Bloomfield to Oak Park testified at a local Real Estate Board hearing on behalf of the Kollel: In response to the Board's challenge to the Kollel's unauthorized location in a residential zone, the physician explained that the kollel had attracted him to Oak Park, and its convenient location could only enhance the neighborhood.

- The Kollel area in Toronto, where real-estate prices are higher than elsewhere, has also been experiencing a Kollel-inspired influx.

- The unfortunate lack of centrally located housing for kollel members in Deal had had a most fortunate result: On *Shabbos*, regular *shiurim* and lectures are given in four different *shuls* by kollel members. The members of the community greatly appreciate these classes and view them as part of the *shuls'* function rather than the kollel's. Indeed, to a large degree the kollel was quickly accepted by the community

members, despite prior suspicion and concern, because the kollel created the *Shabbat* programs in their own *shuls*. The members of these *shuls* view the rabbis of the kollel as their own rabbis rather than as visiting kollel lecturers. Regular bulletins prepared for the synagogues by the kollel enhance this relationship.

To be sure, all of these specific instances of improvement are duplicated in one way or another in all the other communities.

Enhancing the Influencers


The very people who leave the security of the larger yeshiva-based kollel to the frontiers of the community-kollel for the purpose of benefitting others, are themselves among the major beneficiaries of their efforts. Indeed, pioneering usually does bring out the best in a man; many men who were content with relative obscurity in a larger institution, enter their new situation fired with a sense of responsibility for both the kollel and the community. To quote one *Rosh Hakollel*: "Once here, a number of *avreichim* develop talent, resourcefulness, creativity, and leadership which had been unknown and unforeseen by teachers and peers, these revealed themselves in both the studies and other kollel activities . . . The *avreichim* find themselves in a quasi-*shtetle* (official position)—their fellowship grant often equals that of a *shtetle* salary. They have definite obligations both in learning and to the community. They know that in their absence someone must replace them."

In more than one kollel, members have emerged as experts in *halacha*, serving as regional authorities in Torah law. Generally, functioning in a smaller group requires the *avreichim* to lecture more often, experiencing appreciable growth in their studies.

A typical example is a Deal Kollel fellow who had earned a reputation as a respected *lamdan* in his many years of study, but had no experience whatsoever in dealing with contemporary laymen. Unable to find a home in the center of the community, he established

residence in a new section, far from the synagogue. A small group of families in his area started their own synagogue, which he served as rabbi. In a short time, they were joined by many new families moving into this section, crowding the *shul*, enjoying his *shiurim* in *Chumash* and *halacha*. Eventually, another kollel member joined him and created classes for the children. Fifty to one-hundred-and-fifty children come to the *shul* every *Shabbos* afternoon, participating in classes and groups.

A Place on the Map

A kollel is an institution designed to afford young men an opportunity to continue their growth as Torah scholars and eventually emerge as leaders in thought, teaching, and action. To be sure, these men need the kollelim; but even more, *Klal Yisroel* needs the kollelim. Their influence is so profound and vast, that it is beyond our scope to chart it, but the spiritual upheavals affected in tangible ways in the communities that host them bear eloquent testimony to their power as a key force in Torah life. 

The author expresses a note of gratitude to the following for supplying much of the information that appears in this article: Rabbi Shlomo Diamond, Deal; Rabbi Reuvain Drucker, Baltimore; Rabbi Chaim Fasman, Los Angeles; Rabbi Elchonon Bunim Freedman, Detroit; Rabbi Yaakov Michael Hirschmann, Toronto; Rabbi Yisroel Saperstein, Mexico City; Rabbi Pinchos Yurowitz, Lakewood.



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Reading in Judgment

"Too harsh. . ." — "Too favorable. . ."

The bookreviewer examines his responsibilities in light of several critical letters.

Irresponsible Skimmer or Nit-picking Pedant?

BOOK REVIEWING is a difficult task. Anyone who writes for publication must expect some critical response. A book reviewer, however, must expect more than the usual quota. For in dealing with another's work, he is likely to touch sensitive spots. Some people probably picture him as arrogantly—and carelessly—flipping through the pages of a book on which its author spent his very lifeblood and praising it to high heaven or damning it mercilessly, as his mood moves him. If he is more effusive in his approval than a reader considers proper, he may be seen as irresponsible, too lazy to look between the covers of a nicely bound book, and, instead, copying the publisher's blurb. On the other hand, if he may be too critical, he is considered a nit-picking pedant, eager to find fault and to show that he is smarter than the author.



While such extreme views are more likely to be found in regard to general book criticism, even the most conscientious book-reviewer, who tries to do justice to the many books offered to the Torah community, will also find it difficult to satisfy all readers. The reason is simple: he has to weigh a number of contending considerations—and he may well find that his readers may not see them his way. On the one hand, the author is entitled to respect for his work. His good intentions, his efforts, his prestige, and usually also monetary considerations are involved in it. Moreover, *Klal Yisroel* has a stake in every undertaking that will serve the interests of Torah. These considerations, buttressed by concrete halachic obligations, put a heavy burden of

responsibility on a reviewer critical of the book before him. He may be tempted, in the circumstances, to play down his criticism of a book. And yet . . . equally weighty considerations speak against such a course.

The Criteria of Judgment

The reviewer ultimately is responsible to the public that is presented with a book and has every right, morally and halachically, to know whether it lives up to the goals that the author set for himself, and to the good intentions that inspired him. Does it provide a clear, readable and enlightening treatment of the subject? *Klal Yisroel* as a whole, moreover, has a stake in a further crucial question: can the book be relied upon to be correct in its presentation of Torah teachings? In offering his work to the public, the author implicitly agrees to have it evaluated along these lines—and the reviewer, like it or not, must attempt to make this evaluation to the best of his ability.

These thoughts have been occasioned by two letters recently received, which challenge this reviewer's judgment of two very different books. Both letters have a point that merits response—and through discussing them the task of the reviewer will perhaps be further clarified. The first letter is from an outstanding rabbinic scholar who feels that a book was dealt with too harshly; the second, from a concerned mother who feels that a book was dealt with too favorably. Herewith the first:

(see right)

Let me first stress that the review in question referred to the author as devoting "great effort and diligence to this ambitious undertaking," and to the undoubted value which the quotations gathered for each commandment have for the reader, as well as to the noble purpose for which the book was designed. However, the review did state that it raises serious questions and that a thorough revision is called for. I do not believe these remarks to be derogatory—but even if they might be taken as such by some, I believe that I had to voice them.

Danger: Flawed, Though Not Heretical

Rabbi Cohen's disagreement with me on this point clearly revolves around the doubt cast by him upon any "slighting" of a work (and thereby "causing anguish to an author") unless the book in question is actually heretical. With all due respect, this is a position that appears to me untenable and fraught with great danger. The book market is today flooded with publications that seek to present Torah teachings to the public in English; many of them are not heretical—but poorly done, confusing in their execution, questionable in their *hashkofos*, and full of errors. Whereas rabbinic works in Hebrew usually contain a *haskomah* and have to pass the scrutiny of a learned public before finding acceptance, today's Judaica—without these safeguards—reach a wider, less erudite public and, for many of their readers, are the source of their thoughts and practice of Torah (just the other day I spoke to a group of *Baalei Teshuva*, and the lady of the house where the gathering was held proudly showed me the Judaica in which she looks up her halachic questions). Obviously, the mag-

nitude of an undertaking, or its pioneering nature, cannot, in such circumstances, excuse major flaws—it is all too often possible that an author takes on a work that he is not equipped to handle.

In the case of Rabbi Chill's book, I specifically criticized a disturbing lack of clarity, as well as halachic mistakes and inexactnesses. I did not consider it necessary to give all instances but chose at random eight examples to illustrate what I considered four major groups of shortcomings. In my desire to be brief I may not have spelled out my criticisms adequately, and thus provided Rabbi Cohen with the opportunity of *limud z'chus* on the author in some of the examples given; but they are indeed very valid.

Thus, there is of course some relationship between *eruv tavshilin* and *eruv t'chumim* (as shown by the names themselves). What I criticized as a "strange combination," evidence of confused editing, was the fact that in a chapter titled, "Going Forth From One's Place on the Sabbath," and devoted totally to that topic, the author tacked on a paragraph on *Eruv Tavshilin*, without any link or explanation—and then repeated the



A Derogatory Review That Ignores Virtues...

To the Editor:

Permit me to take exception with your reviewer's assessment of Rabbi Abraham Chill's "The Mitzvot" (JO April '79). I feel that this derogatory review does not take into consideration the many virtues of the book which, to my mind, is a genuine contribution to contemporary Jewish literature and fills a large vacuum. I've read the book and recommended it to many people. It is comprehensive and extensively researched, was the first in English of its genre, and because of its magnitude, is not flawless. As for the criticisms, *al rishon rishon*...

Firstly, there is a relationship between *eruv tavshilin* and *eruv t'chumim*. The Rambam in the first *shorash* of *Sefer Hamitzvos* conjectures that all the *eruvim* (the above

as well as *chatzeiros*) are *takanos* of King Solomon. As for "each day is divided into 1080 parts," isn't it evident this is a printer's error where "hour" is to be substituted for "day"?

Your reviewer goes on to criticize that "abstruse rules are often given (the right of Kings)" while crucial ones are omitted. A *sefer* concerning itself with *taryag mitzvos* is not mentioning an abstruse rule when it mentions a king's rights; and the "omitted crucial rule" (in regard to *Nidah*) is not an omission at all. It is evident that the author was stating a greater stringency (i.e. even examining clothing concerning *bedike* during the seven clean days, rather than the law of self-examination). After all, the author was not compiling a compendium of *dinim* and was not obligated to mention all the *halachos* of *Nidah*. This "criticism" would be as valid if levelled against the *Sefer Hachinuch* who cites only a few *halachos* concerning each *mitzva*.

The reviewer criticizes the author's introduction as "lacking clarity" because he states that there were those who strongly believed that there was no rationale at all to

mitzvos. But this view is clearly stated in the *Moreh Nevuchim* 3, 26. It is the Rambam's understanding concerning the opposing views mentioned in *Berachos* 33b, and (according to Maimonides) is the view of the *Midrash Breishis Rabba* 44a. The fact that the Ramban in *Devarim* 32-6 disputes the Rambam does not "muddle the clarity" of the Rambam's view as presented by the author.

As to the reviewer's contention that "the rationale of *mitzvos* certainly has no relationship to the Talmudic controversy whether, in halachic arguments, we explore the reason for a biblical statement," I refer him to the *Beis Yosef* to *Tur Yorah De'ah* 181, who correlates both concepts.

Finally, may I question whether JO's policy of causing anguish to an author by slighting his work is halachically correct? Of course, if the book is heretical, there is no doubt that it is commendable to call a potential reader's attention to the facts. When this is not the case, has JO inquired concerning this and acquired a ruling?

RABBI DAVID COHEN
Cong. Givul Yaabetz
Brooklyn, New York

The Book Reviewer's Quandary...

same paragraph, almost verbatim, on page 278, where it really belongs, without even a cross-reference (similar and more confusing instances abound). The mistake about the division of the day is surely an editing error rather than a printer's error—and it is as confusing to the layman as some of the other outright mistakes.

As for including some abstruse rules whilst omitting others, it is of course obvious that the author had to select—but it was incumbent on him to exercise good and careful judgment, as the *Sefer HaChinuch* did. I did not criticize a chance omission of a *din* but a very significant and crucial rephrasing of a *halacha*, with far-reaching practical implications. The *Yoreh De'ah* (ch. 196) states that a woman must make *hefsek tahara* and count seven days during each of which "she must examine herself"; the *Taharas Yisroel* amplifies that on each of the seven days she "must examine herself and her underwear; however failure to examine her underwear does not invalidate the clean days." Rabbi Chill writes that "after staining, a woman must count seven clean days. On each of these seven clean days . . . she must examine her clothes and bedlinen for staining." His stress on the examination of her clothing, and his failure to add "and herself" is astounding, and Rabbi Cohen's explanation is well-meant but unsatisfactory. Just in those circles for whom this book is most valuable, an acceptance of *Taharas Hamishpacha* is often paired with an aversion to the physical examination required; instead, there is often at most a cursory external examination or check of the clothing—and Rabbi Chill's statement is bound to lend aid and comfort to this attitude. True, his book is not meant to serve as a legal compendium—nor, however, were those other *Judaica* which are used for this purpose today!

"No Rationale For Mitzvos"?

The same need to foresee the consequences of one's comments prompted my criticism of his remark that "there were those who strongly believed that . . . there was no rationale at all" for the *mitzvos*. It is true that the *Rambam* imputes this view to the authors of the Midrash referred to; but it is also true that the *Rambam* himself stresses that we do not agree with this view—and the *Ramban* disagrees with the *Rambam's* interpretation of the Midrash and denies that such a view exists at all. In the circumstances, is it necessary to state flatly, as a fact, the existence of such a view, which certainly will not encourage readers who may be weak in their commitment to *mitzva* observance? Moreover, I was quite correct in stating that such a view (that *mitzvos* have no rationale at all) is not related to the Talmudic

controversy about exploring the reason for biblical statements—the *Bais Yosef* relates this controversy to the question whether we can and should explore the reasons for biblical commandments or not, but nowhere does he refer to a view that there is no reason for biblical commandments (see also *Tosfos Gittin* 49b and *Sota* 14a; *Chavos Yair* 189; Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, *Devorim* 24:17).

Yet it is not these last-mentioned points, in Rabbi Chill's introduction, which prompted me to suggest a thorough revision of the text, but the number of unclaritys, inexactnesses, and mistakes in the halachic statments. Even if the book is not meant as a halachic text, some of them might mislead an uninformed reader. But even if this never happens, should our evaluation of a book only consider whether it might lead to *aveiros*, and totally disregard whether it does a correct job of conveying Torah teachings? Obviously, we should not totally reject a book unless it is heretical—but we have a right and duty to call attention to significant inadequacies and have them corrected.

* * *

LET US TURN now to the other letter:

(see right)

First of all, I would like to say that, no, *Devorah Doresh* was not only glanced at. No, the reviewer did not overlook the points questioned by Mrs. Rosenberg. And yes, he agrees with several (though not all) of her points, and he should have made some cautionary remark in recommending the book. But finally, no, he does not agree that the book should not have been recommended on their account.

Obviously, it was wrong to have words exchanged during the *Megillah* reading—but would any child follow this example, or even deduce that it is alright to talk during the *Megillah*? Likewise, the reference to the church bells showed poor judgment—but most or all child-readers would hardly register it in their minds. The other points raised (with the exception of one instance implying *yichud*) are of similar nature. In other words, while the objectionable points are real, I do not believe their direct *chinuch* impact is such as to put in question the basic value of a book, which, effectively and interestingly written, presents a religious girl concerned with her *Yiddishkeit*, possessing may fine *midos*, and functioning in a Torah setting.

The question we have to ask is this: when presented to the ordinary child, in the English-speaking religious community at large, will this book help enhance the



Objects to Rave Review

To the Editor:

Please allow me to preface this letter with: "I am an avid fan of *The Jewish Observer*." It stands out as an excellent source of material, much of which serves as a wonderful guide. It is one of the few items of reading material that comes into our home; we save all back issues to provide future reading material for our growing children.

In the past issue there was an item that in my opinion was questionable—the review on *Devorah Doresh*. I wonder how much time the book editor spent on the book. From all indications, he probably glanced at it then rave-reviewed it, based on the author's personal credentials.

I bought the book, read it and filed it away, out of sight. I have no interest for my children to read it; if they need mysteries, they can do very well with the standard junk (which they don't get, anyhow).

Allow me to list some of my objections to the book:

1) Should a mystery be solved by the time of ringing church bells? ("The Case of Pedigree Peninah").

2) Should Devorah (a *frum* BY girl) and her mother be talking during the reading of the *Megillah*?

3) Isn't it odd to have an entire story center around an irreligious Israeli house guest? This point may sound a little fanatic, and it is also not in tune with *Kiruv Rechokim*—but *Kiruv Rechokim* never figures in the story.

4) How about an expression like "Oh yes, and they told me beware of American men"?

5) Should a *frum* girl be alone with men in the middle of the night ("Haunted Shul") or even during the day ("Pedigree Peninah"), when there is a *yichud* problem?

6) On the bottom of Page 12, and continuing on Page 13 the author gives some very strong opinions on *aliyah* to *Eretz Yisroel*. Is she qualified? Are those the opinions of our *Gedolim*?

7) How can a few *pesukim*—taken out of context and used to solve lurid, sensational murders, rob-

beries and kidnappings—save the poor *chinuch* given over to the child in this book?

Rabbi Yaakov Teitelbaum זצ"ל, *Manhig Ruchni* and mentor of the staff of Camp Agudah for many years, encouraged telling children only stories based on *Midrashim* and incidents in the lives of Torah leaders. If we must invent stories to fire our children's imagination, can we not at least base our stories on *Chazal* and the *midos tovot* (fine character traits) they taught us? Need we follow the examples of the marketplace and copy their plots, styles, themes?

In my view, the JO is doing a grave injustice to the discriminating reading public with its positive review of this book. Parents and *mechanchim* alike use your publication as a definitive guide.

May I stress that I write with no malice, only with the hope of dissuading the appearance of similar books in the future. May authors of such talent rather channel their efforts toward more rewarding works.

(Mrs.) FRUMA ROSENBERG
Lakewood, NJ

child's respect and affection for *Yiddishkeit*? Or will it actually teach him or her wrong things? I am inclined to take the first view and therefore believe that the book, despite its shortcomings, makes a contribution in an area where we are exceedingly poor.

No Books for the Teenager

It is no accident that almost all books that have appeared for our children address themselves to the youngest, from nursery through the primary grades; almost no books have been written for the teenager. There is a simple reason for that. It is relatively easy to present interesting and educational material in the right way to the younger age group (though, even here, questions can be raised as soon as we do not literally follow *Midrashim* and *Sipurai Gedolim*—e.g. Rabbi S. R. Hirsch strongly objected to any manner of fairytales in which inanimate objects talk or act). To write for older children in a manner that is not just drily didactic but holds their interest and attention, and is sufficiently entertaining to wean them away from undesirable reading, is quite different. Even Rabbi Marcus Lehmann, who was so successful in presenting valuable historical matter in a vivid manner, encountered criticism, e.g. for

his description of the love between Rabbi Akiva and Rachel.

The truth is that any fictional and dramatic writing raises problems, and a good case can be made for not having our children read for enjoyment at all. However, this is obviously not realistic, for the bulk of Yeshiva and Beth Jacob children read—voraciously, and much too much that is bad for them—and will continue to read. We certainly must not copy all of the plots, styles or themes of non-Jewish literature—but, if we must compete with it, we cannot reject everything. A statement that if children "need mysteries, they can do very well with goyishe junk," can only be made by somebody who, like Mrs. Rosenberg, is secure in the knowledge that her children will not read non-Jewish mysteries; others, however, are sure to welcome their replacement by mysteries of the *Devorah Doresh* type, even though they are bound to contain some violence and some characters we would rather do without. Of course, the details that can be criticized in the book should have been avoided; and it also goes without saying, we should strive to have books that are not open to such criticisms. However, despite our best efforts, overall, fiction for teenagers—even when drawing on

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authentic historic sources or seeking to teach authentic hashkafa (ideology) lessons—has its built-in pitfalls.

I was told that, when asked what books one can give children to read, the revered Steipler Rav suggested Lehmann's writings; and when the questioner said that there were some things in them, too, that could be questioned, the Steipler Rav answered: "Nobody has yet been spoiled by Lehmann's books!" After all the efforts are made to produce books conveying Torah ideas and free of objectionable details, the end-products very likely will still provide an opportunity to raise some questions—and, unable to give up on producing children's literature, we may perhaps find some consolation in the Steipler Rav's observation.

* * *

THESE LINES are not meant to claim infallibility for this reviewer. Rather, I hope they have thrown a light on the complexities of the task of book reviewing and the need for *Siyata deShmaya* (heavenly assistance) in balancing the many conflicting responsibilities involved in it.

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Missing — a Dimension of Golus

(a response to letters regarding "Missing — a Feeling of Galut," J.O. Tishrei 5739)

In the Tishrei 5739 Jewish Observer I wrote an article "Missing, a Feeling of Galut" bemoaning what I felt was an absence of a feeling of *golus* among some of the finest religious Jews of America. This article jangled many a sensitive nerve. Perhaps the fundamental criticism was expounded by Rabbi Michael J. Meisels (Teves 5739 Jewish Observer). He contended that I confuse *golus* with other terms, particularly *chutz la'Aretz*. *Golus*, according to Rabbi Meisels, has nothing to do with location of a person or a nation. *Golus* according to him "describes the tragic state of affairs which results from the absence of *Shechina* among *Klal Yisroel*. When because of our, and perhaps our fathers' insufficiencies, we are denied the presence of *Shechina*, and a spiritual darkness, a *Hester Panim*, pervades the world, we experience *Golus Hashechina*. As we sink deeper in this darkness, we are denied a *Bais Hamikdosh* and even the privilege of living in *Eretz Yisroel*."

I had no opportunity to reply to these comments, which may have been regarded as straightforward, and perhaps, as the writer indicated, "this interpretation is elementary and is perhaps the major positive value which the Yeshiva world has taught this past generation." Indeed in questioning a number of *b'nai Yeshiva* and *Bais Yaakov* graduates, I discovered to my surprise that almost unanimously they characterized *golus* in the same terms as did Rabbi Meisels, as a spiritual event without spatial dimension. Taken aback by this unanimity I began to question my own concepts and then reexamined some of the traditional Jewish sources, back to the *Chumash*, *Nevi'im* until the *Achronim*. Without exception I found that this "elementary" and "major positive value" which the Yeshiva world has been praised for introducing is in conflict with the definition of *golus* understood by our *Nevi'im*, *Chazal* and *gedolim* for centuries.

Every Reference: Chutz La'Aretz

Every reference to *golus* in *Tanach* refers clearly either to collective exile of the Jewish people or to the

exile of an individual, such as one who kills unintentionally and is permitted to escape to city of refuge. *Golus* never refers to a state of "spiritual darkness." During many phases of Jewish existence in *Eretz Yisroel* from the times of Joshua until the *churban bais rishon*, when judges or kings described by *Chazal* as *resho'im* (wicked men) reigned, even when *avoda zara* and other sins were rampant, the word *golus* was not applied. During the era of the second *Bais Hamikdosh* when kings assassinated to achieve power, when the office of *kohein gadol* was handed out as a political plum to illiterates (see *Mishna Yoma* describing how the *kohanim gedolim* who could not handle a Hebrew text spent Yom Kippur evening), when spiritual corruption was the rule, the situation was not referred to as *golus*.

In our daily usage of phraseology which antedates the present era, *golus* is used in a spatial dimension. How else does one interpret *yom tov sheini shel goluyos*? Indeed if *golus* is only spiritual and is present in Israel as well as in Boro Park such usage would be bizarre. In all of our *tefillos*, *golus* clearly refers to the dispersion of Jews out of *Eretz Yisroel*. It is hard to explain the *tefilla V'kabetz Goluyosainu* in its plural form by the concept of a unifying spiritual eclipse.

The Gaon of Vilna in *Avnei Eliyahu*, his commentary on the *Siddur*, makes it quite clear that "*goluyosainu*" to him meant the various states and eras of being exiled from *Eretz Yisroel*. In our own era the Chazon Ish, זצ"ל, expressed himself about the relocation of Yeshivos from outside of *Eretz Yisroel* into *Eretz Yisroel*, בתי מדרש הגלויים, העתקתם כתבור בהרים וככרמל בים הובטחו בארצנו הקדושה להקבע, ליסד פינה, ולהקים חומות, לרפא את החרוס ולספון קורתם (Kovetz Igaros, letter 89) using the term "*Galus*" to refer to *chutz la'Aretz* not to a spiritual state.

Away, And Then Some

Yes, there is a difference between *chutz la'Aretz* and *golus*. *Chutz la'Aretz* is a geographical location. *Golus* is a condition describing a relationship between someone and his natural surroundings, an exile of a person or of a people from home or homeland respectively.

The concept of *Shechina* in *golus*, well recognized, does not imply that G-d's presence has been denied to

Dr. Shimon Glick, a native American who now lives in Israel, is chairman of the Division of Internal Medicine at the Central Negev Hospital in Beersheva.

us. On the contrary, it indicates that the Alm-ghty (*kevayachol*—so to speak) in an awesome manifestation of *tzimtzum* (containment) and of identification with Jewish suffering has not left the Jews, but has *gone into golus with them*, and our sources tell us that the Alm-ghty, too, feels out of place outside of *Eretz Yisroel*.

For those skeptics who by now are raising eyebrows at my seemingly Zionist secular interpretation of *golus*, I will quote a clear and unequivocal definition of *golus* and ask the readers to identify the source:

"There is no doubt that *golus* is a change and a departure from order. For blessed G-d arranged each nation in its appropriate place, and arranged Israel (i.e. the nation) in its appropriate place, which is *Eretz Yisroel*. *Golus* from their place represents change and total departure. All things when they leave their natural state and are outside of their place, have no permanence in the unnatural place, but return to their natural state. For were they to remain in their unnatural place the unnatural would become natural, and that is impossible . . . And so too Israel (i.e. the nation) if they would remain in *golus* permanently this would not be their appropriate place. Their appropriate place according to the order of nature is to be in *Eretz Yisroel* under their own sovereignty (*rshus*) and not under the sovereignty of others . . . Also dispersion is unnatural. Just as each thing returns to its place so too do spread and separated parts return to form one community (*klal*). This is obvious to any sensible person . . . Therefore the dispersion of Israel among the nations is unnatural. Since they are one nation it would be appropriate for them to stand together as one . . . Since the Jewish nation is one nation no more divided or split than other nations it is appropriate that they should be gathered together. From this we see that their individual dispersion is not at all natural."

If you guessed that the source was Herzl or Ahad Ha'am you will be surprised. That definition is the *Maharal's* (*Netzach Yisroel*, Chapter 1) who simply reiterated what every Jewish child realized for almost two thousand years, that *golus* has two components: (1) exile and (2) foreign domination. The *Maharal* indicates further that there was one period in which the term *golus* was applied to the Jewish people while they were still in *Eretz Yisroel*. That was during *Golus Yavan* (Greece), when in spite of the Jewish presence on the land, they were living under the occupation and domination of the Greek empire.

Causes and Effects


The causes of *golus* are legion and are well described repeatedly in Jewish sources—sins. Among the sins that shortened the period of the *Bayis Sheini* (Second Temple) was the failure of the Jews in Babylonian *golus*

to return to *Eretz Yisroel* in response to the call of Ezra and Nehemia. Only a tiny fraction of the Jews in *golus* then (smaller than the fraction of world Jewry in Israel today) left Babylon for *Eretz Yisroel*.

The results of *golus* are catastrophic. Let us read one description, by Rav Yaakov Emden, in his introduction to his commentary on the *Siddur*. He uses the word "*golus*" in the way that I have defined it. He states "This (the lack of an active attempt to make *aliya*) was the sin of our ancestors which has caused tragedy for generations, because they have despised *Eretz Chemda*. . . . Therefore all the troubles have befallen us when we resided in Spain and other countries in tranquility and great honor from the days of the great *churban* almost 2,000 years ago, and we were driven from there until there was no Jewish remnant left in that land . . . Who is the wise man who can understand this, why was our land of Israel lost, burnt like a desert, and the L-rd said because you have abandoned My Torah, for the Jews are called the inheritance of G-d, and the land is His inheritance. And the Torah is dependent on both factors, on the people of G-d and on the land of G-d. He who abandons one abandons the other, as is said in *Midrash Raba* on *parshas Lech L'cho* 'If you enter My land you accept My divinity and if not . . . 'He goes on to plead in the strongest terms for every Jew to make *aliya* and get out of *golus* as a matter of greatest urgency. As the *Gemora* in *Chagiga* states, "Once the Jews have been exiled (*גלו*) from their place there is no greater *bitul Torah*."

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The End of Golus . . . and Geula

This definition of *golus* does not define the converse as *Geula*. *Geula* is not merely the absence of *golus*. For the redemption of the Jews from Egypt, for example, there are four or five different expressions of *ge'ula*, each describing a separate and unique phase of a step-wise process. Using the terminology of logic, living in *Eretz Yisroel* is a "necessary but not sufficient" condition for *ge'ula*. *Ge'ula* does not occur automatically in *Eretz Yisroel*, but it is inconceivable in *Chutz la'Aretz*.

Those whose distress with the secular nature of the builders of the State of Israel affect their attitude towards *Eretz Yisroel*, may find solace in a careful reading of *Yechezkiel* chapter 36, (*haftoras Parshas Para*) as a description of the future *ge'ula*:

"I do not do this for your sake, oh house of Israel, but for My holy name which you have profaned among the nations . . . And I will take you from among the nations and I will gather you from all the countries and will bring you into your own land. And I will sprinkle pure water upon you and you will become pure from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take out the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you and will cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will keep My laws and do them. And you will dwell in the land which I gave your fathers and you shall be My people and I will be your G-d."

The commentaries are unequivocal in confirming the *sequence* of events. The return of the Jews to their homeland, the first step, will take place while the people are still undeserving and unrepentant. They will be gathered to Israel *only* because, were G-d to keep them in *golus* any longer, it would result in intolerable desecration of G-d's name. *After they have been gathered in Israel, only then will the further steps of ge'ula and t'shuva take place.*

I have demonstrated that the authentic definition of *golus*, from the Torah down to the *achronim*, has been altered beyond recognition by a process which superficially elevates the concept to a spiritual plane, but which I believe is, in itself, a tragic consequence of prolonged *golus*. I would suggest that the abstraction of *golus* and the stripping of the *golus* concept of its classic, true meaning of exile and foreign domination, is in essence, to deny the existence of *golus*. The process although occurring in a milieu steeped in loyalty to G-d and Torah, and motivated by drives diametrically opposite to those of Reform Judaism, bears unfortunate similarities to the attempt by Reform Judaism to "spiritualize" *mitzvos*. Judaism sanctifies the secular, but does not deny it. Judaism does not deny the importance of nationhood, with its natural concomitants—land,

language, culture, army etc. Quite the opposite, Judaism without nationhood is inconceivable. Of course, the Torah demands that the nation must be unique with special spiritual goals and specific *mitzvos ma'asiyos*. Loss of nationhood and land, i.e. *golus*, has devastating spiritual consequences. But by its very definition it is a term of spatial and national dimensions.

Current Status in Historical Perspective

It is difficult for any person with a sense of history to be unimpressed by what has occurred in our lifetime in *Eretz Yisroel*. Never since the *churban Bais Hamikdash* has the absolute number of Jews in Israel been greater; never before have entire *goluyos* been transferred totally to *Eretz Yisroel*; never before has *Eretz Yisroel* contained such a high percentage of world Jewry; never before have the Jewish holy places been under Jewish control (I would recommend reading the letter of the *Ramban* to his family about the state of

Jews and holy places in Jerusalem during his visit); never before, since shortly after the *churban*, has *Eretz Yisroel* been quantitatively and qualitatively the Torah center of the world.

For a secular Zionist the dream has been fulfilled, the *ge'ula* has arrived; for followers of the Satmar approach (*l'havdil*) the State is a creation of the *sitra achara*, to test us; for the Mizrahi member the State is *aschalta d'geula*. What do the state and dramatic changes in *Eretz Yisroel* this century mean to the yeshiva world and to the readership of *The Jewish Observer*? These phenomena cannot be ignored by religious Jews to whom every event is divine in origin. The events of this century in *Eretz Yisroel* are a challenge to Torah Jewry. The *Alm-ty* has, after the tragedy of the Holocaust, made a generous gesture to us. He has started the process of *kibbutz goluyos* on a scale unparalleled since Joshua brought the Jews to *Eretz Yisroel*. Dare we repeat the tragic error of those who ignored the calls of Ezra and Nechemiah and thereby hastened the demise of the *Bayis Sheini*? *Chazal* tell us that a generation in which the *Bais Hamikdash* is not rebuilt is regarded as if it caused the actual destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*. The Torah world must rise to the challenge. The first step is in recognizing and feeling the pain of *golus* in all of the *goluyos*, and especially in those which are pleasant and even in those which are full of Torah observance. Once that pain will be felt, one may then hope to be given the opportunity to begin the long road to the rest of the processes leading to *ge'ulah*, as described in *Yechezkiel, U'va l'tzion goel*.

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A Torah Jew Takes Leave

I was walking down the corridors of "Machon Sharet," the new wing added to Hadassah Hospital. Something was odd, but I couldn't put my finger on it. Then I realized what it was—a strange calm and silence pervaded the halls. Nowhere was there the hushed hustle of activity usually associated with a hospital. The ward contained some 120 beds yet there was no doctor and only one nurse sitting behind a desk. No moans and groans, no conversation—just an eerie silence. A quick look at the signs told it all: this was the oncology ward, where terminal patients are kept. No need for too many doctors or nurses, nor any use for them. Most patients were drugged and sleeping, awaiting their final rest. . .

I had been sent to stay with Ely

Rabbi Scheinman, an American studying in a Jerusalem yeshiva, was represented by "Why Confess?" in the Sept, '79 JO.

(name fict.) who, as it worked out, was a week away from his *petirah* (passing). I was prepared to see a sick man, but was shocked at his appearance. Thin and emaciated, his skin was an unhealthy yellow indicating liver failure. Indeed, he looked as if the end was imminent. His eyes were glazed and looked into the distance, and he rarely responded to communication. Even when he noticed me, it was extremely difficult for him to speak, for his mouth was parched and bloodied; and when he did respond to me, it was with a nod or at most a grunt.

I steeled myself, and began attending him. I asked him if he wanted water. A faint nod. I dampened his mouth with a bit of water and tried to get a few drops down his throat.

I then asked him if he would like to "go for a walk." No response. It was as if he were in a daze. I asked him again. A faint nod. So I

struggled for quite a while until I managed to get him into a wheelchair, and began pushing him around the long hallway.

While wheeling Ely around, I became aware of the other patients. Here one patient was trying to hit it off with the nurses. Another was showing his strength and a third was cursing the "Askenazi" doctors for "killing" him. I was reminded of Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz's frequent comment: "Bilaam had said, 'Let me die the death of the righteous' (*Bamidbar* 23, 10). Bilaam had witnessed the loftiness and sanctity surrounding the passing of a *tzaddik*, and wished it for himself. He failed to realize that in order to die like a *tzaddik*, one must live like a *tzaddik*."

I seemed to see the comment come alive in this ward. Here were people who were keenly aware of the imminence of their *Yom Hadin*, yet they could not discard the habits of a lifetime.

My stroll with Ely was finished. I put him back in his bed and turned to leave. Something agitated him and he tried to motion toward the wheelchair. I was puzzled and could not understand what he was trying to tell me. Frustrated, he forced himself to say the first sentence that I heard from him that afternoon: "Please . . . return the wheelchair . . . someone else . . . may need it." With this, he fell back exhausted, his eyes returning to their own world.

"Yes," I thought, "A person who lives for others does not forget others when he dies."

A week later Ely returned his holy *neschama* to his Maker. May his remembrance be a *zechus* for us.

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Letters to the Editor



Inspiration For "Thirty Year Trip"

To the Editor:

Reading Wolf Karfiol's article "The Thirty Year Trip" (June, '79), enabled me to make my own personal thirty-year trip back to the year I spent in Rabbi Shisgal's class, in the first year *Beis Midrash*. A raw young man from the Mid-west was inspired and helped along to develop an appreciation for Torah and the yeshiva way of life.

Rabbi Shisgal was one of those truly special and unique *rebbe*s who by his very nature was able to serve as a model and to inspire his *talmidim*. The evenings we spent in his house in the East Side are still very

real in my mind, and his *hasmada* in the *Beis Midrash* in the late afternoon hours still serve as an incentive to me to study and to learn.

There is so much more one could say about Rabbi Shisgal. Certainly Karfiol's description is true for him, as well as it is for me. Hopefully all of our children will at one time or another experience such a *rebbe*.

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LETTERS CONTINUED

The Rebbe and the Heartless Computer

To the Editor:

Rabbi Zev Schostak's article, "Yeshiva of Tomorrow" (June '79), reminded me of a comment by my illustrious grandfather, the renowned Mashgiach of Ponovezh, Rabbi Yechezkiel Lewenstein זצ"ל. When he was losing his strength in his later years, it became difficult for the entire assemblage to hear him deliver his *shmuessen* (lectures). He was asked if he would agree to speak into a microphone that would be hooked up to a speaker system. The *Mashgiach* consented, but added that it would create a major disadvantage: the experience of those hearing the *shmuess* only by aid of the amplifier would be somewhat lacking in "*dvorim hayotzim min halev*—words emanating from the heart."

If Reb Yechezkiel זצ"ל, with the sensitivity of a *baal mussar*, saw in a microphone a reduction in the traditional heart-to-heart ingredient of teaching Torah, what would he say of a "rebbe by computer"?

MOSHE GINSBURG
Lakewood, N.J.

*Part of a rabbinical aphorism that concludes: "*nich'nasin el ha'lev*—enter the heart [of the listener]."

Omissions and Corrections

The photographs taken of the funeral of the Satmar Rebbe זצ"ל which appeared on pages 3 and 4 in the September JO were published with the kind permission of the New York Daily News.

The excerpt from Rabbi Dannel Schwartz's article regarding rabbis who perform intermarriages, which was quoted at length in Apr. '79 JO ("Combating the Intermarriage Crises ..."), had originally appeared in *Moment* magazine, August 1978, as was indicated after the quotation. It was published, however, before permission to do so was received, which we regret.

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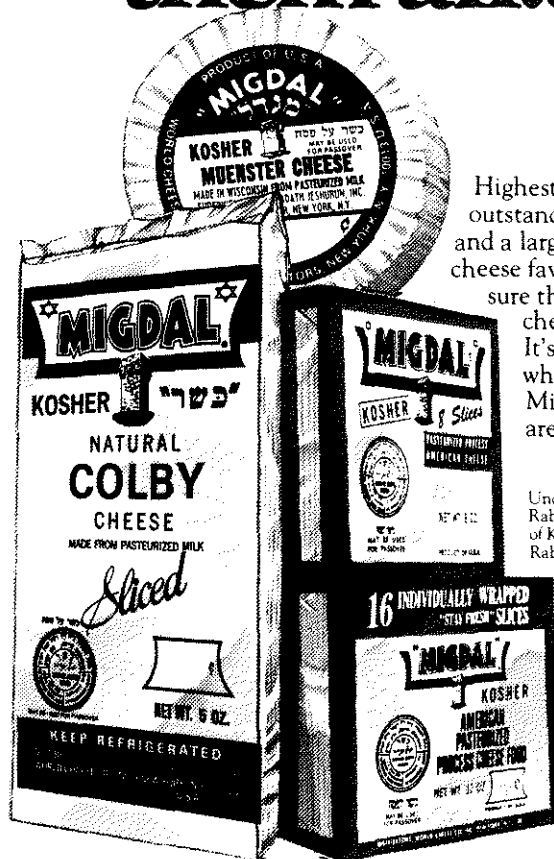
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Cope Program for Handicapped

In an attempt to significantly upgrade its services to the handicapped, particularly those of the Orthodox Jewish community, a specially trained counselor will be stationed at the central offices of a major citywide agency for career guidance and job training, it was announced by Project COPE of Agudath Israel of America. In explaining the new effort, Rabbi Menachem Lubinsky, director of Project COPE, said that the new counselor, Lillian Ciner, will be equipped to assess and refer eligible clients for either services already provided by Project COPE, or to other state funded projects. The new service is the result of successful negotiations between the Agudath Israel agency and the New York State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Since its inception in 1975, Project COPE has shown particular concern for the hundreds of clients, who because of some form of disability, are unable to participate in the mainstream of job training programs. Rabbi Lubinsky added: "We found that there were clusters of marginally handicapped people who refused to surface because of their inherent belief that they could not function properly in the job market. Nevertheless, the experiences of the last few years have shown that through comprehensive counseling, it was possible to raise the motivation level of these people and even enroll some of them in regular training programs."

The Project COPE director said that a particular concern was addressed to the unique sensitivities of those in the Orthodox Jewish community who found a lack of suitable services available. While calling the arrangement with OVR a first step, Rabbi Lubinsky said that Agudath Israel would continue to work towards a more comprehensive solution to the problem.

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RELEASE TIME EDUCATION EXPANDED BY AGUDATH ISRAEL

The Jewish Education Program (JEP), the reach-out division of Agudath Israel of America, announced plans to significantly expand its release time program in public schools, despite a suit by the Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty (PEARL), which is spearheaded by the American Jewish Congress. JEP, which sponsors one of the largest release time projects in New York City, served more than 300 Jewish children in 20 schools throughout the city in its programs during the past school year.

In announcing the increase of its release time activities, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Golding, director of JEP, said that enabling children to spend one hour a week to receive religious instruction off the premises of the public school with parental consent, is a tribute to American democracy. He said that the JEP program each year takes the children from the school on Wednesday afternoons to a nearby synagogue or institution, and provides them with fundamental religious instruction, without which these Jewish youngsters would have absolutely no knowledge of their heritage and background.

A spokesman for Agudath Israel's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action

termed the latest American Jewish Congress-inspired law suit to curtail release time programs "another in the long line of amazing demonstrations of how so-called Jewish leaders are prepared to damage Jewish survival by placing most legal questions above Jewish education." Expressing optimism that the AJC efforts will be defeated, the Agudath Israel spokesman said that "this AJC lawsuit is in itself an education for the Jewish public: how a secular national Jewish organization can shamelessly work against Jewish interests with impunity."

Rabbi Golding stressed that the expansion of the JEP program was in no way connected with the PEARL suit, "it is our response to a Jewish need based upon our successful experience over the years." He said that in recent years, thousands of children have come in contact with Judaism through the release time program. JEP's statement added that its agency does not rely on the small amount of time allotted in the public schools to teach fundamentals in Yiddishkeit and attributed its major success to follow up sessions which have resulted in a large number of public school children being enrolled in yeshivas: "our ultimate goal."

Agudath Israel Wins on Yiddish Bilingual Education Programs

Yeshivos may continue to participate in government-funded Yiddish bilingual education programs, even if such a program is not available to public school students, was the gist of a major ruling by the U. S. Office of Education as a result of the intervention of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America. Following this ruling, Dr. Bernard Fryshman, chairman of Agudath Israel's Commission on Legislation, urged the Board of Education to continue its cooperative arrangement with yeshivos to provide Yiddish bilingual education programs.

The problem began when the New York City Board of Education discontinued its cooperative arrangement with several yeshivos as a result of new proposed rules by the U. S. Office of Education published on June 29th. For the first time, the rules stipulated that local school districts must provide services for private school children whose language is the same and whose grade level education needs are similar to those in the public school system. Because Yiddish bilingual education programs are not available in public school, where there is no need for

this service, the yeshivos were automatically eliminated from participation in the program.

Arguing that the new Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended sought to strengthen the participation of non-public school students in bilingual education programs, Agudath Israel's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action, with an assist from Senator Jacob Javits, obtained a favorable ruling from the U. S. Office of Education. In its ruling, USOE notes: "We agree with the position that nothing in the statute forbids a school district at its option from providing services as part of the federal bilingual education program to private school children in the language other than that addressed in the services to public school children . . . The notice of proposed rule-making permits continuation of the cooperative arrangement between the New York City Board of Education and Yiddish education." The problem was brought to Agudath Israel's Commission by the Beth Rivkah School for Girls, a Lubavitch-affiliated institution located in New York City.



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Rabbi Nissim Wolpin, Editor
The Jewish Observer

Leading Torah Authorities Call For Knessia Gedolah Participation

In an unusual joint proclamation, the highest governing authorities of the international Agudath Israel movement, the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages) of both Israel and the United States, called on Orthodox Jews to participate in the sixth Knessia Gedolah (World Congress) of Agudath Israel, January 7-13 in Jerusalem. The Knessia Gedolah, the first such global gathering of Torah leaders since 1964, will consist of seven days of inspirational gatherings and practical meetings, workshops, and seminars devoted to the crisis issues facing the Jewish people today.

The Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah statement, which stresses the significance of the Knessia Gedolah to world Orthodoxy, reads in part: "The importance of a Knessia Gedolah to world Jewry, in general, and to organized Torah Judaism, as represented by Agudath Israel, in particular, is widely known: The convening of representatives of Jewish communities throughout the globe in one body, united in heart and mind to carry out G-d's will, possesses a vast potential for deliberating on a vast number of subjects, ranging in scope from the international to the local, and offers unrivaled opportunities for evaluating and enhancing the operation of existing programs, as well as initiating new undertakings to resolve existing problems."

The proclamation goes on to say that the Sixth Knessia Gedolah can also serve as a source of encouragement to the Torah world as well as a demonstration of the Torah's vitality to those outside our ranks. In addition, special efforts will be made to organize activities aimed at reaching out to those who are alienated from Torah Judaism.

The statement continues: "The scope of topics that are on the agenda are many and of vast importance. They demand answers and concrete action with the involvement of the entire membership. We, therefore, call upon all Jews loyal to Torah, wherever they may be found, to join forces to work for the success of the sixth Knessia Gedolah."

Concurrent with the issuing of the proclamation, an organizing committee was established at the headquarters of Agudath Israel of America, with the responsibility of heading a task force that will be handling the travel arrangements as well as prepare the platform for the forthcoming Knessia Gedolah. Hundreds of American delegates are expected to make the trip to Jerusalem next winter to participate in this conclave.

Mendelevich Delegate to Knessia

Bournemouth, England—Yosef Mendelevich, the Jewish "prisoner of conscience"

incarcerated in Soviet Russia, was elected an honorary delegate to the Sixth Knessia Gedolah. This decision was taken at the week-long conference of Agudist leaders from Israel, America, and Europe, which met here to plan the international congress. According to spokesmen of the organization, the move was taken with the hope that it would facilitate the release of Mendelevich, who is renowned as a strictly observant Jew.

The conference, attended by over fifty members of the world executive of Agudath Israel, aired the broad range of issues with which the Knessia Gedolah must come to grips. The meeting discussed reorganizing the organizational structure of the interna-

tional Agudah movement, in order to enable it to have adequate machinery, to immediately step into action on all crises problems on the world arena, and bring to air the unique Torah approach of Agudath Israel on these problems. The new administration of the Agudath Israel World Organization will be elected at the Knessia Gedolah, which will close Sunday evening, January 13th. The members of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages) of Agudath Israel, will be in continuous session during these deliberations, and are expected to issue important proclamations at the closing session.

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