New Morality - How New Is It?

Torah Jewry "Down Under"

The Rising Cost of Life
In this issue...

THE RELEVANCE OF SANCTITY. Chaim Keller ........................................... 3

ORTHODOXY IN AUSTRALIA, Shmuel Gorr .................................................. 8

THE NEGRO AND THE ORTHODOX JEW, Bernard Weinberger ...................... 11

THE RISING COST OF LIFE, Yisroel Mayer Kirzner ................................... 15

DR. FALK SCHLESINGER, ורב חסדא הלכה ...................................................... 18

THE SUPREME COURT TEXTBOOK DECISION, Judah Dick ......................... 19

THE LOSS OF EUROPE'S TORAH CENTERS: A LESSON FOR OUR GENERATION ................................................................. 22

SECOND LOOKS AT THE JEWISH SCENE:
Jews Without a Press ......................................................................................... 26

A PERSONAL NOTE ......................................................................................... 29
Chaim Keller

The Relevance of Sanctity

How New is the “New Morality”?

Acknowledge Him in all your ways
and He will set your paths straight
Be not wise in your own eyes
Fear G-d and turn away from evil.
Proverbs, 3:6-7

At a time when society faces a disintegration of all moral standards, King Solomon’s words—especially in translation—take on a puritanical ring. What the wisest of all men is saying to us is that there is an objective standard of what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad: that morality is not decided by consensus.

We have been taken to task lately by the forces of “liberal” religion for not relating to the problems of society. The measure of relevance in these circles is one’s commitment to civil rights or stand against the war in Viet Nam. If Orthodox Jews are not manning the ramparts in the fight for racial equality or carrying the signs in the anti-war demonstrations, then we have, in this view, retired from the arena of world involvement and isolated ourselves behind impenetrable walls of seclusion.

Yet these same religious leaders are silent on what is perhaps the most serious and far-reaching social problem which faces civilized man today: the breakdown of morality which portends the abdication of the Divine image in Man.

It is of no small significance that the line of demarcation between those retaining their allegiance to Torah law and those who have shed this allegiance has been the Mechitza in the synagogue.

Names can be very confusing: a synagogue can call itself Traditional, or Modern Orthodox, or simply Orthodox, and still have set off on the one-way street which leads away from Shulchan Aruch and Daas Torah. The Mechitza has been the one tangible, distinguishing factor, over which the battle of “the Christianization of the Synagogue” has been fought, and which has removed a great deal of the confusion engendered by these labels. It is the readily discernible separation between the sexes which has given the authentic Beis Haknesses that sanctity which alone makes it a Beis Mikdash Me’at—a miniature sanctuary.

Authentic Judaism, having taken its stand at the Mechitza has paid dearly in terms of its image, but has thereby reaffirmed the cardinal significance of the principle of Kedusha to the eternity of Klal Yisroel.

The Mechitza, besides fulfilling the halachic requirements of separation between men and women without which the synagogue is unacceptable for public worship, has served as the symbolic representation of the fence against the immorality which must result from the mingling of the sexes.

Speak to all the congregation of the People of Israel
and say to them:
Be holy, for I the Lord your G-d am Holy.
Leviticus 19-2

Rashi, quoting the Midrash, explains this seemingly abstract concept of holiness enjoined on the collective body of Israel: “Be holy: Separate yourself from sexual immorality and from sin, for wherever you find a מִקְדָּשׁ, a fence against immorality, there will you find holiness.”

Certainly the Viet Nam war has some bearing on Jewish life and survival, as does the problem of open occupancy. But towering above these problems is the realization that Kedusha is vital to our survival, and immorality among Jews is a greater threat than any social issue external to the Jewish people. This does not mean that Jews should adopt a policy of callous disregard for the problems of others or that we should be insensitive to the ideals of peace and social justice. It does mean, though that Jews as Jews and Jewish organizations as such, must first and foremost address themselves to the problems which affect the very exist-
Relevance in the Synagogue

Conservative rabbis and their congregations throughout the country have received booklets that include special prayers and pronouncements, including remarks by Walter Alston, manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, for use on the High Holy Days.

More than 50,000 copies of the booklet entitled, "Yearnings, Prayer and Meditations for the Days of Awe," have been distributed, Rabbi Jules Harlow publications director of the Rabbinical Assembly, the international association of Conservative spiritual leaders said.

"We feel," said Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, executive vice president of the assembly, "that we must keep the services in our congregations more related to the lives of our people."

Rabbi Harlow said that the remarks by Mr. Alston, a Protestant, had appeared in The Christian Science Monitor, adding that they were used because "wisdom and virtue are inherent among the pious of all faiths."

Mr. Alston, in an interview in the paper, criticized ballplayers for spending "too much time talking about what happened last year or comparing this season with last," adding, "it's not only useless conversation, it's dangerous."

Mr. Alston concluded with:

"Each spring I try to wipe my slate clean and start all over again, and I think that the new spring is the most important in my life."

—The New York Times, August 25, '68

ence of their own people and culture. We are not at all that secure in our positions—no one else will secure them for us—that we can afford to dissipate our energies and substance in combating all the injustice that there is under the sun. Too long have we guarded all the world’s vineyards, with the result that our own vineyard is in such a state of neglect.

From all sides we hear what has already become a monotonous refrain: we must concern ourselves with the defection of our college youth, who have become disenchanted with Judaism because our rabbis refuse to talk out on the burning issues of our day. Those who sound these alarms, however, seem to overlook the most obvious factor in the loss of these young people. The real problem is that they are introduced on the college campus into an intellectual atmosphere of agnostic disdain for spiritual values and—what is even worse—into a life of sheer hekairus—of heartrending and soul tearing amorality which no manner of anti-war or civil rights pronouncements can cure.

THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS has become the center of intellectual ferment, the focal point of social agitation, the source of militant idealism—and the breeding ground of libertinism and promiscuity.

A recent letter to the editor in the Chicago Sun-Times signed by an undergraduate with a typical American Jewish name, brought this point home most poignantly to me. The student protested the tactics of a group of black students who had taken over the administration building at his school. His point was that they had no right in advancing their own interests to adopt such measures which tend to wreak havoc with the educational process of the university. But before closing, he wrote something like this: ‘Now please don’t misunderstand me. I’m no square. I am opposed to the draft and the war in Viet Nam. I favor a federal open housing bill. I endorse selective free love and am for the legalization of marijuana. But I feel that the administration should...’

Apparently he felt ill at ease in voicing an opinion which was at odds with the prevalent mood on campus and therefore hastened to present his credentials, and to assert that he, after all, was "no square" but one of the crowd, who conformed with the "in" thinking on all other matters.

To compound the problem: not only do those who speak in the name of religion not speak out forcefully on this and related subjects; not only do they not condemn the trends which are corrupting our youth, undermining the family structure and gnawing at the very roots of our society; not only do they not clamor for an end to profane living as they do for an end to the Viet Nam war. Their silence on these matters would be bad enough. But when they do speak out on matters of morality, more often than not, they speak of “updating” and “revising” moral standards. They turn to, of all people, these very same college students for guidance as to what should or should not be considered acceptable human conduct.

The National Jewish Post and Opinion (May 17, 1968) recently reported:

Following through on its previous view that ‘the traditional conception of sex relations can no longer be accepted,’ the Reconstructionist movement adopted a resolution at its recent convention calling for a study of the appropriateness of...
Gilbert of the Reconstructionist Foundation, who pro­
Jewish law on sexual morality ... is more restrictive
ship to the reconsideration of the
laws of narcotics including a drug addict
human relationships had challenged rabbinical
situation would be a commission on revision of the
legislation. (Actually the example is not so much rednctio ad absurdum. There
is quite in vogue on the college campus.)
ARE THE Reconstructionists alone in this? Not quite.
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off the yoke of Torah from ourselves, so that we shall
not be reproved for our immorality’.”

“The Realities of Modern Living”
ARE THE Reconstructionists alone in this? Not quite.
No reader of the daily or Anglo-Jewish press can escape notice of the frequently recurring statements
by Jewish (and Christian) clergymen and organizations
calling for revision of state laws and religious attitudes
and codes on contraception, abortion, even homosexuality.
The gist of the reasoning behind most of these
pronouncements is that we must bring our laws and
attitudes into line with the realities of modern living.
There is the implication that contemporary society is
somewhere unique, and that modern man has undergone
profound changes in these areas, which require com­
mensurate adjustments in the field of law and ethics.
If the forces of enlightened religion think that our
generation has discovered the Yetzer Hora they have
committed a grave error.

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav:
The Jews knew that there was nothing to idolatry:
they worshipped idols for no other purpose
than to permit themselves blatant immorality.
Sanhedrin 63
We should not be naive enough to think that those who
lived at the time of the First Temple and worshipped
idols really believed in them—nothing so idealistic as
that. As Rashi explains: “Their lust for sexual immor­
ity was so strong that they said ‘let us completely break
off the yoke of Torah from ourselves, so that we shall
not be reproved for our immorality’.”

Those generations sought out a new form of worship;
our generation seeks “more meaningful relationships.”
They both have this in common: a simple desire to
satisfy their lust; and in order to do so they must throw
off the yoke of moral discipline imposed by the word
of G-d and seek new idols to worship: new “codes of
morality.”

What sort of nonsense is this we hear: “problems
of sexual morality that challenge us today.” There are
no new problems. Man’s biological and psychological
needs and drives are the same today as they were
3,000 years ago when the Creator spoke to the people
of Israel on Mount Sinai. Sociological pressures of the
non-Jewish milieu are no different today than when
the Torah first introduced the prohibition of sexual
aberrations by enjoining us: “You shall not behave as
they do in the land of Egypt, where you dwelled; and
not as they do in the land of Canaan, where I now
bring you; nor shall you adopt their ways.” (Leviticus
18:3)

There is a difference however. Whereas in former
years a Jew found it necessary to worship idols for
condonation of his debauchery, today he can look to
the clergy for a “revision of the code” and still be a
good Jew.

There is here a classic example of Reb Yisroel
Salanter’s penetrating analysis of the social forces in
motion affecting the lives of Jews before the advent
of Moshiach.

Before Moshiach comes
the “face” of the generation
will be like the face of a dog.
Sotah 49b

Reb Yisroel explains that when a dog runs ahead of
a carriage drawn by a team of horses one might think
that the dog is leading the horses and the driver of
the carriage. When the carriage reaches a crossroads,
the dog, not knowing which course the driver will take;
stops and looks behind. As soon as the driver has
started down one of the roads, the dog races ahead,
resuming his “position of leadership.”

In the period preceding Moshiach, says Reb Yisroel,
the “... the leaders of the generation—will have “the
face of a dog,” courageously leading the masses down
the path which they have already chosen.

If the ears of these leaders would only hear what
their lips are saying! “We must consult the college
students and find out what they are doing so that when
they come to ask us (which by the way they aren’t
interested in doing) what is the correct path and what
are the proper moral standards, we shall be able to
tell them “this is what is right; since it is what you are
doing.” Then the college student will be happy, for
they were doing it all along. The psychologists, et al,
will be happy for having removed the students' guilt feelings, and the rabbis will be happy because they have provided "religious guidance," made a breakthrough in providing a modern sexual code. Which leaves only the Ribono Shel Olam, the Lord of the Universe very unhappy, kvayochol, because His children have gone astray.

This is what King Solomon meant when he said: "Do not be wise in your own eyes, Fear G-d and turn away from evil." Do not label as wisdom what you have chosen to do merely because it is pleasing in your mortal eyes. Fear G-d: stand in awe of Him whose eternal wisdom has created Man in the pattern of Torah and who alone is the ultimate judge of that which is good and that which is evil: turn aside: reject that evil.

A Heart Filled With Anguish

We pray that all this shall not be read as just another polemic against the non-Orthodox. These words are the expression of a heart filled with anguish; deeply troubled by the spiritual bondage of a people whose existence depends on the sanctity of the individual and the family: a sanctity which can only be preserved by the fence against immorality of which we have spoken. The heartache over the profanation of the Divine Image among our fellow Jews who have strayed from the path of Torah grows from day to day. But there is also a growing fear of what new inroads the infiltration route: from Gentile to Secular Jew, from Reform to Conservatism, and from there to the Orthodox Jew.

The laws of Family Purity which have introduced sanctity and sanity into Jewish marriage, are set into a broader framework which has provided the most powerful preventative to moral laxity in Jewish life: the principle ofヌィ🍷，of modesty in dress, in speech and in social conduct.

Actually the concept of Tznius is much broader, affecting the conduct of the Jew in all areas of life, not only in those matters narrowly understood as "morality." The prophet Micha included Tznius in his listing of the three main principles of Torah (see Makos 24a). "He told you, man. what is good and what the Lord asks of you: to do justice and to love kindness and to walk modestly with your G-d." (Micha 6:8)

The term 줍קרב (usually translated "to walk humbly," more correctly: "modestly") implies a concealment of one's self and one's deeds—a withdrawal from the public eye, as opposed to brazen exhibitionism.

The Sages tell us: "To walk modestly with your G-d: This refers to accompanying the dead and bringing the bride to the marriage canopy. Now if those acts which are ordinarily done publicly, the Torah tells us must be done in a modest manner, how much more so those acts which are done in private." (Makos 24a)

A Guiding Principle

The Prophet teaches us that this quality of Tznius should be a guiding principle in all of our life. Even where ostentation is the rule, and the very nature of the activity is public, such as a funeral or a wedding, we must act with restraint, limit the pomp, remove the boisterousness, conceal something of ourselves. What shall we say, then, of relations between the sexes which by nature are private? (It is characteristic that the section of Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 240) dealing with proper conduct in marital relations is entitled Hilchos Tznius.)

The Torah imperative of Tznius, as it is applied to dress and to relationships between the sexes is not merely negativism. It is not, as Torah detractors would have it, a litany of "thou shalt nots." It is a positive and practical application of the concept of sanctity to the human psyche and to the human body, which serves to invest them with a sense of dignity befitting the Divine Image. That which is precious is guarded, that which is divine is concealed.

Clothing is not merely a human invention: "And the Lord G-d made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin and clothed them." (Genesis 3:21) After Adam and Chava had precipitated the present state of human existence by their sin in seeking an intimate knowledge of Good and Evil, Divine wisdom decreed that the human form should no longer remain unclothed.

When the Yetzer Horah—the evil inclination, which had previously been external (the serpent), entered into and became a part of them through their partaking of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Creator, in His wisdom, saw that in order to retain their spark of divinity, man and woman must clothe themselves, lest they descend to the level of the beasts. So G-d Himself made clothes for them and clothed them.

It is a truism of Torah that standards of morality and ethics are absolute and not relative. The fact that many people, or even most people do wrong does not make it right. If a mob loots and burns, each individual is still a robber, still an arsonist. If society accepts unfaithfulness in marriage, each individual is still an

The Jewish Observer / September, 1968
adulterer. And if clothing is immodest, wearing it is still a transgression of the standards of decency.

There are certain Torah norms of feminine Tznius, which have long gone unheeded by a large segment of Jewish women, including many in the Orthodox camp. These lapses have become so widespread that they have ceased to be considered a matter of grave concern. We have learned to look the other way—figuratively, that is.

But the inexorable pressures of an amoral society continue to nibble away at whatever standards of modesty remain to us, and, little by little, slowly but surely, the concept of Tznius is being vitiated.

To be sure, society has passed no laws forbidding modesty in dress or requiring skimpy and provocative clothing. But they are not necessary. Nor could they be as effective as the all-powerful dictates of Fashion. It is painful to witness the phenomenon of sincere, dedicated women who take great pains to maintain their Jewish identity and personal integrity, who at times make great personal sacrifice in order to adhere to Torah law, and yet who do not realize, or cannot accept the fact. that there are fashions which come within that law—and there are fashions which are just as unacceptable as are Shatnes or Treifus.

We cannot rely in these matters on a native sense of propriety. We live in a society which attacks not with gun or lash, but with words of derision such as “prudish” and “puritanical.” The greatest affront is to be called “Victorian” and the greatest disgrace is to be “unstylish.”

Styles which only yesterday were looked upon with disdain and considered vulgar, are worn today by married women—the same women who would have raised their eyebrows then at a girl seen in public with her skirt above her knees.

What shocked American society by way of literature and entertainment only a decade ago has now become part of the American way of life. And the situation is deteriorating.

Shall we, in the face of all this, relinquish the G-d given insights of Halacha and rely on Society for standards of what is pure and what is profane?

The Sages of the Talmud and the early contemporary halachic authorities have defined for us what is eruvah and what is not. With their divinely-inspired perception of the nature of man they have set certain immutable constants defining what is permissible in dress and what is not. There are those who carp at such specific halachic regulations; they would leave the details of dress, for example, to our own good understanding. They do not realize that the highest ideals mean little and are easily lost sight of, unless they are expressed in clear, unambiguous terms. This axiom is basic to the entire structure of Torah and Mitzvos—and so too are the constants of Tznius. One of these constants is: “The upper leg of a woman [from the knee up] is indecent nakedness.” (B’rachos 24a)

If there is anything that we can learn from the current unrest on the university campus; if there is some area in which it would benefit us to take lessons from twenty-year-old college students, it is in their complete disdain for public opinion in matters which they feel affect their conscience; their matter-of-course refusal to conform to standards and pattern of behavior which, although accepted by society, are unacceptable to them. This faculty has, from the time of the Patriarchs been the secret of Jewish survival among the nations of the world. The Jew has historically rejected the values and morality of his host culture where they have been found inimical to his own. Ever since Abraham smashed the idols of his father Terach, his descendents have been at odds with society. They refused to offer their children as sacrifices to the Molech. They refused to prostrate themselves before the idols of Rome and Greece. They refused to accept forced conversion in the period of the Crusades; and they have stubbornly refused to give up their Torah way of life in the face of tremendous social and economic pressure.

Why, then, should we Jews, living in a country which allows us freedom of choice, which even lionizes non-conformers, feel constrained to adopt a mode of dress which is nothing more or less than the outer manifestation of an insidious debasing of morality? If there are women in America who feel no shame in pioneering new styles whose appeal is quite openly and bluntly sensuous, why should Jewish women, whose dignity and heritage is at stake, not take pride in setting a style of modesty in dress? Why should they feel ashamed to appear in public with their hemlines a few inches lower than the rest of the crowd?

Is society to be the arbiter of our sense of right and wrong, of what is proper and improper? If that were the case we would have ceased to exist a long time ago.

If society is seeking new solutions to problems of contemporary morality, l submit that it should take a page from the book of the people of the Book, who have been eminently successful throughout the ages in maintaining the highest level of morality.

It is no accident that the divorce rate among Jews is lower than that of other groups. It is no coincidence that Jews comprise an insignificant percentage of sex offenders.

It did not just happen that the stability of the Jewish family unit is legendary.

In these momentous days in which we live, when, as our Chachomim presaged for the days preceding the advent of Moshiach, Evil is rampant, let us proudly reaffirm our eternal values and earn for ourselves the title of a Holy Nation.
Shmuel Gorr

Orthodoxy in Australia

The Newest Torah Frontier: Down Under

For two thousand years since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, the Jew has wandered the earth and made his home in most every land on the face of the earth. One of the last frontiers to be opened to Jewish settlement is Australia, a massive continent situated in the South Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The first Jews to set foot on Australian soil arrived in the nineteenth century with the first shiploads of British convicts who were pardoned on the condition that they settle in the new British colony. Little is known about these Jews, but it is hardly likely that they were at all observant. Their presence became known only when an application for a burial lot for people of the Hebrew Faith was lodged with the Governor of the new Colony.

An interesting episode occurred in the early years of the Colony. A Jew was arrested for highway robbery, and sentenced to death by hanging. When the rope was put around his neck in the open area reserved for public hangings, he called on the G-d of Israel to bring vengeance against those unjust Christians who had sentenced him to death, and he then proceeded to curse all the Christians present.

The order was given, and the rope secured. The hangman triggered the trap door for release, but it failed. There was great consternation among those present. The order was given a second time: again the trap door was triggered for release, and again it failed. The large crowd of spectators was stunned. Was the G-d of Israel really defending this Jew who claimed to be innocent of the charges against him? Finally, the officer in charge gave the order for a third attempt—the gallows had been tested each time—and again the trapdoor refused to budge.

Pandemonium broke out among the spectators. They cheered and demanded that the Governor withdraw the charges and proclaim the prisoner completely innocent, seeing this occurrence as an act of G-d. The prisoner was released and given a full pardon in accordance with Anglo-Saxon tradition. (This event is documented in the archives of the Australian Jewish Historical Society).

A few years later, a number of Jews in Sydney came together and formed a Minyan for the High Holy Days. This was the first congregation convened in Australia, and was known as the York Street Synagogue. In 1842, a congregation was started in Hobart, the Capital of Tasmania. The Hobart community built a mikveh—apparently the first in Australia.

When early settlers came across from Tasmania to start a settlement in Melbourne, there were a few Jews among them, and it wasn’t long before a Jewish Burial ground was allocated, and a Minyan started in someone’s home. Shortly afterwards, the congregation was inaugurated.

The cry of “gold!” brought thousands of colonists to the inland Victorian city of Ballarat. Many Jews joined the rush; not so many as actual miners, but as traders to cater to the needs of the increasing numbers of settlers and miners in search of gold.

The newly-founded harbor at Corio Bay—Geelong City, also attracted many Jews. Smaller congregations were started in many places on the Australian mainland, but as the gold petered out, so did the Jewish communities, and there are today one or two “Ghost Synagogues” in the interior of Australia. I have seen the one in Goulburn, New South Wales. Imposing houses of worship were erected by our brethren in those days.

SHMUEL GORR was born in Melbourne in 1931. He was the first native Australian to go abroad to attend a yeshiva. He studied at the Telshi Yeshiva in Cleveland, the Nitrer Yeshiva in New York, and at yeshivos in Great Britain. He has written articles for various journals, but his first love is poetry, and he has published several volumes of his poems.

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THE FIRST SETTLERS were Orthodox and keen on maintaining their ties with a Jewish way of life. The great problem was the absence of competent rabbis. There was also difficulty in finding suitable Jewish women to take as partners in marriage: the few Jewish maidens there at the time, were nowhere near the number demanded. No sooner had the London Chief Rabbinate sent out a few reverends and lay-ministers, than there was a great clamour for conversion for many non-Jewish women who were married to Jews, and many waiting to enter the faith. Among them were some sincere and devout women who accepted Judaism as demanded by Halachah. Many others were refused on justifiable grounds.

The Geelong community found him to be too “froom” but the Ballarat Jewish community eagerly sought his services. He served there as spiritual leader till his death before the turn of the century. Ballarat was for fifty years the “Yerushalayim d’Australia.” It had its own Day School, mikveh, communal shechita, burial grounds, and at one stage a Shiebel formed by a group of Chasidim who had broken away from the rest of the community.

THE INLAND CITY of Ballarat was quite unique. There had come to Geelong from Russia a great talmid chochom, Rav Shmuel Herman, probably the greatest talmid chochom to be a resident rabbi in Australian Jewish history. He published sephorim and wrote many responsa. The Geelong community found him to be too “froom” but the Ballarat Jewish community eagerly sought his services. He served there as spiritual leader till his death before the turn of the century. Ballarat was for fifty years the “Yerushalayim d’Australia.” It had its own Day School, mikveh, communal shechita, burial grounds, and at one stage a Shiebel formed by a group of Chasidim who had broken away from the rest of the community.

Many present day Jewish leaders in Australia were born in the old Ballarat community, and many of them are Orthodox to this day. One of the biggest department stores—STONES of Ballarat is still closed every Shabbos and Yom Tov—and the owner is president of the congregation. Unfortunately, as the gold gave out and Melbourne grew in importance, this congregation dwindled to a small reflection of its former glory.

Another interesting community in Victoria is in Shepparton, a city which lies in the rich and fertile Goulburn Valley, the center of the Australian citrus fruit industry. About sixty years ago, the Australian government financed a scheme to settle Russian Jews on land in this part of Victoria.

The descendants of Reb Moishe Zalman Feiglin, a Lubavitcher Chossid who was an early settler, are now prominent leaders, teachers and askonim for the local Lubavitcher Yeshiva. This community built a schul, mikveh and every amenity required for Yiddishkeit. From its inception, the Shepparton Jewish community always maintained a schochet who served as Melamed and Chazan. There were times when no kosher meat was available in Melbourne, and it was necessary to bring it from Shepparton (120 miles away). Most of the Orthodox Jews have since left the vicinity, although some still have their businesses there, and travel there during the working week.

IN THE EARLY DAYS of the Melbourne Jewish community, there were quite a number of free settlers besides the few pardoned convicts. Among the free settlers were many affluent Jewish businessmen who helped to lay the foundations for the original congregations and communal institutions. At that time, more than fifty percent of the Jewish settlers were from England, and they took a significant part in the early civic life of the city and state.

Melbourne has had two Jewish Lord Mayors: one, Sir Benjamin Benjamin, was a Shomer Shabbos. He was in shul when the Town Clerk came to inform him that official confirmation had come from London that he had been made a knight. The Town Clerk was asked to wait in the vestibule of the Bourke Street Synagogue until the conclusion of Divine Service. It was only then that he could break the news to Sir Benjamin Benjamin.

Many members of Parliament were Jews in those days, both in the city and state governments. Before the turn of the century, there was a Jewish Day School in Melbourne, which closed down, however, after twenty years. No attempt was made to re-open such an educational institution till the late forties of this century.

Two major groupings comprised the Melbourne Jewish Community—the descendants of, and incoming immigrants from Eastern Europe. At times the two elements did not get along, but they always united on matters affecting the whole community. The older faction of English Jewish settlers resented the East European settlers because of their awkward speech, their difference in dress, and their general appearance. It was probably due to this fact that East European Jewish settlers found it more difficult to achieve affluence and remained over the “poor brothers.”

The old district of Carlton in Melbourne, is probably the only district in Australia which parallels the East End of London, and the old Lower East Side of New York City. Most of the Jews from Eastern Europe settled there, and a shievol atmosphere developed. But unlike the European ghettos, the streets are as wide as boulevards and there are many parks and gardens in the area. Jewish residents of Melbourne were virtually unaware of anti-Semitism.

Almost a century ago, Rabbi Chaim Schneerson, a descendant of the early line of Lubavitch, came to Australia to seek funds for the Mosdos Chabad in Jerusalem. His photograph appeared on the front-page of the local daily newspaper The Argus, and the Lord Mayor of Melbourne himself called upon local Chris-
tian citizens to give unstintingly to such a worthy cause. He stressed that it was most right that Christians should help their Jewish brethren in Jerusalem, the Holy City. Two thousand five hundred pounds were collected by public subscription.

The Carlton Jewish community was self-contained. It had one major synagogue whose spiritual head was a talmid of Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski.

WORLD WAR II was a major stimulus to Orthodox Judaism in Melbourne. In 1939, fifteen yeshiva bochrim who had been stranded in Lithuania and Poland when war broke out, found their way to Australia, since they were all British subjects and able to obtain visas. The local Zionist Federation, which controlled the Jewish Board of Deputies, was loathe to accept responsibility for their welfare, and agreed to pay their expenses to travel away from Australia. Most of them left soon after their arrival, but a few chose to remain.

At the same time, a large number of German and Austrian Jews who were stranded in England after escaping from the continent, were interned and sent to camps in Australia. A small number of these Jews had been active members of Agudath Israel before the war, and when they were released from internment, some of them settled in Melbourne. Together with some post-War immigrants from Poland and Russia, they organized the Beis Ephraim Congregation, the first Agudah-oriented shul in Australia, located in the St. Kilda section, which is similar to the Boro Park area in Brooklyn, New York.

The year 1949 saw a rapid acceleration of the growth of the Orthodox Kehillah in Melbourne. The war was over, and many Jews anxious to leave the D.P. (Displaced Persons) camps, wanted to get as far away from Europe as they could. Australia seemed to be the end of the world, and at first only a small trickle came. Ultimately the flow of immigrants was so great that what had been a modest Minyan was now a bustling congregation, with the shul packed each day.

Around this time, a number of Lubavitcher families came to Shepparton where they set up a yeshiva. Having no yeshiva of their own, the Beis Ephraim families sent their sons to Shepparton to study.

The Beis Ephraim Congregation moved from their store-front shul to larger quarters, and adopted the name “Adas Yisroel” in the tradition of the European Ashkenazic congregations.

FOR MANY YEARS, the only mikveh in Melbourne was located in a special section of the City Municipality Baths. The newcomers found it burdensome to have to make special arrangements with the officers of the City Baths each time the mikveh was needed. One of the members of Adas Yisrael built a mikveh in his own backyard and made it available to the Kehillah. But this too proved to be inadequate, and eventually a proper mikveh building was designed and built after the plans had been approved by the Satmar Rav and the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The Adas Yisroel opened their own Cheder and Talmud Torah—the system of education was the same as that of pre-war Hungary. Daily shiurim were conducted morning and evening after tefilah, and there were Shabbos shiurim for boys and girls. But the Kehillah lacked a rav and spiritual leader. By unanimous consent, Rav Yankov Yitzchak Neuman, the Rosh Yeshiva of Antwerp was asked to accept the post. When he arrived at the Essendon airport in 1952, his first act as Rav was to instruct the president of the Kehillah to apply for a permit to found a Day School. On the very next day instruction began in the new yeshiva.

The Adas Yisroel and the Lubavitcher communities, in a sense, complemented each other. Adas maintained its traditional “Austrit” approach, concentrating their efforts on strengthening their own Kehillah, while Lubavitch moved out into the community to reclaim Jews who had drifted from Yiddishkeit. Dozens of young men from the Adas left their homes to learn in yeshivos in Eretz Yisroel, America, and England. They have all returned to Melbourne, where they have married and built their homes adding new strength to the Kehillah.

Lubavitch has created a network of institutions including a Day School with classes from the primary level through high school; a Beis Rivka school for girls, with the only high school for girls in Australia, and a Yeshiva Gedolah. On Shabbos, bochurim from the Yeshiva visit the many shuls that have sprung up in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, where they conduct classes for the congregants and youth groups for the children. (The tefilin campaign initiated by the Lubavitcher Rebbe has had remarkable success in Melbourne.) In co-operation with the entire community, Lubavitch recently formed a Mikveh Committee to build a new community mikveh, scheduled for completion by the end of this year. They have also been active at Monash University in Melbourne, where daily minyanim are held for Minaeha, with a shiur twice each week. Many of the lecturers and professors are Shomrei Shabbos. Apart from the Adas and Lubavitch, there are other Orthodox congregations, some of which sponsor their own Day Schools, and these varied forces have combined to make a thriving Torah community.

Australian Jewry has come a long way since that first Jew stood with his neck in a noose and cried to the G-d of Israel to be delivered from his oppressors. Yiddishkeit in Australia is now a vital link in the chain of Torah which joins Jews through the centuries and over the face of the earth.

The Jewish Observer / September, 1968
The Negro and the (Orthodox) Jew

Recently, I received a call from a Chassidic Rebbe who thought I could be helpful in solving a serious problem he anticipated. "What will happen," he asked, "if Chalilah riots come to New York City this summer and the Governor imposes a curfew—does that mean that Jews will not be allowed to go to Mincha-Maariv to daven?" He honestly was troubled by the prospect of not having a minyan in his shibbele evening and thought that if we started using our political acumen now we might be able to eke out some pledge that religious practice would be excluded from any curfew, particularly in a year of presidential primaries. "And what about women who have to go YYillah in the evening," he argued ever more forcefully.

After I put down the receiver, I pondered-half-smiling and half-crying—how we react to an issue that threatens the survival of our country and the very fabric of American life. Is it not time for Orthodox Jews to develop some strategy on how to confront the crisis of the cities, which threatens the urban centers where the majority of Orthodox Jews in this country live?

It is of course true that we Jews have been pushed around for such a long time that our own individual and communal survival is a task that requires all our energies and occupies all our available time. We have learned to relate every issue, almost instinctively, to how it affects us as Jews. We had to learn how to take care of our own needs because there was no one else who cared. It should therefore not be surprising that the average observant Jew will react to the problem of riots in the streets on the basis of how it affects his going to and from shul in the evening. It may seem picayune to think in terms of the minyan, the yeshiva banquet or Melave Malka, the Daf Yomi or adult class, as issues of significance in the context of riots and bloodshed in the streets. Yet, this is in fact the reflex-thought and reaction of the Orthodox Jew.

There are many who will argue that it is this kind of intellectual chauvinism that is leading our youth away from our traditions. The youth, in turn, criticize us for not reacting to the burning issues of the day, and for thinking in our own narrow terms. Why aren't we concerned, they ask, with how these issues affect the total community and why don't we offer our views to the total community? They point to Reform and Conservative leaders who every day of the week release statements to the press on the injustices perpetrated by our Society on the disadvantaged and the poor. They are constantly devising new programs and proclamations on what we ought to do to meet these crises. They are "where the action is," while we Orthodox sit back waiting to react to some new emerging problem. We have no conferences to discuss urban problems, we do not sponsor "dialogues," we have no social action committees, and we lack the Universalism that is the essence of "Prophetic Judaism."

It is true that many yeshivos were closed on the day of national mourning proclaimed for the late Dr. Martin Luther King. But, there seemed to be no Orthodox rabbis at the funeral. There were no memorial services held in the large Orthodox synagogues or yeshivas.

Our nation is sharply divided on the Vietnam War, but no pronouncements appear from Orthodox leaders. The New York Times carried four full-pages of signatures protesting American involvement in Vietnam and no Orthodox academicians of note were included. The New York City educational system is being challenged by the Bundy proposal for decentralization which affects many Orthodox Jewish teachers, and not a word is heard from the Orthodox leadership of the city on this important issue. Few, if any, Orthodox rabbis walked side-by-side with Dr. Abernathy in the Poor People's March on Washington. The negroes' struggle for equality has received at least lip service from every important Jewish group from the Jewish War Veterans to the Anti-Defamation League, and yet the Orthodox leadership has not been deeply involved. Yes, there were some Orthodox rabbis marching in Selma, Alabama, but the respected and authoritative leadership was not there, nor were their voices heard. It was a Reform group that got extensive coverage in the press when they left their suburban homes to come to East Harlem to help slum dwellers rehabilitate their homes with paint-brushes and brooms.

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The Jewish Observer / September, 1968
THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY must explain its non-involvement and its ostensibly disquieting silence.* In responding to this challenge, I must begin with the perhaps shocking countercharge that those Jews who are "involved" in the issues of the day, threaten the survival of the Jewish community in America. That we have survived as Jews in such a hostile world is a miracle that the most careful analysis of the social scientists has been unable to explain. But, no small share of this miraculous survival is due to our awareness that we simply cannot afford to tell our neighbors how to govern their lives. We were always cognizant that we are in fact a minority, tolerated at best, perhaps shocking countercharge that those Jews who speak their mind, openly and honestly, without jeopardizing Jewish lives.

ought to encourage a city-planned low-income project in his neighborhood. But how many Conservative and Reform rabbis who are lecturing Jews on "open housing" or on combatting poverty among the disadvantaged live in integrated neighborhoods or know at first hand the experience of the slum-dweller? It is Orthodox Jews in New York City, Los Angeles, Detroit, Baltimore, Chicago, and other urban centers, who live in the slum neighborhoods, that account for whatever integration in fact exists. Long after the few middle- and upper-class have left, Orthodox Jews remain in the Brownsville, Hunts Point, Boyle Heights, and Dexter neighborhoods throughout the country. It is only after ethnic frictions becomes intolerable that the Orthodox Jew finally leaves these communities and deprives the neighborhood of the measure of integration that it achieved.

Yet, it is the middle-class leaders who usurp our rights and purport to speak on behalf of the Jewish community. The affluent Jewish leaders who are far removed from the confrontation with slum living are quick to offer advice on how to cope with the tensions within these ghettos. But, Orthodox Jews who face the daily challenge remain silent.

As noted above, ironic as it is, it is not difficult to understand when one considers the Orthodox training in a sense of responsibility for the total Klall Yisroel. There is a tremendous temptation to want to get involved and let our voice be heard. It would be wonderful if we could offer our advice and wisdom to help save America. Alas, we must stand by and bite our tongues in silence. We can only remain observers in a society that rejects us for whatever position we take. It is perhaps a great price to pay, but, the image of appearing to be "relevant" cannot supplant our determination to survive as a Jewish community and our reluctance to hurt any of our brethren.

But, even after we conclude that our public silence is both prudent and just, it by no means implies that we ought not talk within Jewish circles on how to cope with these problems. We must develop a common strategy on how to exist in these high-tension areas and troubled times. The fact is that Jews and particularly the Orthodox Jews are most directly affected by the crisis within the cities. It is the Jewish merchant whose store is being looted during riots. It is our homes that are being vandalized and burglarized. More significantly, we have a tremendous stake in the social order that prevails. Jews can live with some measure of security only where there is law and order. As soon as there is a breakdown of the law we are in serious trouble, for we are the easiest victim for all combatants. The current spirit of rebellion against law and order which seems to engulf our society imperils our future in this country. The riots at Columbia University as well as the slaughtering of the apostle of peace, Dr. Martin Luther King, affect us far more seriously than the question of whether we will be able to get out to daven.

* In TORAH AND RELEVANCE (TJO: Sept. '67), Prof. Leo Levi states the case, based on Biblical and Talmudic sources, that while Torah is most relevant to every aspect of contemporary life, Jews as a community must play a passive role on the world scene. Rabbi Weinberger here approaches the problem from a more pragmatic viewpoint. See also: TO PICKET... OR TO PRAY? (TJO: April, '68).—ed.
Many Americans and particularly Jews, misunderstand the meaning of "Black Power"—it is not simply an attempt to seize power away from the whites, and not simply a militant, anti-white, racism in reverse. It is rather the black-man's way of saying to the white community, "we are tired of being catered to, treated like a little helpless child that needs mothering by the benevolent white man." It is the negro's way of saying "just give me the opportunities and the resources and I'll take care of myself." By misreading of the concept of Black Power, the white community has helped Stokey Carmichael, Rap Brown, and other militants become the spokesmen of the negro community, rather than Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young and other moderate leaders.

There is also special resentment which the negro harbors for the Jew which is even more violent than his general hatred for the whites. Jews are also a minority group. They, too, have been persecuted and disdained all over the world for a long time. They have been the most universally disadvantaged people in the world. Yet, they have managed to surmount these hardships and emerge from all of it as a gallant, proud, and solidified people. Thus, they pose a serious challenge to those who are prone to point to the prejudice they suffer. The Jews who lecture the negroes are, therefore, the most despised and hated of all whites since they are living witness that poverty and slums do not inevitably lead to delinquency and broken-homes, just as denial of equality does not justify lawlessness. It is because of this special condition of the Jew that he is singled out for a more intense and more zealous kind of enmity. In this light, too, we can comprehend the otherwise incomprehensible anti-Israel position recently taken by some militant blacks.

**These Ironic Facts Add Up to an Illogical, but Nevertheless, Sad Reality in Negro-Jewish Relations.** Jews have had little to do with causing the unfortunate plight of the American Negro. There is, in fact, little that Jews can do to rectify the situation. Yet, Jews stand in a singularly dangerous and precarious position vis-a-vis the negro community. Outstanding negro spokesmen such as Bayard Rustin have tried to ease the blow of negro antisemitism by indicating that it is a manifestation of what he calls “the love-hate syndrome” which in effect says that you hate the one you love most. He suggests that Jews are hated in the same way as moderate negroes are hated. While what he says can in no way assuage the pain Jews experience, he makes an important point that is being overlooked.

Blacks today are no longer satisfied with “tokenism”—even including substantial expenditures—that does not get to the root of the problem. Therefore, unless you are able to make real changes in the social structure that imprisons the black slum-dweller you will only...
be regarded as a deceiver: You either “deliver” or "get the hell out of the way," and stop pretending. Succinctly stated, it means that Jews would be better advised to do nothing rather than insignificant efforts that cannot really bring about the social upheaval and restructuring that the blacks rightly demand.

In terms of a practical program, therefore, I think Jews must develop a new strategy in their relations with the Black community. We must learn to get out of their way wherever possible. This may mean giving up exploitive businesses in ghetto areas. It may mean public non-interference in their efforts to decentralize the school system. It certainly means desisting from overtly paternalistic efforts at helping the negroes. We delude ourselves—more seriously: they easily sense the deception that is inherent in such ostentatious but fruitless efforts.

We must learn to live with blacks and not to fear them. The whites who live in integrated areas of Brownsville, Morrisania, West-Side, Crown Heights, and Williamsburg are Orthodox Jews. It is when Orthodox Jews leave that the area becomes a totally non-white ghetto. We Jews have too much resources invested in these areas to afford the luxury of constant moving and running. We must learn to hold on to such neighborhoods and adjust to the reality of integration. When such integration occurs a dialogue between the leadership of the respective groups emerges naturally, and a determination to coexist becomes a reality. This is not to suggest that tensions are completely obviated, but the desire to keep things “cool” has a stabilizing effect. It should also be noted that the greatest contribution that we can make to the black community—this has been almost completely ignored—is to encourage a stable family life. Money, jobs, and equal opportunity alone cannot achieve this. The example provided by the Orthodox Jewish community affords the negro the inspiration which he instinctively feels compelled to emulate, and which is worth infinitely more than all our programs.

FINALLY, WHAT WE CAN DO in a positive way is to support the changes in the social structure that tend to work against the disadvantaged blacks, as well, I might add, as the impoverished Jews. We can support the efforts to ease the restrictive procedures of the welfare system, the narrow requirements of the civil service system, the outright prejudiced employment practices, and the antiquated and domineering New York City Board of Education.

Negro leadership today is sophisticated enough to prefer honest criticism to deceptive liberal posturing. We would be better advised to challenge them to live up to certain basic standards of social relationships rather than the pretentious sympathy that we offer them. We need feel no sense of guilt for the white racism that engulfs America since we had no share in its development. But, we cannot remain indifferent to an injustice that corrodes our society.

Jews have a tremendous stake in the current crisis that transcends local and specific problems of religious observance: our continued survival is here at stake. We need to begin discussions on how to cope with it even if we are not direct parties to the conflict. It is perhaps an unprecedented dilemma which confronts the Jewish community, and as always, we must seek the guidance of our Torah leaders in this burning issue of the day.

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The Jewish Observer / September, 1968
The Rising Cost of Life

A Torah View on the Economics of Choosing Life

It was a distinctly chilling experience to read of current suggestions being put forward asking that new criteria be used in the legal determination of the cessation of human life. A panel of legal, medical and other experts — including, inevitably, a “theologian” — grappled with the problem of the definition of life and of death, in the light of contemporary medical developments. It seems that the conventional criteria employed to determine the instant of death impose, in certain instances, heavy costs upon the family, or upon society in general, in order to preserve patients in a state of irreversible coma, a state which, beyond a certain point, it is now urged that society consider as a state of death. The costs that are involved here arise out of modern developments in medical technology that make possible the artificial prolongation of certain physical processes normal to life, as well as the more recent possibilities opened up of transplanting vital human organs, possibilities that may be precluded if conventional criteria for the definition of death are adhered to. In the light of the high costs involved, the experts now urge a redefinition of life and of death that shall permit physicians to halt efforts to prolong — what has hitherto been considered — life artificially, and to remove vital organs from patients from whom such removal would have hitherto been considered murder.

Now, this writer refrains, on the grounds of lack of competence, from passing judgment on the relationship between the alternative criteria that are at issue here, and those prescribed by our codes in the halachic determination of the instant of death. Needless to say we are jarred by the cool calculation of the relative costs of alternative definitions of the cessation of life. While it is true that threats to life that are not normally used to deliberating upon the worth of life are avoidable at either high cost in material resources (air-pollution?) or high cost in renounced pleasure (smoking?) are often (“irrationally”) not avoided, we are not normally used to deliberating upon the worthwhileness of keeping oneself alive at high cost. Indeed the panel of experts pondering the appropriate definition for death did not, of course, dream of suggesting that where the preservation of life carries with it a sufficiently high cost, murder, or even the deliberate refusal to prolong life, is to be countenanced. Instead the awareness of the high cost of preserving — what has been hitherto considered — life has called attention to the possibility that on an ethically and medically acceptable redefinition of death, this cost is entirely

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The Jewish Observer / September, 1968
For the Jew... identifying as he does the fulfillment of Torah with the preservation of life, it follows that no sacrifice is too great when the fulfillment of Torah is concerned. More correctly, when the fulfillment of Torah is concerned, no notion of sacrifice can possibly be involved at all. A life without Torah, is, for us, a contradiction in terms. There is simply no alternative, for the Jew, to a Torah life, as there is no alternative to life itself.

uncalled for. Nonetheless it cannot be denied that hard-boiled calculations in the context of the preservation of life run sharply counter to patterns of thought based on a deep-seated reverence for the inviolateness and the sanctity of human life.

The truth is that in one important sense cost calculations seem to be inherently inappropriate with respect to the preservation of life. In the literature of economics the notion of cost is interpreted in broad terms of sacrifice. Where an individual is faced with a choice between two courses of action, the outcome of each is viewed as the “opportunity cost” of the other. Whichever course of action is adopted, is adopted by renouncing the results offered by the alternative course of action. What any one pleasurable experience costs, is the alternative experience that is being sacrificed in order to enjoy the first. But it follows from this insight into the nature of cost, that where an individual chooses a pleasurable experience, the alternative to which is a state in which he would no longer exist, then this pleasurable experience is costing him nothing at all. He is renouncing nothing, in order to enjoy this experience. There is no alternative (enjoyable or otherwise) that is being sacrificed, in this situation, for the sake of the pleasurable experience being embraced. To the extent, therefore, that death connotes the absence of experience and of sensation, its rejection constitutes no sacrifice whatsoever. Of course it is only in the narrowest of senses that death may be described as connoting the absence of experience and of sensation. But to the extent that death does connote the absence of sensation and of existence, the preference for life over death involves no sacrifice. Nothing at all is being renounced. Despite the material resources which may be required for the preservation of life, the true cost is zero. In renouncing such resources in order to preserve life, one is renouncing nothing; the alternative to life, in such situations, is not the alternative enjoyment of these resources, but simply non-existence.

Something of this is no doubt responsible for our habits of thought in which life is viewed as beyond the yardstick of cost calculations. In considering the preservation of life we are accustomed to view all possible relevant sacrifices as of the palest significance. In considering life we are well aware that there simply is no alternative, so that nothing at all is being sacrificed, no cost at all is being incurred, when life is preserved, no matter how heavy the material expenditure that may be involved. It is true that in strict logic the costlessness of life as discussed here pertains only to one pondering the expenditure of resources to save his own life. But the attitude towards life which is consistent with the recognition of its costlessness, applies no less to the life of one’s fellow man. Whether, then, it is one’s own life that is to be saved with the expenditure of one’s resources, or whether one expends one’s resources to save the life of another, we are accustomed to a cast of thought in which life is inherently costless.

THESE OBSERVATIONS ARE of particular interest in the light of the frequent comparisons between Torah and life itself. Torah is Torah-chaim, a Torah of life: we are told in the Torah itself to identify the good with life, and we are admonished “choose life.” At the giving of the Torah at Sinai, we were shown that our very lives and existence—and indeed the very existence of all Creation—depended upon our acceptance of the Torah. Again and again the Torah, its study and the observance of its mitzvos, are likened to life, to the tree of life, to life-giving water, and so on.
For the Jew, therefore, identifying as he does the fulfillment of Torah with the preservation of life, it follows that no sacrifice is too great when the fulfillment of Torah is concerned. More correctly, when the fulfillment of Torah is concerned, no notion of sacrifice can possibly be involved at all. A life without Torah, is, for us, a contradiction in terms. There is simply no alternative, for the Jew, to a Torah life, as there is no alternative to life itself. Just as cost calculations with respect to the preservation of life involve an almost blasphemous disregard for the bottomless gulf that separates life from its absence, so does use of the notion of sacrifice and the yardstick of cost calculation in the context of Torah observance almost blasphemously imply the possibility, at least in principle, of an existence free of the Torah yoke. Theoretical recognition — at least — of the utter identity of life with Torah, is surely part of the mental equipment of every observant Jew, with numerous degrees of graduation possible with respect to the depth of his everyday practical consciousness of this identity. The readiness to assume greater and greater material burdens, to renounce more and more imperiously beckoning pleasures, for the sake of Torah and mitzvos, reflects, then, not only greater and greater awareness of their transcendent value, but even more fundamentally perhaps, the awareness of their inevitability, the consciousness that existence without them constitutes a state of paralysis. Our baalei-mussar tell us that although it is of the essence of man that he is a baal-b'chira: one with the freedom to choose, nonetheless the consistent pursuit of the Torah life should point to a spiritual plane where the very possibility of choosing evil fades away into nothingness. One measure of one's progress towards this plane surely consists in the degree to which one's awareness of the utter impossibility of an existence without Torah has permeated one's being and dominated one's practical actions.

THere are Jews who maintain a kosher home, but who, with greater or lesser sense of guilt, suspend their kashrus observance when away from home. Each of us is aware of circumstances in which one feels sorely tempted to relax observance of some Torah precept — more weighty or less — that one normally holds inviolate. The economist is accustomed to interpret this in terms of cost; whereas at home or under normal circumstances the sacrifice called for in order to observe the Torah precept is small enough to render observance preferable to transgression — the sacrifice at other times or under other circumstances becomes sufficiently great to make observance seem the less desirable of the two possible courses of action. From the Torah perspective what is to be condemned in such instances is not merely the perverted sense of values that renders observance less desirable than its worldly alternatives; to be deplored is the very notion that the cost calculus is at all appropriate to the question of Torah observance.

Of course the Torah itself makes provision for situations in which the proper choice may be the non-observance of (what in other circumstances would be) a Torah-precept. There are systematic priority rankings governing cases where one precept comes into conflict with another, where a precept calls for the expenditure of large fractions of one's wealth, and, of course, where a precept comes into conflict with the preservation of human life. But where a precept yields ground, this is never to be interpreted as an act of deliberate calculative choice made from some vantage point located outside the Torah life. This is never to be interpreted, it should hardly require to be pointed out, as an instance where the cost of Torah observance is too high for observance to be worthwhile. Even the case of pikuach nefesh, (when a mitzvah yields as a result of its conflict with the preservation of life) does not, of course, mean that the Jew himself independently ranks the preservation of his life higher than the observance of the Divine Will. It means that in the Torah ranking of priorities, the preservation of life takes precedence, in general, over other precepts. And in those cases where the preservation of life does not take precedence over relevant Torah precepts, this means that continued existence in violation of these precepts is, in the Torah view, unthinkable under any circumstances.

For the Torah-Jew the observance of Torah is inseparable from life itself. His very identity is merged with that of Torah observance. Just as all living things struggle passionately to preserve their lives, so does the Torah-Jew as individual, and so does Klal Yisroel as a whole, struggle passionately to preserve their life and existence, through unswerving commitment to the Torah. As we have seen, cost calculations have little place in the context of the preservation of life. And it is because of this that men cling to life passionately, recklessly, even irrationally. Even so does Klal Yisroel cast all calculations to the winds in its yearning and striving for life, the life of Torah, the life of a people that cleaves to its Soul and Creator — the G-d of Life.

And if for no other reason than the awareness of all this, it is entirely healthy that we feel chilled, jarred, and shocked whenever we encounter attitudes in which the preservation of human life is treated as something less than sacred, as something for which the material cost calculus is, in principle, a matter of relevance.
The sad news has reached us that Dr. Falk Schlesinger, Medical Director of the Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, has passed away.

This writer's admiration for Dr. Schlesinger dates back to the years in Berlin, when as a student, he was often invited to the home of Dr. Schlesinger: the home of a highly respected physician, and thoroughly permeated with the spirit of Torah in all its aspects, at the same time radiating the unique warmth and charm that were so characteristic of Dr. Schlesinger.

When—having come to Eretz Israel with his family in 1933—the leadership of the Shaare Zedek Hospital was entrusted into his hands in 1949, he was able to channel these very qualities towards intensifying a hospital atmosphere that has no counterpart anywhere in the world. The hospital was started by German Jews in 1903, based on the concept that the laws and the spirit of the Torah must forever be its guidelines, and that the highest medical standards would be upheld.

Like Dr. Wallach, his equally dedicated predecessor and first Medical Director of the hospital, Dr. Schlesinger was able to translate this concept magnificently into every detail of the daily operation of the hospital. Thus preparations and arrangements made for emergencies so as not to violate the laws of Shabbos and Yom Tov, both for patients and staff, are extended to the minutest details. And nobody who visited the hospital on a Friday afternoon and watched the arrangements being made for the candle lighting would ever forget the actual feeling of the Shabbos spirit descending into the wards and bringing along the accompanying peace of mind to the patients.

Dr. Schlesinger—the man, the doctor—was beloved, trusted, confided in and revered by thousands all over the Land, from the far right to the far left of the religious spectrum. As Medical Director of the hospital he came into contact with many circles and many individuals, and he was able by the sheer force of his charming personality to make his influence widely felt and to reach and to attain many goals for the benefit of the hospital. However, if necessary, he was equally ready to take a determined and unafraid stand in issues like Nituaeh Melsim that threatened to endanger the supremacy of the Daas Ha'Torah in the medical field.

His colleagues in the hospital respected him highly; the entire staff was completely devoted to him; the nurses looked upon him as a father—but his patients adored him. He had only to stand alongside a patient's bed to give that person the feeling that he was already a bit better; that his fate was in the hands of one, who deeply cared and was committed to help improve it, and that with G-d’s help all that was possible was being done for him.

Throughout his life Dr. Schlesinger had the good fortune to have at his side a wife who not only fully shared his convictions, but who understood, supported and encouraged her husband, and who was ever ready to do her part and be at his call when needed. She, the six children and their families, will be comforted in the knowledge that their husband and father will be deeply mourned, sorely missed and gratefully remembered by his many friends in all spheres of public and private life in Israel and abroad for his unfailing goodness and kindness and his exemplary service to his hospital and to Klal Yisroel.

Although Dr. Schlesinger for a long time was deeply concerned with the question of his successor, he was unfortunately not privileged to see the solution of this problem. Let us hope that his tremendous Zechuyos will stand by and aid those responsible for the fate of the hospital in finding a man imbued with the same Torah spirit as his predecessors and equally committed to the perpetuation of the unique concept of this hospital.

ERNST L. BODENHEIMER
The Supreme Court Textbook Decision

Its Background and Meaning

Orthodox Jewry has unanimously supported governmental aid (Federal, State or local) to the secular studies programs of yeshivos and Day Schools. This position is in sharp conflict with many secular Jewish groups who contend that such aid contravenes the constitutional principles of separation of church and state. The Orthodox position is relatively new, developed only recently in response to the rising cost of education and the difficulties yeshivos are having in meeting their budgetary requirements and in providing quality education in both the religious and secular departments. Rabbi Moshe Sherer, of Agudath Israel, and Reuben E. Gross were largely responsible for the evolution of an independent Orthodox position on this issue.

Since the opponents of governmental aid argue that such aid is unconstitutional under both the Federal and State Constitutions, it was reasonable to expect that they would make every effort to block any legislation granting such aid, however indirect or incidental, and challenge the validity of such legislation in the courts. Two major laws were enacted which provide some aid to Yeshiva students (as well as students of all other parochial schools) in recent years: the New York Textbook Law and the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The New York Law provides for the State to loan textbooks to all students in junior and senior high schools in the state. The Federal Law provides for certain types of financial assistance to local educational agencies in poverty areas for remedial reading, remedial mathematics, psychological services and other related matters, and for the acquisition of library materials, textbooks and other instructional material. The law provided that such resources be made available on an equitable basis for the use of children and teachers in private elementary and secondary schools. Although the law has been widely discussed in the press, yeshivos have thus far obtained only nominal assistance under the Federal law.

AS WAS EXPECTED, both laws were challenged in the courts. Court action against the Federal Law was initially dismissed for lack of standing by a taxpayer to challenge the power of Congress to appropriate funds. But on June 10, 1968, the Supreme Court reversed its long-standing rule on the subject and sent the case back to the lower courts for an adjudication on the merits. (Flast v. Cohen, 392 U.S. 83.) On the same day, the high court upheld the New York Law on the merits. The New York Court of Appeals had previously ruled that the law does not contravene the “Blaine Amendment”—which bars all aid whether direct or indirect, to sectarian schools—by a 4 to 3 vote. In doing so, it adopted an argument presented by COLPA, the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs, in its amicus curiae brief on behalf of all major Orthodox Jewish organizations. The brief argued that such textbook loans are primarily intended to provide all students in the state with up-to-date textbooks to prepare them for good citizenship and an ability to earn a living, and that any aid which accrued to the sectarian school as a result of such textbook loans was neither direct nor indirect: merely collateral to the main purpose of the state.

There was anxiety in the Orthodox community when the Supreme Court decided to hear the appeal from this decision, since it had not ruled on the subjects of indirect assistance to parochial schools since 1947 when it sustained a school bussing law by a 5 to 4 vote. COLPA put some of its most competent legal talent to work on the brief and presented a very cogent argument: that the State of New York had a secular legislative purpose in supplying quality secular educational tools to all of its schoolchildren, irrespective of the school they attend. It argued that the purpose of the First Amendment was to promote religious tolerance and freedom while minimizing religious conflict and tension; that it would be wholly consistent with the Constitution to (1.) make available public benefits...

JUDAH DICK is an attorney with the Corporation Counsel of New York City, and an active worker for the defense of Orthodox interests in the courts and legislative bodies. In his The Tuition Squeeze on Yeshiva Parents (THE JEWISH OBSERVER, March 1968) he argued that a major portion of funds for the support of Yeshiva education must come from federations and Jewish philanthropists, who must be convinced of the crucial importance of Yeshiva education to Jewish survival in America.
to children attending parochial schools which fulfill their parents' desire to give their children a religious education, and (2.) meet the state's requirement to provide a proper secular education to such children.

The Court, by a 6 to 3 vote, agreed with these arguments. Justice White in writing for the majority stated that "Americans care about the quality of the secular education available to their children. They have considered high quality education to be an indispensable ingredient for achieving the kind of nation, and the kind of citizenry, that they have desired to create." The court concludes that parochial schools perform, in addition to their sectarian function, the task of secular education and that government assistance in the performance of such secular functions is not unconstitutional. (Board of Education v. Allen, 392 US 236.)

This decision opens the way for new legislation to extend "equal educational opportunity" to parochial school children. COLPA has successfully argued before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court that the equal protection clause requires states to provide the same benefits to parochial school children as it does to public school children, to the extent that it does not violate the First Amendment. (Rhoades v. School District of Abington Township, 424 Pa, 202; 226 A 2d 53.)

If this argument is adopted by the state legislatures and Congress, we will see further developments in the law to provide assistance to children attending yeshivos. It is likely that the "child benefit" theory will be utilized to extend the textbook program to all grades, and to provide remedial programs and special services not generally available to yeshiva students. The "Blaine Amendment" in New York and similar constitutional provisions in other states may limit the type of assistance offered to the more peripheral and indirect areas of aid, and rule out any per-pupil grants or funds to pay teacher salaries. It is unclear how far the Supreme Court of the United States would be willing to go to sustain more direct forms of assistance. (See COLPA Symposium: Governmental Aid to Parochial Schools —How Far? edited by Marvin Schick, New York.)
1968). The dissenting opinion of Justice Black, sees a logical extension of the child benefit theory to buying land for parochial schools, erection of buildings, and payment of salaries of personnel in such schools. New forms of indirect assistance such as tax credits or tax deductions for tuition may be considered. In certain parts of Canada, a property owner may designate which school board—Catholic or Protestant—is to receive his school tax.

Prudence on the part of the proponents of governmental aid would dictate a cautious and deliberate evolutionary program in seeking new forms of aid to parochial schools, lest the courts be tempted to erect a fortress between government and religion to prevent undue diversion of funds from public education to non-public education.

Even if the Supreme Court’s rationale that governmental assistance to the parochial school in the performance of its secular functions is taken literally and would permit per capita grants of $600 per students as envisioned by certain Catholic groups, or payment of salaries of teachers of secular subjects, the enormous cost of such a program in an era where the states are spending very heavily on education in the public sector, would still seem to preclude any substantial aid to yeshiva education in the near future.

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A Torah Perspective

The Loss of Europe’s Torah Centers: A Lesson For Our Generation

The following is adapted from an essay by the Gaon Rav Eliahu Eliezer Dessler, in which he focuses on the destruction of the great spiritual leaders and Torah centers which were forever lost together with European Jewry. Citing traditional sources, he outlines the reasons for the destruction, and its meaning for every Jew who has survived. The original essay appeared in Hebrew in the Bais Yaakov journal of Teves, 5722. It was adapted by Shea Lieman, who is now living in Israel where he is engaged in learning, writing, and translating.

The ways of Providence are beyond our comprehension: we know only that His ways are just. Nevertheless, we must study those ways to determine what duties they may teach us. In this light, we will examine the subjects of Galus (Exile) and Churban (Destruction) to determine what obligations the events of our own epoch impose upon us.

Why did Hashem permit the destruction of Torah centers and allow Torah scholars and teachers of Torah to be ruthlessly murdered? This severely lowered the spiritual level of our generation—why then did it happen? It is clear that physical pain and the tribulations of Galus expiate our sins; but what purpose can there be in the destruction of our spiritual resources? R' Moshe Chaim Luzatto poses a similar problem:

We know that all Hakadosh Baruch Hu does to the Jewish People is for their benefit. Yet how can it be beneficial when the nations of the world do not allow them to study Torah, as in those places where the Inquisition banned the study of Talmud...?

—IGROS RAMCHAL, Number 50.

He explains that this punishment comes to offset the sin of idolatrous thinking: the mere thought of serving any force other than Hashem. On this subject Yechuzkail (14:5) prophesied, “to bring Israel to repent the sins of its heart,” and our Sages taught (Kidushin 39b) that merely thinking of worshiping other forces is considered an actual deed.

Since the sin of idolatrous thought is an internal sin, for the very thought is a sin—so must its expiation—by the principle of הוהי עננו—be internal, with no help at all from his environment. For example: a man finds himself in a sound spiritual society where everyone is bound to spirituality and labors at it. If a person in such an environment is drawn to spirituality, it is possible that his behavior is superficial, for it is motivated by external forces—the influence of his environment—and does not originate in the depths of his heart. While in the course of time he may rise to the level where his actions are internally motivated, this takes a great deal of effort and travail.

But if a person lives in an environment where he is forbidden to learn Torah, where our enemies rule over Torah, where the entire environment is hostile to spirituality, and there he rises to spirituality and faith in Hashem and in His Torah, that person’s faith and service are clearly internally motivated. Only such internally-motivated service of Hashem can expiate internally-motivated sin.

INTERNALLY-MOTIVATED service of Hashem has unique value: it not only makes no use of external forces, but the person so motivated stands in opposition to the external environment. The value of such inner spirituality is inconceivable to anyone who has not experienced it. This explains the words of our Sages:

The vision of Ovadyahu: This is what Hashem said to Edom... Why was Ovadyahu chosen for Edom? [As he offered no other prophecies, why was he chosen for this prophecy over other prophets?*] Rav Yitzchak said, Hakadosh Baruch Hu reasoned: Let Ovadyahu, who lived with two wicked people [Ach'av and Eezevvel*], and did not adopt any of their ways, prophesy about Eisav, who lived with two righteous people [Yitzchak and Rivka*], and did not adopt any of their ways.

Sanhedrin 39b

Ovadyahu was raised and trained in an environment dominated by two great evildoers, Ach'av and Eezevvel, and did not adopt any of their ways. As a result, he knew at first-hand the greatness of internally-motivated spirituality in opposition to its external environment.

* Rashi.

The Jewish Observer / September, 1968
The Gaon of Vilna writes that the generation in which Moshiach comes will be externally motivated: a generation whose ideologies are superficial. This refers to their sins as well as to their worthy acts. That generation's sins will not result from analytical or philosophical heresy as in previous generations, but from an exaggerated desire for the material comfort, and from a general desire to throw off all discipline: “Eat and drink for tomorrow we die.” Similarly the good deeds of that generation will suffer from superficiality; they will be motivated by the external force of a sound spiritual environment. Great effort will be required to rise beyond the external nature of things spiritual and to experience their internal nature.

and could fully fathom the depths of Eisav’s degradation and the enormity of his wickedness in living with two saintly people, yet not learning any of their ways but turning to evil—in opposition to his environment. This qualified him to prophesy Eisav’s end and the extent of his punishment.

He who allowed himself to be drawn into evil despite a sound environment has only one remedy: he can amend his sins only in the same manner as he transgressed. In other words, he must confront an evil, materialistic environment and yet cling to good. For only then will his penance be genuine and of sufficient weight to offset his sin.

THE DESTRUCTION OF A spiritual environment as punishment for the entire nation is a subject spoken of by the Prophets and elaborated by our Sages:

And the Lord said: Because this people sought to approach me with their mouth and honored me with their lips, yet was his heart far from me, and fear of me was at the order of men who taught them how to look pious: therefore, I will shock this people with one shock after another; the knowledge of its scholars will be lost and the comprehension of its wise will be hidden.

Isaiah 29: 13-14

And our Sages comment:

Hakadosh Baruch Hu considers the removal of the righteous worse than the ninety-eight curses and the destruction of the Bais Yammikdosh. Of the curses it is written, “Hashem will shock you with punishments . . .” while of the removal of the righteous it is written, “one shock after another . . .” And why is “shock” repeated here? Because “The knowledge of its scholars will be lost . . .”

Aicha Raba 1:7

The sin Isaiah here warns about is the fulfillment of Torah and the observance of mitzvos not for their own sake—lip service—acting for various external ends such as wealth and honor, or simply out of habit, without a thought for the sake of Heaven. And the removal of the righteous is a punishment for “honored me with their lips.”

BUT THIS POSES several questions: Didn’t our Sages say, “From acting not for Hashem’s sake, one will ultimately act for Hashem’s sake”? Why should the people then be punished? Wouldn’t their lip service ultimately bring them to heart service? And why so severe a punishment—“worse than the ninety-eight curses”? And what purpose can this punishment serve? Once the righteous are gone, their generation, bereft of leadership, will find itself even more in the dark—how will the people’s failure to serve for Hashem’s sake be amended?

Let us first analyze the spiritual situation of our generation. The Gaon of Vilna writes that the generation in which Moshiach comes will be externally motivated: a generation whose ideologies are superficial. This refers to their sins as well as to their worthy acts. That generation’s sins will not result from analytical or philosophical heresy as in previous generations, but from an exaggerated desire for the material comfort, and from a general desire to throw off all discipline: “Eat and drink for tomorrow we die.” Similarly the good deeds of that generation will suffer from superficiality; they will be motivated by the external force of a sound spiritual environment. Great efforts will be required to rise beyond the external nature of things spiritual and to experience their internal nature.

It is axiomatic that Providence grants the aid and abilities needed for the achievement of spirituality to
each generation according to its level. And it would
then follow that our generation, the generation in
which Moshia'h will surely come, needs secondary—
not-for-the-sake-of-heaven— aids: that the ben-Torah,
the lamdan, and whoever it is who strives for spiri-
tuality, be respected; that he be elevated by the masses
in order to survive spiritually and to strengthen the
generation's spirituality. Yet, amazingly, we see the
opposite prevailing. The value and the honor of the
Torah and of the fear of Hashem are debased and
the not-for-the-sake-of-Hashem attitude, always so
much a part of spirituality is far less in this generation
than in previous ones. Why?

I have elsewhere explained (Michtav Mai'Eliahu,
Volume I, pp. 24-29) that since the sole purpose of
 QApplication
 is to help a person achieve שמות—there is
great danger that this generation, motivated by external
factors and mired in materialism, will remain satisfied
with the element of externally received Torah in spiritual matters, and
will never attain 실שה ל流浪. Therefore 실שה ל流浪, the en-
vironment conducive to spiritual advancement, was
taken from us, for its sole value is as a conduit to 실שה ל流浪.
The truth is that the normal way to advance spiritually is with the aid of 실שה ל流浪, using external aids to
attain 실שה ל流浪—internality. This is the way of spirituality: to first grasp at even the externals of spiritual
matters, and by constant effort to achieve internality—
clinging to Hashem. And so from step to step till one
reaches the level of internal unity.

The rav who teaches his student provides him with
the means to discover his own internality. Once the
rav has transmitted the ריזיתה יד and it is the pupil's func-
tion to fulfillCLA שה יברנה אל לברנה—to place the words deep
in his heart and to make them a part of his internality.
Yet, should the student be content with having a great
rav, with being in the atmosphere of Torah-environ-
ment, and so ignore his internal needs—that all his
Torah and service remains external, superficial, and
habitual aspects of 'the order of men who taught them
how to look piyous'—then there can be no solution
other than: "The knowledge of its scholars will be lost
and the comprehension of its wise will be hidden."

THERE ARE GENERATIONS—OURS among them—whose
situation precludes step-by-step advancement from ex-
ternality to internality for the reason given above:
there is the danger that instead of advancing from ex-
ternality to internality, they will sink into externality,
and never attain 실שה ל流浪. In this case there is no alter-
native but to do as the physician who advises a danger-
ously-ill man to undergo surgery, even though the surgery
itself endangers his life. Given no other choice, surgery
must be risked. The same is true in spiritual matters.
It becomes mandatory to perform an extremely dan-
gerous operation: the removal of aids to spirituality,
the removal of spiritual guides and influences, and the
destruction of a sound, stimulating environment—for
they are only means for the attainment of spirituality.
The hazardous operation of removing the righteous
who aid and support Hashem's service had to be un-
taken. And now there is hope that whoever labors
under his own power to achieve internality—his heart
will be truly close to Hashem and his fear of Him will
be pure and not מילוה, simple habit.

The same is true for the burning of Sifrei Torah,
outlawing learning Torah, and the destruction of so-
cieties that fostered sanctity, purity, Torah, and מילוה.
Of course a tremendous decline in the generation's spiri-
tuality results. But those individuals who hear
Hashem's call, who are privileged to turn their hearts
heavenward despite the great and awesome darkness
when the entire external environment of Torah is
rocked and destroyed; who confront the great and
awesome challenge not to be goaded on by the ידי יא
who demands that one question Hashem's ways,* but
to strengthen one's faith in Providence—these are the
men of pure internality, pure without a single stain of
externality.

This idea is of even greater concern in our genera-
tion—an external generation—the generation of
השפיטים, the coming of Moshia'h.

We are far from the internal values of תורגנין ולברון, pure
כון, purity of heart, and love of others. Yet we perceive with our own eyes that the
shall of the honor accorded Torah has been dimin-
ished, and that the guidance of a great rav and a spiritu-
al environment have been diminished. Every place
in Europe where Torah blossomed has been destroyed.
The Torah greats are gone; masses of Bnei Torah and
Talmidei Chachamim sanctified Hashem in death. Can
one help seeing that our generation has undergone a
hazardous "operation," that the possibilities for internal
advancement through external means have been min-
imized? How great is the danger to us if we do not
now seek the means of arousing our hearts' internality
cling to Hashem—by constant devotion to the study of
His Torah; by devotion to His service through prayer
and mitzvos. For without this service—what will be
our end?

THE GREATS of past generations taught us the critical
need for the study of the heart's service: prayer, Musar,
and Chasidus. Now we lesser people have almost no
one to advise us how to serve, how to earn merit. So
we must labor, and must begin internal service by set-
ting aside fixed hours for the study of the heart's
service. For the dangers are very great, and without
internal service there is no hope. May Hashem aid us
and open our hearts to serve him in Truth.

* As witness the well-known words of Rav Elchonon
Wasserman ר' when he and his students were about to be
killed by the Nazis: to be careful to let no impure thought
spoil the sacrifice each of them was to be for all Jewry.

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The Jewish Observer / September, 1968
second looks at the jewish scene

Jews Without A Press

There is no more widely organized Jewish community in the world than American Jewry. There is at least a score of national agencies with complex organizational structures, expensive and expansive suites of offices — some even housed in their own buildings. The combined budgets of these agencies would yield a sum to stagger belief. There are field offices in various cities, highly-paid executives and lobbyists, and highly professional public relations departments who carefully nurture the press and the gentlemen of the press. And yet this vast complex of fraternal, civic, charitable, and defense organizations — which has brought forth immense hospitals and seminars in the hundreds, institutions for human understanding and inter-religious understanding — has not produced a Press worthy of the name. This vast establishment, which has aped most every American institution, at times even improved upon them, has not seen fit to create for itself a Fourth Estate: an American institution which some of the Founding Fathers thought to be more vital than government itself.

We can immediately rule out the suggestion that American Jewry is incapable of producing a Press — many Jews rank with honor among the publishers and journalists of America. Could it perhaps be that the American Jewish establishment is afraid to look itself in the eye — would rather not have anyone snooping about in their business?

Of course there are house organs galore: publications which tell the membership and anyone else willing to read them, that their organization is responsible for major achievements in Jewish life. There are too, the shabby weeklies which pretend to be a Press; but they are with few exceptions controlled by local federations either in fact or by the pressures exerted upon them. Jewish journalism boasts not even a minor league “Walter Lippman” — nor even a “Drew Pearson.” Jewish doctors, lawyers, public officials — books are written about them; but who can find a respected Jewish journalist: a critical, independent mind who can take a hard look at the Jewish Establishment in the pages of a publication that would reach even a cross-section of American Jewry.

THOUGHTS were stimulated by — surprisingly — two recent issues of Commentary magazine. Commentary is published by the American Jewish Committee, but since 1961 it has been “de-Judaized.” Its editor, Norman Podhoretz, in his recent book Making It, takes credit for having initiated this process, and boasts that he is under no obligation to his employers other than to produce a good magazine. This he has done, by general agreement, but it is also generally agreed that Commentary is not a “Jewish magazine” (no more so, as someone recently put it to us, than the Partisan Review). This is not to say that there is nothing in Commentary of Jewish interest: we have on occasion referred to some astute observations on the Jewish scene by contributing editor Milton Himmelfarb, but the major thrust of Commentary is in the areas of world politics, and social and literary criticism.

It was for this reason that we read with interest Teaching Jewish Teachers, by Robert Alter, in the July ’68 issue of Commentary. The article contains little that a reader of the Jewish Observer would find to be new, but this is precisely what makes it novel.

Mr. Alter opens by putting a sticky question about Jewish survival:

THOUGH the American Jewish community in recent years has shown a good deal of nervous concern over its own prospects for survival, there seems to be little sense of how survival should be promoted and scarcely any thought about what its purposes might be. If it is survival for Jewish country clubs and bowling
leagues, for sisterhood luncheons and fashion shows, for moments to collective ego in million-dollar synagogues, one can hardly be surprised that young people want no part of it...

Survival might not seem so crassly irrelevant if all that it ought to involve or all that its failure implies - even for the proverbial "alienated" Jewish intellectual - were carefully thought through. One of many symptoms that there has been little thinking on this score among American Jews is their general indifference to serious Jewish culture, despite all the unctuous lip-service to our "glorious heritage" and despite the continuing vogue of a sentimentally recollected shtetl world.

A case in point is the painful condition of the American Hebrew teachers colleges, which have existed now in a cultural, social, and financial limbo for nearly half a century. I would assume that only a small minority of American Jews is even dimly aware of the presence of these institutions, yet these are the schools, supposedly, that train the teachers of our children, and the activity first undertaken within their walls has considerable bearing not only on the implementation of survival but on its definition as well.

Alter finds these teachers colleges - only one is under Orthodox auspices - to be peculiar and to have achieved only "a modicum of success." He refers to a volume of essays, The Education of American Jewish Teachers, which lists the essential facts on the subject, but notes that:

"... the individual contributions to the volume, with only a few exceptions, are flat, dull, and repetitious, operating on the level of stylistic and intellectual sophistication of perhaps a very dutiful high-school sophomore. I say this not to be gratuitously unkind but because the lackluster quality of the essays suggests something of the miasma of mediocrity that pervades so much of American Jewish education at all levels. To be perfectly frank, reading the Janowsky volume stirred in me feelings of both apprehension and depression: if this is the degree of intellectual and imaginative energy with which we are confronting the vast problems of training those who are to transmit Jewish culture, how much hope can there be for the enterprise?"

It is unfortunate that Alter has nothing to say about the fantastic growth of Day Schools in America, and the teachers training program of Torah Umesorah, but he unwittingly pays tribute to the Day School when he writes:

"... we have little prospect for surviving as a distinctive community unless there are appreciable numbers of Jews - however strong their linguistic loyalty to English - who are capable of reading the Bible in its original language, who understand the Hebrew of the prayer-book and of rabbinic law and legend, and for whom the reborn language of Israel, if not always fully intelligible, is at least not a foreign tongue."
(Alter's comments on the Jewish intellectual are also worth quoting: 
Alter writes:

"An intellectual would hardly think of talking about political theory without ever having read a word of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Burke, or Marx, or pretend to place and assess contemporary writing without any knowledge of the national literary past, indeed, without some minimal awareness of the broad Western literary tradition from Homer onward. I would contend, then, that if a Jewish intellectual insists on the Jewish component of his intellectual identity (of course he is free not to), he at least ought to feel a suspicion of incongruity in the fact that he has never read a word of Maimonides, that he wouldn't know a sugia in the Talmud from a sura in the Koran, that Akiba and Rashi, Judah Halevi and Bialik, are no more than names in an encyclopedia to him, that his closest approach to the Bible experienced by Jews over the centuries is the King James Version.

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a frequent contributor to Commentary, and staff member of the American Jewish Committee, Lucy S. Dawidowicz, contributes a very warm piece On Being a Woman in Shul. Mrs. Dawidowicz has found her way to an Orthodox shul, and in as beautiful a sentence as we have seen in a long time, she writes, "I like this shul." and then proceeds to tell why:

This shul is, above all, a place where people come to pray. When there is a bar-mitzvah ceremony, it does not usurp the service. The boy reads maftir; the rabbi acknowledges the occasion in his sermon and bestows upon the celebrant the sisterhood's gift of a siddur; then the service goes on as usual. The women, too, come to pray. Whenever they arrive — no matter how late — they recite the Shemonah Esreih. Then they catch up with the rest of the congregation. Even behind the partition of lattice and scroll-work, the women of this shul can find their place in the prayer-book, without assistance from their menfolk.

But what about the partition — the mechitzah? Mrs. D. writes:

To my astonishment — for I thought myself modern — I find I like the partition. Because of it, men are more intent on the liturgy (and, for that matter, women are, too) than they might otherwise be. The original reason for separating the sexes, a practice which dates all the way back to the Temple, when women were assigned to the eeval nashim, was, presumably, to discourage amorous thoughts. Later, to ensure the same purpose, rabbinic leaders prescribed special galleries for women in the synagogue so that they "should look down from above and men look from below."

IT IS THIS KIND OF JOURNALISM that American Jewry desperately needs, and that it so sadly lacks. The American Jewish Committee has poured millions of dollars into Commentary over the years. (It is only recently that a talented new business manager has boosted their circulation and advertising volume, but they may still be operating in the red.) They might more easily justify this huge expenditure if the talents and resources of Commentary were directed to filling at least some of the vacuum in Jewish journalism.

But, we mentioned two issues of Commentary; the August issue contained a cynical article about the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists. Is this the sort of journalism we are looking for? — yes, it is. We leave it to the AOSJ to react to the critique of their group; no doubt they have already done so. But if there is to be a serious examination of American Jewry, then certainly Orthodoxy cannot hope to escape unscathed. A mature willingness by all elements of American Jewry to examine itself — as some groups have, for example, examined non-Jewish attitudes — can only result in a healthier Jewish life. And somehow we feel confident that Orthodoxy will be the greatest beneficiary of informed scrutiny of American Jewish life.

The Jewish Observer / September, 1968
A Personal Note

The greatest challenge the Torah thrusts upon the Jew is to be constantly aware of the Presence of G-d — an awareness which must reflect itself in his very act and thought. The intensity of this challenge is today compounded by an endless stream of physical and intellectual distractions which clutter man's mind and becloud his utter dependence on Chasdai Ha'Shem for his every breath. So many events which were, in the past, classed as "acts of G-d" are today "handled" by a telephone call to some public or private agency.

While living in St. Louis, Missouri, a number of years ago, we looked out our back window one summer day and found that the creek behind our house was overflowing its banks and creeping toward us. Our first reaction was to consult the "Yellow Pages" for the proper number to call for stopping a flood — until we realized that technology had not yet developed a flood stopper. But technology has developed so many "stoppers" which we cheerfully accept, but which limit the opportunities to be made aware on an emotional level of our dependence on Chasdai Ha'Shem.

While in the midst of preparing our last issue for the press, we were rushed to the hospital with severe pains on our left side. Surgery revealed that our appendix had burst several days earlier, thus accounting for the absence of the traditional pains on the right side, and for the failure of our June issue to appear.

FINDING YOURSELF flat on your back, with tubes running in and out of your body, is a humbling experience. Evidently, the Hashgocha finds it necessary at times to inflict such an experience on some of us to heighten or to revitalize our awareness of our dependence on G-d; to shift this awareness from the mind to the heart. We do not seek out such opportunities, but when thrust upon us by a Wisdom infinitely greater than our own, they can be used to advantage.

Days and weeks spent in a hospital bed are by their nature unproductive in the realm of achievement; unfinished, unstarted work piles higher on your desk. But for the neshomo it can be a fruitful experience.

And yet, when the tubes are removed; when the endless injections do come to an end; when your strength begins to flow back into your weakened muscles, the mind...
began to forget. The vivid images of doctors working around you, the constant jabs of needles, the discomfort, the pain, the troubled looks of family and friends which they try to hide with tired smiles — these memories fade and the body having recovered even part of its strength, renews its fight with the neshomo, which, for a while has held greater sway.

It is never easy to remain close to G-d; to maintain the constant awareness of His Presence which is our goal. But this closeness can be achieved through the medium of Torah and Mitzvos. As our Sages put it:

The Almighty wished to purify Israel and, therefore, bountifully bestowed upon them Torah and Mitzvos.

In the new year to come may we all merit and achieve greater closeness to Hashem through Torah and Mitzvos and may this be the year of Geula.

YAAKOV JACOBS
U. S. ESROG BAN AVERTED
BY AGUDATH ISRAEL ACTION

American Jews will be able to use the Israeli Esrog this Succos after intervention by Agudath Israel of America caused the U. S. Department of Agriculture to lift a new regulation, which would have in effect banned the import of the Esrog to this country.

Earlier this year the Department of Agriculture issued a regulation which requires the fumigation of all citrus fruits entering the U. S. from the Mid-East, to protect the American citrus growers from possible Mediterranean fruit-fly infestation. This fumigation, because of the sensitivity of the Esrog peel, would render it unfit for use (posui).

After the U. S. Government turned down all appeals by representatives of the Israel Embassy, the Israeli Esrog growers and the American importers, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, executive president of Agudath Israel of America, met in June with top officials of the Agriculture Department in Washington. He presented a lengthy memorandum proposing an interim plan, whereby each Esrog destined for export to the United States would be inspected in Israel by a memorandum proposed that chemical fumigant which would not harm the Esrog during the incubation period after cutting, prior to inspection.

For the 1969 season, the Agudah memorandum proposed that chemical testing be undertaken to develop a fumigant which would not harm the Esrog peel.

AT THE CLOSE of the conference, the Agriculture Department officials agreed to accept the Agudath Israel proposal, and in a subsequent letter to Rabbi Sherer spelled out their approval of this plan. As a result of this intervention, a serious religious crisis for American Jewry was averted. Approximately 50,000 Esrogim are imported from Israel, and it is estimated that one million Jews use the Esrog during the Succos holiday.

In a subsequent statement Rabbi Sherer hailed the U. S. Agriculture Department for acting in the finest American tradition by extending its fullest cooperation to negotiate a satisfactory solution to a problem which vitally affected Jewish religious practice."

WORLD CONFERENCE IN LOCARNO MAPS FUTURE AGUDAH PLANS

A THREE DAY CONFERENCE of the inner executive of the Agudath Israel World Organization, which took place in June in Locarno, Switzerland, mapped a broad plan to intensify Agudath's activities on the international scene. The gathering, attended by 35 delegates from 8 countries and 3 continents, also discussed the ideology and policies of Agudath Israel, especially concerning Israel. The problems of Torah education and Eastern European Jews also were a major subject of discussion.

NEW AGUDAH CENTER RISING IN BORO PARK

THE NEW THREE-STOREY community center being built on 14th Avenue, Boro Park, by Agudath Israel of Boro Park, is slowly rising. The branch, which has undertaken a $500,000 building fund campaign, hopes to have the building erected and serving the entire Boro Park community again this Fall. Heading the campaign is the branch president Abraham Plotzker.

NEW METHODS STUDIED BY PIRCHEI LEADERS

OVER 200 leaders of Pirchei Agudath Israel branches from every part of the United States and Canada participated in the annual Labor Day weekend convention, sponsored by the National Council of Pirchei Agudath Israel, in Camp Agudah, Ferndale, New York. The delegates benefited from workshops outlining better methods for Torah youth leadership, as well as from panel discussions on the role of the Yeshiva student in preparation for assuming communal responsibility in adult life. The roster of speakers, which was headed by the presidium-member of Agudath Israel Rabbi Moshe Horowitz (Bostoner Rebbe), included Rabbi Mordecai Weinberg, Rabbi Shlomo Rotenberg, Rabbi Yaakov Goldstein, Rabbi Joshua Silvermintz and Rabbi N. Joseph. The Agudah administration was represented by Rabbi Baruch Borchard and Rabbi Yosef Heschel. Shimon Zweig was elected chairman of the Leaders Council of Pirchei Agudath Israel.

NEW CALL GOES OUT URGING STUDY OF THE DAF YOMI

ON THE OCCASION of the Siyum of the second tractate (Shabbos) of the current cycle of the study of the Daf Yomi on September 4th, Agudath Israel of America issued a public manifesto calling upon Jews to join this unique Torah-study plan. Many new Daf-Yomi study groups were organized in recent months throughout the United States, and the daily study of the Talmud has revolutionized the spiritual life-pattern of those who participate, the Agudah statement declared. With the beginning of the new tractate Eruvin, a new opportunity has been offered to Jews to join such study groups in their neighborhoods or to help create new groups. Assistance to further this plan in any neighborhood can be obtained by writing to the Daf Yomi Commission, Agudath Israel of America, 5 Beekman Street, New York, N. Y. 10038.
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