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Conference On Soviet Jewry Holds Seminar, Debates Plans

By AUREL LITTMAN

The American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry held a seminar to re-educate Jewish leadership concerning the anti-Jewish policy of the Soviet Union. Sessions were held on Saturday evening December 20, 1969 at Yeshiva University's Mendel Gottesman Library and all day Sunday December 21, in Hurst Hall. A number of eminent scholars and Kremlinologists were scheduled to speak on various aspects of the plight of Jews, Armenians, Baptists, Ukrainians together with other nationalities and religions in the Soviet Union. The speakers included Abraham Brumberg, editor of "Problems of Communism," and Moshe Decter who is director of Jewish Minorities Research, a group of scholars who pool, publish and comment on information coming from Russia and her satellites.



A. LITTMAN

(L. to R.) Richard Maass, Dennis Prager, Jerry Goodman, Nechama Lifschitz.

Speakers concluded that world opinion has a direct effect on the Soviet government's policy towards her Jews and that protest of existing discrimination serves to prevent an extension of the anti-Jewish policies. It was pointed out that recently a new voice has been added to those who cry out for national freedom for Soviet Jewry—this voice is the cry of the Soviet Jew for himself. After repeated refusal of his request for permission to go to Israel, Boris Kochubievsky wrote a letter defending his desire to leave. In this letter he wrote, "I am a Jew. I want to live in a Jewish State. This is my right, as it is the right of a Ukrainian to live in the Ukraine, the right of a Russian to live in Russia, the right of a Georgian to live in Georgia. I want to live in Israel." And, most recently, 18 Georgian Jews had their names and addresses read in the U.N. asking the world body to intercede on their behalf since their efforts to be allowed to join families in Israel were also constantly ignored. These people feel that as Jews they cannot express themselves except in the Jewish state.

After the eminent scholars concluded, Nechama Lifschitz, a Yiddish singer who recently settled in Israel, spoke of her friends in the Soviet Union. To her, she said, the three million Russian Jews are not mere statistics but they are human beings whom she has known and loved all her life. With tears in her eyes, she read a letter from a friend who has been trying to get permission to go to Israel for four years and has

been constantly refused by the authorities. He is a Yiddish poet who is not allowed to publish his work and he finds that his people's culture—the source of his poetry—is being stifled.

The meeting on Saturday night closed with a talk by Dennis Prager who recently returned from a visit to the Soviet Union. Like all other visitors to Russia, Mr. Prager came back as a *shaliach* to relate his shattering experiences and to ask American Jewry "to make noise." He met a rabbi who lost his position in a community because he *shechtet* a cow. At another time, he saw a mother and child being literally kicked out of a synagogue because of a Soviet law forbidding those who had not yet served in the army to join groups of public worship. He concluded that in view of the grave situation, the American Conference should not merely have meetings to "re-educate the leadership" but, rather, it should devote its full efforts in planning positive actions on behalf of its Soviet Jewish brethren. Mr. Prager claimed that the delegates were already aware of the anti-Jewish policy of the Soviet government and now they should be working out means to alleviate the situation.

There was a unanimous agreement on the part of both the speakers and the delegates to resolve to rededicate their efforts to maintain the anti-Jewish policy of the Soviet government as a world issue. However, a large percentage of the delegates present noted that there was no time allotted to discuss positive recommendations concerning activities of the organization and the funds with which these activities might be carried out. When delegates voiced their desire to have the Conference earmark a budget for its activities and to set up able, full-time staff to coordinate the different projects, they were invariably ruled out of order by a chairman and it was suggested that Richard Maass, who was recently appointed to head a committee on the budget, would deal with their suggestions at a later meeting.

College Students Organize To Strengthen Jewish Education

By DAVID GREENSTEIN

Students in YU these days are organizing, ad hoc, to preserve and further Jewish traditions. While many of our brethren are keeping a strict vigil over the integrity of *Yiddishkeit* and *frumkeit* within the walls of Yeshiva, others are working on strengthening the Jewish spirit outside YU. They call themselves the Ad Hoc Committee for Jewish Education.

The group was organized quickly (ad hoc) Nov. 13 to answer the call from Boston to help pressure Federation delegates to aid Jewish education. There they joined with students from JTS, Harvard, Brandeis, Tufts, Barnard, and NYU and spoke personally to many delegates in an effort to persuade them to change their sense of priorities about Jewish communal life. Besides lobby-

An Open Letter To Dr. Belkin: Emphasis On Yeshiva Urged

By JAY MARCUS

16-Tselet, 5730

Dear Dr. Belkin,

I sincerely hope you are feeling better and will have a *refuah shelema*. I am certain that you will be back at the yeshiva soon. I hope you will forgive

clusive idea, of SYNTHESIS—the combining of Torah and *Madah*. I wonder what the new school emblem will be? It may sound, stranger but I believe that synthesis in proper Torah form will help Yiddishkeit in America. I am



Former Home of Torah-U-Madad

YUPR

my writing to you at this time, but I believe the cause is very great and merits this letter.

In a short time Albany will be deciding on granting 2 separate Charters: one to Yeshiva University and one to RIETS. I understand the financial necessity of such a plan and would not be naive enough to lament "*al mikham bakesel tzadik*." However, I do wonder if this is not the beginning of the end. There has been a joke that YU will never become like Harvard because the divinity school will never be as good. But I'm afraid we won't be able to joke about YU's secularization any longer.

I remember hearing you speak a number of times about the centrality of Torah and "if not for the Yeshiva you could close down all the graduate schools." I guess now with RIETS separate we will no longer have to deal with that very complex, and at times

aware that we don't always succeed in presenting a Torah true synthesis, but we are striving for that goal, and for Yiddishkeit here to survive we must succeed!

Although, unfortunately, I'm not able to be a master builder, nor even a patron of Yeshiva, I am a *talmid* of the Yeshiva, from high school through college and now *semikha*. I am very concerned that there may not be any *yeshiva* left for my brother to return to, from Eretz Yisrael, or to (please God) send my son to—that is, a *yeshiva* wherein Torah ideals and values are paramount and where one may gain a properly combined synthesis of secular education and Torah while learning Torah. I wonder how many other *Talmidim* would not like to see the Yeshiva or RIETS split and divorced from the University.

With all apologies for my non-ecumenism, I wonder how many were hurt to read the new Yeshiva College catalogue refer to RIETS credit as "other institutions" and the statement about admission to Yeshiva College regardless of race, creed or religion; I was deeply hurt. I wonder how the *Roshei Yeshiva* at Radin z"l would react now. I have no doubts at all, *chas vechalilah*, as far as your motives being *l'Shem Shomayim*, but I wonder if all the money is worth not being able to demand *Shmirat Shabbat* or not being able to enforce *halakhah* in "federally" financed dormitories. I don't believe that such a division will only remain a "legal device." I am curious if you realize how many of us who take the Yeshiva and its ideals seriously, and who appreciate what is done for us, are greatly distressed and chagrined about the *derech* or path of the University. I am greatly afraid that the *Ohel* and Torah of Shem is in serious danger of being tucked away in a corner of the *Yefeiso* or values of Yefes.

Sincerely yours,

JAY H. MARCUS

(Continued on page 5)

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Yeshiva (?) University

... the English newspaper *Hamevaser* is issued by other schools at the Main Center." YC catalog (1969-70).

Since the beginning of this year, a credibility gap has widened at YU between the students and the administration. We were told that we had entered into a new era of student-faculty-administration cooperation, that we would be consulted and our opinions would be weighed on decisions which affect us and which affect the school. It is true that there has been an increase of such cooperation regarding a number of mundane decisions within the framework of the Senate; yet when important decisions have to be reached which affect the entire purpose and ideals of the University, we are left in the dark and presented with a fait accompli. Such has been the case in three areas: the changing of the titles of the degrees at Stern (from BRE to BS), the separation of RIETS from the University, and the new college catalog which blatantly expresses this separation and its consequences.

RIETS is now referred to as "other institutions" (p. 6); Bible is now part of the foreign language requirement (p. 22); the following statement from the old catalog (p. 27) is not found in the new catalog: "No student may attend YU unless he is simultaneously attending one of the following: RIETS, EMC, or JSS." Finally, the purpose of Yeshiva is no longer to provide "the fullest knowledge of Jewish and general culture" which was to be accomplished by "receiving an education in the liberal arts and science while simultaneously pursuing studies in Jewish religion and culture" (p. 23, old catalog) but rather that "the values of Judaism have a meaningful relevance to the general culture" which one arrives at by, in addition to one's college education, "intensive analysis of the classical texts in the Hebrew and Aramaic originals" (p. 19, new catalog).

We are told that these changes are merely on paper to insure our receiving state and

federal aid. But are these merely changes on paper? Can we be so schizophrenic as to represent ourselves in one way to the outside world, while remaining inwardly true?

The religious atmosphere at Yeshiva is worse now than it has been in a number of years. As any Dormitory counselor will attest to, there is a lack of enforcement of Minyan attendance; there is a lax attitude toward the observance of certain basic Mitzvot; one is no longer surprised when one sees students in the halls of the dormitory without yarmulkas. But should one be surprised? Aren't these students just following the new catalog which has been promulgated from on high? Where are any of the above items written off? They are not even in the dormitory regulations.

We recently met with a concerned administrator who told us to continue to criticize constructively and influence students. We readily accept our responsibility. However, we cannot function in a vacuum; we cannot work in an atmosphere where the actions (or the inactivity) of the administration defeat our purposes.

We hereby serve notice that we will not suffice ourselves with mere editorial words in the future. The time has come for a total reevaluation of the present trend of decisions and indecision; a total reevaluation of the system of priorities; a definitive statement of purposes and ideals. We will not sit idly by while Joseph is sold for a pair of shoes.

RIETS Transfer Credit

At the writing of this editorial, the RIETS transfer credit proposal lies in the hands of a senate committee. We firmly believe that intensive study of Talmud certainly merits appropriate credit towards a B.A., and most importantly, transfer credit would provide urgently needed time for learning Torah—supposedly the central element in the YU experience.

The arguments favoring the proposal are numerous, and should be evident to all those who review the proposal, as submitted by SOY. We urge the senate to immediately implement this proposal as a small but significant step toward the reinstatement of Torah to its proper primary position.

The 5-Year Program

Over the past several years, *Hamevaser* has published articles by students on the five year program, editorialized for its expansion and urged the student body to seriously consider entering the program. We were therefore encouraged to learn that the Senate is considering the question of the adoption of the five year program as permanent school-wide policy. There are, to be sure, quite valid reasons for discounting turning Yeshiva into a five year college, not the least of which are the financial burden this would place on the University and the students and the possibility of a sharp drop in Yeshiva College enrollment. Nevertheless, the benefits of the program are certainly great enough to warrant consideration. If there are solutions to YU's problems, they will certainly not be found by generally ignoring the whole issue.

We therefore call upon the administration and Senate, to comprehensively review the deficiencies of the present situation, and to explore all possible alternatives. Toward this end the Student Council Committee on Academic Affairs and *Hamevaser* will conduct a survey of the student body during the first two weeks of the spring term on their attitudes toward the five year program and its institution as school-wide policy at Yeshiva College. We urge students to familiarize themselves with the regulations of the five year program and to think seriously about the advisability of making Yeshiva a five year college.

From the Editor's Desk

The Challenges Ahead

by MICHAEL SHMIDMAN

A number of recent developments, both within and outside of Yeshiva, have highlighted the critical nature of several troubling situations. In most cases, there is some room for optimism; in every case, the coming decade may well prove to be an ultimate test of survival. Our own cognizance of and response to these developments could help to shape the course of things to come.

The most distressing developments concern the relationships between Israel and her "allies." The last remaining European friends have by this time exchanged their moral commitments for Arab oil, and now, most ominously, the never over-friendly United States is apparently depositing its conscience at Chase Manhattan, and joining the oil party (undoubtedly to the great delight of Sen. Fulbright and the State Department).

The discouraging U.S. policy statements, the apparent success of pro-Arab bank and oil lobbies, and Israel's own increasing concern and anger, all combine to produce a rather empty feeling of helplessness; what indeed will Israel—and we ourselves—do, when our best "ally" has literally sold us out?

Against this depressing background of events, it is difficult to discern many promising developments regarding Israel. Yet perhaps just because of the bleakness of the situation, certain recent events at YU—in their own relatively small ways—take on added urgency and significance.

The lesson inherent in the latest U.S. actions is clear (as it was in June '67 and so often in the past): Israel can depend ultimately only on its own people—the world Jewish community. Thus, it is gratifying, in its own small degree, to find the enthusiastic interest in and solidarity with Israel which exists among the overwhelming majority of the student body at YU—an interest which has recently taken the tangible form of an expanded movement, spearheaded by the newly-established Aliyah club and always championed by this paper, agitating for greater interaction with Israel, particularly in the context of officially-sponsored study programs. Surely it is not possible that, in the face of the present grave circumstances, the Administration can still fail to act toward these goals (as it has apparently not acted in regard to the Israel Kollel project, may it rest in peace). The administration must be made aware of the vital importance of increased, closer ties to Israel. Everyone of course recognizes the necessity of prayer and protest for the welfare and security of Israel; but we must also contribute our energies, talents, minds and bodies, as much as is possible, to the preservation and development of the *Medinah*.

Recent changes of events concerning the plight of Soviet Jewry also command our attention. Israel's recent declaration burying the policy of "quiet talks and quiet diplomacy" in favor of concerted, strong international action, has lent new importance to the protest activities of otherwise little known (and sometimes even opposed) movements such as SSSJ. The hope persists that through the combined efforts of the courageous Soviet Jews and an outraged and outspoken international community, some alleviation of the situation—perhaps in the form of emigration—may be produced. To this end, every Jewish student may contribute through participation in public demonstrations, and volunteer work in organizations such as SSSJ. We are told that this is a period of critical change in Soviet policy—for better or for worse (as in Leningrad on Simchat Torah). Our unflinching protests may be the determining factor.

Adding to the depression and sense of crisis is, of course, our own YU. Just several weeks ago, one could eagerly anticipate discussion and action on issues vital to the preservation of the essence of YU: the primacy of Torah. Improvement of the Jewish Studies program, adoption of the RIETS transfer proposal, and re-evaluation of the present 4-year structure of the college were all to be acted upon by the senate. Instead, we have seen little discussion, less action, many committees, and in the meantime, the issuance of a strange new catalog describing a virtually completely secular institution (see editorial), and the termination of the granting of BRE's and BHL's by Stern and EMC. One administrator warns of the danger of becoming a "Bible-belt" institution, an astonishing assertion to those of us still seeking vainly for even a synthesis of Torah-U-Madab.

Some encouraging signs, however, do exist. Many students have finally reacted against an always, but now more rapidly, deteriorating situation. Responsible student groups are forming to investigate thoroughly the present crisis, and to recommend new proposals and demands, hopefully to be backed by the student body.

Israel, Soviet Jewry, YU—all are vital areas facing critical periods, and all are in desperate need of our assistance to survive the challenge of the 70's.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The Role Of The Yeshiva Student



by JACK WOLFISH

In the previous article I pointed out a fundamental distinction between the educational experience of the traditional yeshiva and the contemporary college. While the former has as its ideal a temporary, physical (though not intellectual) detachment from normal participation in society, the latter has come to regard full fledged involvement in the problems of society as essential for the "true college experience." This current transition in America's academic community represents to me a true advance

productively in these areas than the ~~so-called~~ **so-called** who has the obligations of business and family? It is impossible for me to give answers to any of these issues individually for a reason which will soon become evident, but I will present two basic approaches to this problem—the student activist approach and the ben-Torah approach.

The student activist approach, which may also be called the ~~so-called~~ **so-called** *kal va'chomer* approach, runs as follows: if non-re-

learning, and there can be no learning without the yeshiva. For those skeptical about final causes, it should nevertheless be clear from a study of Jewish history that since the destruction of the Temple and the establishment of the *Sanhedrin* at Yavneh, the yeshivot of each generation have been the central efficient cause of the survival of the Jewish heritage. Thus to maintain that the Jewish student activist who has never missed a protest rally contributes more to *Klal Yisrael* than the yeshiva student who devotes the best years of his life to learning is at the very least an absurdity. Asking yeshiva students to leave their learning to participate in political or social activism is loosely analogous to asking a team of cancer researchers to do routine medical work in a health clinic. Neither can be logically condoned under normal circumstances.

Under what conditions, then, may one require that the cancer researcher do routine clinical work? Clearly, only in extreme situations, such as epidemic conditions in which his presence or absence could mean the difference between life and death, can one justly condone and demand his service. In more practical terms, interruption of the yeshiva education can be considered only for special causes whose success or failure could depend solely on the active participation of the yeshiva community; only in the *et laasot* situation. One example of such *et laasot* was the issue of forced autopsies in Israel, and the yeshiva communities both here and in Israel recognized it as such. Certainly the problem of reaching non-religious Jewish youth is also such an issue. Concerns such as Soviet Jewry, aliyah, and some areas of Middle East politics may also enter in this category. However, decisions on matters such as these are not as simple as some make them out to be and ultimately must be made on an individual basis.

In deciding whether a given situation demands *bitul torah*, yeshiva students must ask themselves whether their personal abilities can change the future of some non-religious youth or perhaps the fate of a Jew in Russia. Since conclusive answers to questions like these are an impossibility, probabilities must be

weighed against the value of the individual's time in yeshiva. Here again arise difficult questions, for whose time is more valuable, that of a kollel student going through a *Rav Chaim* or that of the JSS student first learning a *mishnah* in *Berachot*? Whose years in yeshiva are more important—those of the semicha student who must be a "specialist" in his field, or those of the pre-med or pre-law student whose time for learning will be very limited after he leaves the yeshiva? Clearly these are decisions to be made by the individual in consultation with a *rebbe* who knows him well. Only after such serious deliberation can the *ben Torah* reach an adequate solution.

It should be noted that I have not mentioned in this discussion the more far-reaching areas of the Vietnam War and social injustice. This is not to say that the moral responsibility involved in these issues is any less serious or pressing. It is rather my opinion that the successful resolution of such momentous problems can never ultimately depend on the involvement of the yeshiva community, and hence they do not constitute such an *et laasot*! I may add, however, that in terms of the American college community at large, resolution of these issues could very well be contingent on the student participation. But at this point the considerations of the yeshiva student must necessarily differ from those of the college student if the "primacy of Torah" is to have any meaning. It is precisely this point that I have tried to emphasize: that the yeshiva student must have a set of values and priorities different from that of an ordinary college student. It should not be a feeling of self-righteousness, but rather a difference of purpose which sets the two apart.

Lastly, I am quite aware that I have written in terms of an ideal. One's mere presence in RIETS does not make one a *ben Torah* just as one's presence in the *beit-midrash* does not mean one is learning. The central point that must be recognized, however, is that if YU is to be improved it must be seen in terms of the "yeshiva experience" and not the "college experience."

This is especially true for an issue such as the war, on which there is no unanimity in the yeshiva world.



Demonstration for Soviet Jewry

in liberal education. Our educators and more important our youth have finally come to the realization that under the so-called "ivory tower" system, intellectual development can and has in the past been divorced from the moral development of the individual. Nevertheless, they have a long way to go before the intellectual and the moral become as inseparable as they are for the yeshiva student who since early childhood has known: "*raysh! hakmah girat hashem.*"

Within this ideal view of the yeshiva experience, there remain nevertheless, serious practical questions which I am sure to have raised in the minds of many. What about non-religious Jewish youth, Middle East politics, and the abundance of problems which face American and world Jewry? Can all our *bnai-hayeshiva* remain totally uninvolved physically in these areas and reserve action until after they have left the yeshiva and entered the mainstream of society? Is not the unmarried yeshiva student more free and able to work

ligious students with a restricted awareness and limited background in *Yahadut* give of their time to Jewish causes, then the yeshiva student whose appreciation and dedication is so much greater should certainly be out there in all these protests and rallies and, of course, in the Salute to Israel Parade. Implicit in this argument is the belief that all the *roshei-hayeshiva* and the yeshiva students who devote the overwhelming majority of their time to learning are totally blind or insensitive to the needs of the Jewish community outside of their own four walls. What makes this approach so illogical is not merely the failure to recognize that physical detachment does not always mean indifference, as has already been pointed out, but rather a far more fundamental misconception.

Anyone who pays more than lip-service to the "primacy of Torah" is aware that the yeshiva is both the final and efficient cause of the existence of *Klal Yisrael* today. It is the final cause simply because the ultimate goal of traditional Judaism is observance of the Torah, there can be no observance without

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I am a graduate of Yeshiva College '60, B.A., and of the Teacher's Institute '60, B.R.E. and Diploma. Presently I am an Ophthalmic surgeon with the United States Army in South Viet Nam. It is needless to say that I was annoyed when I was informed of my orders to go to Viet Nam just after having completed a four year residency in Ophthalmology. Besides the constant threat to life and bodily harm one can encounter in this war zone, the moral issue was one I had to wrestle with as well. After being here for several months I have made certain observations. I of course found it quite easy to rationalize my participation here, since I am a non-combatant and have the duty to heal and cure people wherever they are. None of these young G.I.'s who were drafted here wanted to go to war in Viet Nam. They are putting their necks on the line; the least I

can do is support them with the best medical know-how available to me.

Not only did I come here as a surgeon but also a Jew, an Orthodox Jew as well. Participation in the United States Army is quite different from our forefathers' participation in other armies i.e. Russian, Polish, etc. Thank God America remains one of the few countries in the world where wholesale slaughter of Jews did not take place. Jewish loyalty to the United States should never be questioned. The problem arises when one feels that this particular war is immoral and unjust. Thus in the last couple of years Yeshiva University as well as other Seminaries no longer felt that it had the responsibility to furnish chaplains for the Army. They have made it purely voluntary. In my opinion there is nothing greater for Kiddush Hashem than having a man come here as a Jewish chaplain. There are approximately 4,000 Jewish

service men in Viet Nam at the present time. There are only 4 Jewish chaplains. I am happy to say that 2 of the chaplains are from Y.U. However, since Jewish personnel are few in proportion to the rest of the Army, we are scattered all over the country. It is quite difficult for so few chaplains to reach most of the men. The Army is where people get closer to religion or further away from it. In a war zone is where one needs spiritual help and guidance. I fear that fewer chaplains will volunteer for this job. It would be an absolute disaster to leave these young Jewish men alone without religious guidance.

I am the Jewish lay leader in the Central Highlands. I conduct weekly Shabbat Services, visit all the wounded Jewish personnel, procure Kosher food and act as a liaison for the G. I. in any of his problems. Jewish lay leaders are important and serve a useful purpose,

However, there is no substitute for a Jewish chaplain and responsible Jewish lay leaders are very few and far between.

I appeal to all those people who may be in a position to either go as a chaplain, or direct the programs to send chaplains, to consider the decision of voluntary chaplaincy duty. It is my feeling, being here in the war zone that the role of a chaplain here is just as important or more so than taking a pulpit in Hometown U.S.A. We Jews have always taken care of our own and we have the responsibility and the opportunity to bring thousands of Jewish men closer to our faith and our heritage. Those men who came here in the past look back at it as a wonderful and rewarding experience. Shalom.

Sincerely,
ALBERT HORNBLASS, Maj M.C.
U.S. Army

(Letters continued on page 6)

Religious Controversy Marks Recent Israeli Knesset Elections

By ELYAKIM KRUMBEIN

During those periodic minor crises called elections, a society bares its inner trends. After being long suppressed by the politics of the status quo, nagging issues surface anew to spur debate and fray tempers. In the case of Israel's seventh *Knesset* elections, religious Jews were chagrined by what they found. Some of the results of the election were encouraging, but its aftermath left a distinctly bitter taste.

Certain elements of the campaign, while unpleasant, were familiar repeat performances. Jerusalem's *Neturei Karta* boycotted the election and demonstrated to that effect. Certain figures attempted to unite all or some of the religious parties; their efforts were torpedoed once again.

It was the unpredictable side of the election, however, that caused the most trepidation. It is well-known that the National Religious Party (NRP), the largest of the religious factions, depends for its influence on the need of the party in power for a compatible coalition-mate. NRP is an attractive candidate, because the favors it demands in exchange for collaboration are relatively nominal.

But now, NRP was faced with the prospect of exclusion from the government. The major workers' factions had combined into the huge Labor party, controlling sixty-three of 120 *Knesset* seats. If the new party were to survive the election, coalition with NRP or anyone else would be unnecessary. Even before the election, the religious party got a foretaste of what seemed to be inevitable: over its protests, the government carried legislation for eventual television broadcasting on *Shabbat*.

The tears were brushed aside, however, when the returns came in. Labor lost its majority; NRP held fast and even gained a seat. And so, the *datim* were treated to another repeat performance—they were invited to present their terms for participation in the coalition. Naturally, one of those terms was the nullification of the government's previous decision regarding television on *Shabbat*.

Without a second thought, Premier Golda Meir and her colleagues sent word to the Broadcasting Authority to move its Friday night programs, which were to begin that week (November 9), to Friday afternoon. The decision jolted a large segment of the Israeli public, but the ultimate reproof came from the Authority itself, which flatly turned down the government's request. The Authority is not legally bound to government decisions, but its action was unexpected and aggravated the controversy.

The morning of "Black Friday" brought news that the Authority would follow the government's request after all, due to a protest by twelve members of the Authority itself. After *Shabbat* set in, however, two enterprising young men knocked on the door of High Court Justice Zvi Berenson, who was in the process of repairing a short circuit in his home. They could barely believe the ease with which they obtained an injunction from him, ordering the Authority to televise that night. Berenson's injunction was formally upheld by the High Court the following week.

Berenson became a target of severe criticism. A noted Israeli academician called his injunction an act of anti-Semitism. He must have known what he was letting himself in for when

he ordained *chilul Shabbat* with such haste—or *Shabbat* itself, no less. Berenson, however, is only part of the tragedy. There is a much larger and more critical issue which is at the heart of the whole affair.

The television controversy is the most recent manifestation of the feud between the religious and non-religious communities in Israel. This basic breach in Israeli society had been deceptively dormant for a while, probably because of Israel's preoccupation with security matters. It is indicative of the seriousness of the rent that it has become visible even in these times of crisis.



Golda Meir YUPR

All of the essentials of the rift came to the fore during this latest episode. For one thing, the attitude of many *non-datim* was downright hideous. One must bear in mind that Israeli television is not very good, and in fact is often quite cheap. The fact that *Shabbat* television was fought by the *datim* must account alone for the incredible festivity with which the unexpected telecast was received. Reading some of the descriptions of the Friday night merry-making conjures up images of urban America's reaction to the repeal of Prohibition.

Also, as was often the case in the past, the controversy was stirred by a religious political move, which was instantly seized upon as an example of religious coercion. NRP failed to communicate, and its image, which was none too glorious to begin with, suffered another setback.

In the wake of the election, one more doleful note should be added. It is true that we are assured of religious Jewry having a voice in the Israeli government for the next four years. But we may also rest assured that for at least four more years, religious Jewry will not significantly change its tactics. NRP's persistence in the coalition means more repugnant political dealings, and more resulting antagonism towards a Judaism to which secular Israelis are exposed only when it is jamming rules down their throats. If future ruptures like the television affair are to be avoided, and if there is to be any hope of easing the situation in general, a broad educational and social front must be opened.

A shift in emphasis is clearly needed. The *datim* are heavy-handed where action is most damaging, but tongue-tied where communication is most vital—and mere political maneuvering is not going to make the difference.

Gestalt Psychology In The Light Of Traditional Judaism

By MICHAEL MILLER

A small body of psychological literature exists in which an attempt is made to compare Judaism to psychological theory. Some of these books try to show how Judaism compares with one or another psychological approach. In this article, however, the emphasis will be reversed. One system of psychological thought, the Gestalt school, will be judged by Jewish standards.

Gestalt psychology arose in Germany in the 1920's under Max Wertheimer and Kurt Koffka. It was an outgrowth of the phenomenological school of philosophy which studied direct experience, i.e., the way things appear to be, rather than the ways things are. Gestalt became a reaction to American psychology when behaviorism was at its least subtle and most popular. The priest of behaviorism was John Watson, who believed that all human behavior could be studied and manipulated if one understood the simplest physiological units of the human mechanism. What is meant by lack of subtlety is that he was a bit too outspoken and unable to prove scientifically all that he had claimed. However, Watson did stamp psychology as the science of behavior and this philosophy dominates almost completely the psychology which is pursued today.

Wertheimer and his students began studying visual perception, especially illusions. Their claim was that visual phenomena could not be explained solely in terms of sensory input. They would then demonstrate their point with illusions which behaviorists could not explain. Later on, Kurt Goldstein extended Gestalt principles to questions of personality.

Given that this is a very sketchy historical outline of two systems of thought, the purpose here is to examine the underlying assumptions of Gestalt principles, their implications to man, and to test these results in the light of Judaism.

Gestalt psychology is the study of organizational units. Its central law states that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We see a square rather than four straight lines because the brain tends to organize information rather than process each phenomenon separately. The obvious reason for this is to increase the amount of information that can be processed in a period of time. The corollary to this law is to study the processes of organization. If the smallest units are studied, in effect you are dealing with preprocessed information. Such a study is irrelevant to man's actual behavior because man lives in an interdependent, interacting, and organized world. When a behaviorist studies under supposedly controlled conditions in a laboratory, anything he may arrive at will have serious shortcomings in explaining man's behavior in the real world.

On many levels, Judaism reflects the emphasis on the whole. An *Yisroel* is an interdependent unit which cannot survive as a group of individuals. Thus *Kol Yisrael Apativim Zeh L'zeh*. Similarly, it is stated (*Sanhedrin*), "he who takes the life of one man is as one who has destroyed the world, and he who saves one man is as one who has saved the entire world." This adds the point that the group is dependent upon the individual as well as the individual upon the group. Such an interaction

is consistent with the Gestalt view as well. The *Seder Tefillah* is arranged in such a way that it is an organized unit, not a random collection of prayers. This unit is in turn more effective as a *minyán* rather than as a *yachid*. The most important *mitzvah* is the study of Torah. At its highest level, the study of Torah requires a global frame of reference. Without a broad overview of *Shas*, your understanding of an *inyan* is limited. This is borne out when you consider that no *Ma-sechta*, though given a title dealing with a specific area, ever stays in this one area exclusively for very long. Thus the entire structure of *Halakha* is an interconnected unity—a Gestalt.

What are the moral implications of such a world view? A behaviorist views man as a machine, to be predicted and controlled by manipulation of reward and punishment. Thus man's behavior is predetermined by his mechanical make-up, with the scientist-controller in a deified role. In a country where the individual effort is glorified, behaviorism fits in well. Gestalt, on the other hand, questions both the methodology and the goals of the behaviorist. In Goldstein's theory of personality, man is understood as a unit. Whatever affects part of a person affects the whole person. Goldstein did not attempt controlled experiments in the manner of the behaviorist clinician. The most important concept he outlined was that man had a single purpose in life, striving to live up to his greatest potential. This he called self-actualization.

As Jews, we believe that man was created in the image of God. We see that the Divine spark in man makes him something more than a machine, or as the Gestaltists would say, a man is greater than the sum of his parts. Only such a man can ever rise above his environment to goals higher than pleasure or avoidance of pain. A Jew is naturally more concerned for the *Klal* than for his individual gain. In *Pirkei Avot* (1: 2, 18) we have two statements: "On three things the world stands; Torah, *Avodah*, and *Gemilut Chasadim*," and "On three things the world exists; *Emes, Din, and Shalom*." The first statement deals *Bain Adam LaMakom*, the second with *Bain Adam LaChavero*. The authority of G-d is established first (*omed*) in the world. Once this authority is accepted, the world can exist (*kayom*) on a rational, cooperative basis. Such an environment enhances in turn man's relationship to G-d, and so on in a continuous interaction. Our concept of *Tzedakah* is not what is noble to do, but what is the only right thing to do.

It appears generally that the Gestalt outlook stems from a world view similar to basic Jewish ideals, and opposed to the view espoused by the more established behaviorist school. The moral system implied by Gestalt potentially is consonant with Jewish *Haskafah* as well. It is an interesting historical note that an inordinate number of Gestalt psychologists were Jewish. One could speculate from a comparison of value systems that this fact is not due solely to chance, but to a definite influence by traditional Jewish concepts. Gestalt today carries on promisingly, but virtually unnoticed. Its work deserves increased interest.

LITERARY EDITOR

In Search Of The American Jew



by HAROLD HOROWITZ

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a series of articles exploring the Jewish literary trends of the 60's.)

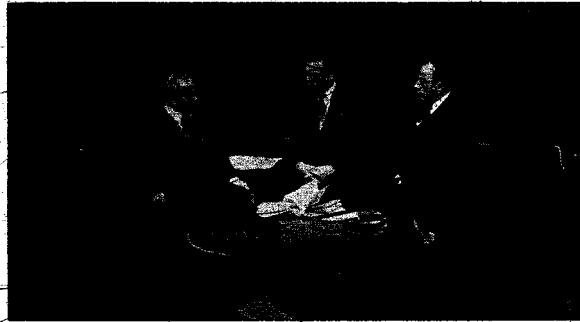
Someone has recently commented that in this decade only cookbooks and middlebrow pornography apparently sell better than Jewish books. While the statistical validity of this statement is open to question, there is no doubt that the 60's have been years of tremendous proliferation of Jewish books in America. It should be understood, however, that Jewish books means works about Judaism, the Jewish people, and Jewish History. In many cases, prominent Jewish writers have emerged, but non-Jews have also written 'Jewish books' during the sixties.

It is impossible to generalize about such a huge amount of literature in terms of general topics; however, it can be said that most of the books about Judaism in America have probed the question, "What characterizes the American Jew?" The question of defining who is a Jew is not dealt with extensively, but there have been innumerable attempts to characterize the typical American Jew. This problem has been approached from many aspects—the novel has assumed an important role; the historical novel has occupied an important place, and there have been many non-fiction studies and works describing American Jewry, and the American Jew. One could further subdivide the many approaches that have been taken to include books about Rabbis, books about immigrants and their children, books about American-born Jews, books about pre-war Europe. There have been philosophical, humorous, and tragic novels written. And books have been written trying to describe every aspect of Jewish life in America as it exists today.

Because so many books about American Jews have been written during the last decade, perhaps we ought to arrive at some perspective in understanding the purpose, accuracy and meaning of many of these books. This is not to say that this writer can review every significant book that has been written about Amer-

ican Jewry; rather an examination of some of the more important ones will shed light on the understanding of many others.

The most obvious attempts to describe the American Jew are made in those books of non-fiction which deal with American Jewry. Two such books are, "The Passionate People" by Roger Kahn, and "The American Jew: Portrait of a Split-personality" by James Yaffe (Random House 1968).



"Great Books and Ideas in Jewish History" is discussed in a two-part program on the WABC-TV series, *Eor Thou Art With Me*, Sunday, January 4, and Sunday, January 11, 9:00-9:30 a.m., channel 7. Yeshiva University participants (l. to r.): Dr. Abraham G. Duker, Dr. Leo Landman, and Dr. Sidney B. Hoebig.

In separate ways, both of these books attempt to describe the forces which have influenced the behavior of the American Jew, the philosophy of contemporary American Jews, and what the future holds for American Jewry.

Roger Kahn, through a series of stories about individual Jews, describes the Jew's attempt at assimilation into the mainstream of American society and the Jewish characteristics which he nevertheless maintains. Among these Jewish traits are a sense of charity, goodness, and modesty. He also explores the abnormal sexual behavior of many Jews, particularly victims of the Holocaust. This point struck me as being particularly strange in that I have never seen this

group of people described in terms of their sexual behavior. While Portnoy certainly seems to have developed many sexual complexes, it seems very awkward to represent the generation of the Holocaust as a generation of sexual deviates! By this time it is obvious that Roger Kahn certainly did not give an accurate picture of what the Jewish people is like in America, and certainly not what has caused the contemporary Jew to live in the manner he does. This book seems

to have been written with an appeal to the mass of Jews and non-Jews as well, for it does not in any way represent a serious attempt to explore the American Jew. This is a key point which must be pondered in reading all books about American Jews. Is every book which professes to describe American Jewry truly a serious and conscientious effort to portray American Jews; or is it merely a work which describes a minority of Jews but is appealing to the reader because of its colorful and vivid depictions of some Jewish traits?

James Yaffe, in "The American Jew," makes an attempt at a more serious analysis of American Jewry. He analyzes the major aspects of American Jewish

life in terms of education, State of Israel, the branches of Judaism, and other areas of Jewish life. Although he frequently misunderstands Jewish law, such as saying that the Torah is read daily in the synagogue, one must probe deeper to try to understand the message that Mr. Yaffe is conveying to his reader. He feels that the American Jew is basically a split-personality, on the one hand clinging to Judaism in whatever form convenient to him, and on the other hand attempting to assimilate completely into the American Christian way of life, retaining only the universal Judeo-Christian ideals. The culmination of this feeling is expressed by Yaffe in the final chapter entitled "Dying?" in which he says that so long as Judaism's "universal ethical values" are preserved, there is no real justification for the survival of Judaism. He goes on to say that he desires the young Jews today to continue to intermarry and he hopes that in the future they will move toward a synthesis of Judaism and Christianity! Shocking as this sounds, this book has been widely accepted as an authoritative source describing American Jews and their future. Lucy Davidowicz, in expressing her dismay at Yaffe (Commentary, December 1968), says that Yaffe's book is grounded in ignorance and self-hate. She goes on to say that his philosophy is a synthetic product created to give his book significance. Indeed then, when discussing 'significant' Jewish books, the intelligent reader must realize that many assimilated Jewish writers undertake monumental value judgements and expound profound revolutionary philosophies without a true understanding of Judaism. While one is prone to yield the right of opinion to any intelligent person, one should not be tempted to accept any opinion set forth as a knowledgeable one and certainly not as a valid philosophy. Perhaps many of the writers of Jewish literature in America are describing their own situation under the guise of an 'American Jew.' Certainly the search for the American Jew must follow the discovery of Judaism!

AD HOC COMMITTEE PLANS PROGRAM

(Continued from page 1)

phrase "Jewish Education," should the committee fight? What and who are the Jewish youth organizations in the New York area (with whom and for which they would be working)?

To resolve these problems the committee began an orientation campaign. Members talked to prominent figures on the Jewish educational scene in an effort to cull from the various views the data necessary for the committee to function knowledgeably. One thing became clear as the enquiry went on: Yeshiva students are either oblivious to, ignorant or confused about most of what happens in the Jewish community. The investigation proved a jolting experience for some committee members.

The awakening to existing student groups was especially stirring, since they are supposedly our peers. Gradually, however, the AHCJE (Ad Hoc Committee for Jewish Education) has become familiar with new on-campus and off-campus Jewish youth projects such as Response magazine, Havurah, Jewish Liberation Project, and others. While this is a step in the direction of solving one problem, at the same time this growing familiarity with our com-

patriots has lent added acuteness to the remaining problems of the group and has brought other problems into focus. One problem which had originally troubled the YU committee was the question of the integrity of student groups on the general coordinating committee. How many groups are involved in the movement only to satisfy their own monetary needs? How many view the movement as a tool to be manipulated for their own "cause"? These questions are losing some of their strength now, but they remain unresolved.

Because of these underlying problems, solutions to other problems are beclouded and the general student committee suffers from a fuzzy sense of purpose. The questions of "how" and "for what" to fight Federation are subjects of internal debate among the different groups.

But, despite the confusion, a certain tendency has emerged from the talks. It seems that the original cause around which "Boston" centered, Jewish education in general terms, has been pushed aside. Religious education as it is commonly understood will not be one of the causes for which the student groups will work. Here, the YU contingent is

in strong disagreement with the committee. In its view such a position is tantamount to embracing triviality in the face of ultimate values (*Zorek et ha-ikar vechais betahfel*). To this the student groups reply that it is not their role to represent the whole Jewish community, nor can they, practically, accept such a role. They can only open the door and show the way for others. But no matter how cogent their practical argument is, the YU group cannot dispel its feelings of commitment to the education cause in general.

This disagreement is inevitable. It seems to point out the essential differences, the inherent rifts, which exist between YU and the rest of the groups. The AHCJE must work separately for those causes which the general committee rejects. Accordingly it is investigating possibilities of working with religious organizations to further religious education. However, at the same time, it is making every effort to continue joint efforts with the movement wherever possible. Somehow orthodox groups are always attracted to separatism; the YU committee is trying to overcome this withdrawal syndrome.

A second major outgrowth of the

"Boston experience" is a program being started by the committee to contact Jewish students on other city campuses. The program is not motivated by any missionary hopes, but rather from the realization that YU is terribly isolated from all other Jewish students. This alienation is more than physical or geographical; it is also personal. The group is trying to bridge the gap by opening up opportunities for YU students to meet other students and to get involved in student activities. So far, some YU students have attended two *Shabbatonim* at NYU (downtown), and a *Shabbaton* is in the making at Stony Brook. This is only a start of what hopefully will become a large, multifarious program. At the moment things look promising.

All in all, the AHCJE has taken stands and steps on a number of fronts never dealt with before by YU students. They are not assured success in their endeavors; but in their recognition of their obligations to Jewish life as religiously concerned students and in their attempts to fulfill their obligations, they have, perhaps, achieved a new maturity and perhaps added a new dimension to their religious personalities.

Vietnam-The Moral Imperative

By SHALOM CARMY

Is it possible not to protest the prosecution of the current undeclared war in Vietnam? Can one justify silence in confronting a futile bloodbath, a tunnel of death with darkness and death waiting at the other end? This question does not concern the performance of lethal actions on the battlefield; it agitates the civilian on the home front, including the 4-D at his Gemarah (hopefully!) and the student at his typewriter. Are we obligated to join in a Moral Protest?



To begin with, we must define two necessary factors that must be present in any Moral Protest, by its very nature: (1) "Protest" assumes that something is gravely wrong. (2) "Moral" implies that the protest involves the proclamation of ethical norms.

It is difficult to dispute that something is rotten in the Democratic Republic of South Vietnam. The defeat of Communism in that country would be a truly Pyrrhic victory, involving as it would, its virtually complete destruction. The subject being debated is how the United States should extricate itself from the present impasse. Protestors on moral grounds are not necessarily so arrogant as to claim greater expertise in foreign affairs than the administration; rather they wish to ensure the primacy of moral considerations in the settlement of the situation. In protesting, they are suggesting that government decisions are not sufficiently informed by the basic tenets of morality. By hammering home these ideas, by persuasion or public pressure, they intend to give the moral issue its rightful importance in policy decisions.

At this point, one might object that the "Establishment" is very much cog-

nizant of moral absolutes, and is in no need of reminders from political laymen. After all, does not the President himself regularly enjoy the ministrations of Dr. William F. Graham, Eric Hoffer, Dr. Norman Vincent ("Positive-thinking") Peale, Louis Finkelstein, and a host of other clerical luminaries and sages? Unfortunately, Mr. Nixon's weekday words tend to belie his sincere and simultaneous devotion to Christian and Jewish ritual (cf. Nagoleon's Egyptian expedition). For few religious moralists would uphold the saving of face at the loss of lives. Fewer would fail to find dangerous and sinful pride in the boast, more appropriate from the mouth of a pugilist, that "I shall not be the first President to lose a war." Thus, one is led to suspect that the voice of religious humanism has been muted or ignored in the corridors of power; it should be heard.

Offhand this would mean to settle the question. Yet one might object that other considerations bid us remain silent; to employ the terminology of Karl Jaspers: moral imperatives may often entail metaphysical guilt. These following arguments have been usually raised in this connection: (a) Good citizenship, a virtue enjoined by *Chazal*, precludes the possibility of protest, however justified. (b) One must act with an eye to the welfare of Judaism, even to the neglect of what we recognize to be universal ethical values. (c) For several assorted reasons, concern for the Vietnam situation simply is not worth the while of the Jew living in the American Diaspora.

(a) The prophet Jeremiah counseled us to "Seek the peace of the city in which you dwell." Is it heretical to suggest that preventing bloodshed violates this injunction? In the United States especially, the *dina demalkha* encourages the good citizen to publicly advocate his point of view, rather than to abdicate his political responsibility. Now it has been maintained that Jews need not assume this responsibility. Indeed it has been urged that one who protests is thus indicating that he is "too comfortable in Galut," and is therefore an assimilationist. This argument is founded upon an extremely convenient impossibility (a "*psik resha ve-nicha leh*"!): namely, that one can claim all the benefits of living in a community without its responsibilities.

Furthermore, the charge of assimilationism can be easily reversed, and justly. What greater assimilation is there than the adoption of the moral standard of indifference to the fate of others that typifies the more vulgar of our Gentile neighbors?

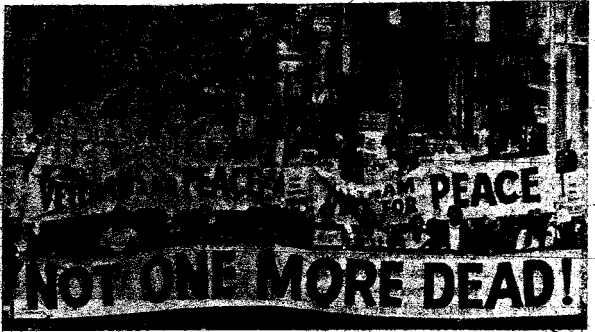
For this is the true crisis of "religious identity" confronting us today: the crisis of our radical religious commitment. Willy-nilly, the Vietnam Project has generated a showdown between Erastianism and Civil Religion, on the one hand, and our absolute dedication to the Divine Imperative, on the other hand. Shall religion be reduced to a "brand-label" of American Nationalism, subservient to Temporal Power—to be seen but not heard? Is this the view of Torah that we intend to propagate and to which we subscribe? Our situation almost resembles a "*shaal ha-geserak*." If we don't get around to taking an ethical-religious stand now then we might as well put religious political-morality

in mothballs. It is impossible that we not make this clear, at least within our own community.

(b) The next argument in favor of Jewish silence on Vietnam points to the risks we are taking in terms of Jewish survival. The danger of a "stab in the back" campaign, calculated to bolster the bruised ego of the previously undefeated American, is a real one. Even more chilling is the threat of reprisals against Israel, if Jews here fail to toe the Pentagon line. Should we therefore, reluctantly,

imagine some direct and essential gain from a policy of radical obsequiousness; but this is an exceedingly tenuous interpretation—hardly worth the price of one's spiritual integrity. More validly, one might contend that certain protest activities be curtailed for pragmatic reasons perhaps even to the point of limiting our activities outside the Jewish community. However, this would still not free us from the responsibility to seek the most efficacious mode of protest.

(c) Among the miscellaneous reasons for keeping silent, a prominent one is that American society is so



become Amen-sayers for those in power, in order to preserve our own skins?

Rabbi Walter S. Wurzbarger recently put his finger on the crux of this problem when he stated that "to be unduly concerned with the consequences of one's actions—is of itself virtually an immoral argument." We cannot eat our cake and have it—whichever choice we might make contains in it the possibility of failure and catastrophe. But to constantly play it safe is tantamount to vitiating the moral imperative. Are any of the aforementioned dangers so direct and so imminent that their prevention justifies the sacrifice of our moral birth-right?

How are we so sure that by silence we can avoid anti-Semitic reactions? Three years—and myriads of coffins later—the young Harlemite widow will ask: "Where were the Jews when my husband was killed?" Her relatives, her orphaned children, will all take her resentment to heart. And even if Orthodox were to remain silent, can we expect the marauding redneck to discriminate between the "tame" Jews and the New Leftists? In one sentence: when scapegoats are needed, we ought not expect reprieve for the moral appeasement of antagonists.

And in the more complex Middle Eastern situation, the same categories apply. We can, again, have no certainty that bowing to the will of the State Department will earn us more than humiliation. For what is to prevent the Americans from trading off, as Dr. Nahum Goldman fears, the security of the *Medinah* for the *Temisite* "face-saving" ritual in Southeast Asia? And despite the telegram of support sent by Mrs. Meir to President Nixon, we still can be told by Ambassador Rabin, barely a fortnight later, that the most recent statement by Secretary Rogers is apparently only the beginning of a drastic erosion in American support for Israel.

Admittedly one might conceivably disagree with this reading of events, and

corrupt that it is incorrigible. This is both an exaggeration and a variation on the "*psik resha*" argument (see under (a)). It ignores the fact that there are individuals, even on the battlefield, who are far from depraved, who are determined to conduct themselves with honor and courage, and who are encouraged in their resolve by civilian support for their position.

It is also claimed that any red-blooded Jew will reciprocate the indifference of the Gentile world to the fate of our people: Since our blood is so cheap to them, why should we get excited over their blood? Thus(?) it is in the best interests of the Jewish people to fiddle while Vietnam burns. If I understand this position correctly, it implies either that we should condemn the entire non-Jewish world, and not lift a finger to save any non-Jew (but shall we then refuse medical assistance to a Gentile?); or that international hatred and brutalization somehow will produce a flowering forth of philo-Semitism. Barring these alternatives, this argument is pointless.

To complete the picture, another variant of this argument must be mentioned: namely, that Gentiles are sub-human anyway, so why bother! May the reader forgive me for lacking the stomach to discuss this in detail.

After all is said and done, there is really one basic question: can we exist in a religious community with each other, knowing that our indifference and our overconcern for personal and social convenience have caused the death of so many, have poisoned the spiritual atmosphere on this planet? If we do not affirm the infinite value of human life, we may sink to the level of beasts. If we fail to live authentically in the light of the Divine Imperative that transcends the whims of man, we shall soon be enslaved to an alien, idolatrous culture.

Letters

(Continued from page 3)

To the Editor:

On Monday and Wednesday evenings, I have a class in room 410, Furst Hall, from 6:30 to 7:45. It seems that this is also the room in which the Rav lectures (to the Rabbinical Council of America) every few weeks. As far as I know, the lectures are scheduled for 7:45, the time at which our class ends. However, many of those attending the lectures deem it necessary to come in much before the scheduled time, to drop off their coats and books. They seem to have no concern for the fact that there is a class in session.

Usually we can cope with this situation, as the Rav's lectures are not given every week. However, there was one scheduled for Wednesday, December 4, the same night as our midterm. Needless to say we were interrupted from 6:45 and on. We tried to explain that there was a test being given; this did not help. We put a sign on the door; this, too, failed to stop the steady flow of intruders. In desperation we moved out to another room at 7:30.

I do not question the value of the Rav's lectures. I do think a little common courtesy and consideration is in order by those attending. *Derekh erets kodmah T' Torah.*

BERNIE GELBER

Orthodox Responses To The Holocaust

By MENDEL SHAPIRO

Given the nature of the Holocaust experience, the totality and indiscriminate nature of the destruction and its demonic quality, any theological system which claims to give value and ultimate purpose to human existence must vindicate itself. Any affirmation of the belief that God loves and is intimately concerned with each of His creations, needs explanation after the tragedy of European Jewry where millions were slaughtered—women and children, both the "righteous" and the "wicked." Especially to Orthodox Judaism, which strives for the goal of "*Shiviti HaShem U'negdi tamid*," and which stresses the need for every human act to be "*leShem Shamayim*," the thought that its devotions were somehow misdirected is shattering; those who constantly affirm God's love expect a reciprocal show of God's concern for man. The Orthodox dilemma is clear: on the one hand Orthodoxy maintains that God deals justly with his children—that he is not a malicious God: "God does not act viciously with his children" (Avodah Zarah 3a), and yet any attempt to square this notion with what actually transpired in Auschwitz must force it to confront the ultimate issue: the possibility that "there is neither judgment nor judge."

In attempting to assimilate the Holocaust experience within the Jewish tradition, Orthodoxy has an exceptionally difficult task because of the limited latitude it enjoys in theological speculation. Specifically, I suggest that any Orthodox response will have to cope with the problem of "why" rather than of "how." Beginning with the assumption that God is ultimately responsible for all that takes place in His universe, the purpose of Orthodox theology is to find a consistent pattern in God's actions, so that men can coordinate their actions with His. The question must be: why did God allow 6,000,000 to be killed?

The alternative would be to discard the belief in an omnipotent God, and explore the notion of a "suffering God," a God who has voluntarily restricted His own freedom of action so that His children might be human and exercise free-will. This theme is developed by Hans Jonas, and it has roots in the Kabbalistic concept of *Tsimtsum*. God's greatness lies in His capability of self-restraint; such, for example would be a Kabbalistic interpretation of *Eiahu gibor? Hakovesh et yitsro*.

Such a solution doesn't offer Orthodoxy a real option. It calls on us to surrender our basic conceptions of a God who acts in history, and who will intervene in human affairs to accomplish His ends. This interpretation conceives of God and man operating in separate realms, whereas Judaism has affirmed *Hashgachah P'natit*, or God's continual interest in this world.

The thrust of Orthodoxy's response to the Holocaust has been in the direction of the traditional Jewish reaction to *Churban*: God is punishing the Jews for their sins. This interpretation is deeply rooted in the prophetic tradition, especially *Kings I and II*, and is also a dominant theme in both Talmudic and post-Talmudic literature. This theme has many variations, most of them revolving around just what the aggravating sin was.

But what emerges from the *Mipnei Chato'enu* thesis is clear. The fault for

the Holocaust lies not with God, but with the sinful Jews. God is directly responsible for the Holocaust, but this terrible show of anger is a factor which can be reconciled with Jewish tradition. It is difficult to evaluate this theological explanation of the Holocaust. It has impeccable sources in Jewish tradition, and has been used by Jews throughout their long history of suffering. But since we shall try to explore here possible Orthodox alternatives to the *Mipnei Chato'enu* thesis, it might be worthwhile to point out some of the shortcomings of this thesis, and to determine just what our alternatives might be.

To begin with, *Mipnei Chato'enu* sets forth an answer which to most people is part of the overall question. The Holocaust threatens religion because it points up the absurdity of human existence. Its challenge is a powerful one. Too powerful, as a matter of fact, to allow itself to be shunted aside by an interpretation which in reality plays along with the "joke." For if we claim that we are God's children, and that God punishes us only so that we might correct our errors—*Ka'asher: Haav Me'yaser et b'no, ken HaShem Alakechav Meyasrekah—the Holocaust is definitely an overreaction. Would we attempt to justify a father who punished his errant son to death?*

The problem, then, with the *Mipnei Chato'enu* approach is that it fails to come to grips with a uniquely modern problem. Never before was human life cheapened as it was at Auschwitz, and this leads us to search for alternative theological categories, which are within the Jewish tradition, to be sure, to account for the tragedy. Now, of course, the problem of theodicy is not one which has afflicted modern man. Yet the Medieval period was characterized as the Age of Faith largely because it postulated a highly structured universe, with each of God's creatures having a specific function and niche in that universe. Nothing happened by chance, and if a person did find himself in straits, he could easily relate to the Talmudic dictum *Yiphshaphesh Be'masov*.

But this approach has been largely rejected by modern man. In truth, the Holocaust is not the experience which triggered Western man's alienation from his Medieval notions, but it cannot be denied that the events of the past twenty-five years have testified to his existential aloneness with such force, that any return to the old conceptions is difficult; it is difficult for him to accept a religious interpretation which paints a simple casual relationship between sin and punishment, merit and reward. And if we insist on using the *Mipnei Chato'enu* argument despite the resistance offered, there is the danger that it might be rendered unacceptable even in those instances where it might be a useful theological category. Thus, it is necessary to determine what other possibilities there are in the Jewish tradition for coping with tragedy and which at the same time allow for God's direct involvement in human affairs, without forcing us to abandon belief in a loving God.

In this vein, there is an appreciation in the classical Jewish sources that *Mipnei Chato'enu* is not a model which can cope with all exigencies; there are situations of such overwhelming magnitude that *Mipnei Chato'enu* cannot serve as any explanation.

For example, the Midrash relates that after the destruction of the first Temple, Moshe and Avraham called on God to repeal the verdict of the *Galut*. Their pleas met with no response. Then came the following encounter between God and Rachel: "At that time Rachel appeared before God and said: Master of the World, it is known to you that Yaakov loved me greatly and labored for me for seven years. And when the time for our marriage came, my father decided to exchange my sister for me, and yet I was not envious of her, nor did I embarrass her. And surely if I, who am only mortal, was not jealous of my competitor, surely you who are a merciful, loving God, should not be jealous of idolatry, and yet you exiled my children? Immediately God was overcome by compassion and said, "For you (Rachel) I shall return Israel to their home." (Eicha Raba).

There is here an implicit recognition of the fact that *Mipnei Chato'enu* cannot serve as a pat answer to all tragedies; if Rachel was mature enough to tolerate Leah, we can expect God to live with almost any aggravation.

Also, calling attention to Israel's shortcomings now is like pouring salt on an open wound. If anything, the Holocaust proved that all Jews have a common fate regardless of their conviction. Those who insist on harping on the Jew's sins, lose sight of the fact that their duty is as much to praise the Jews as it is to criticize them. The following Gemarah, describing Isaiah's death, is a striking example of this:

Isaiah hid from Menasseh in a cedar forest. He (Menasseh) shaped a cedar into a spear and Isaiah died when the spear entered his mouth. (Why?) For he had said: I dwell among a people of unclean lips. Rashi: This was an unnecessary accusation against the Jews. (Yebamot 49b)

Another objection to the *Mipnei Chato'enu* thesis is that it places the blame for the Holocaust squarely on the Jews, without incriminating those who actually perpetrated and witnessed the crime. Those who adhere to the *Mipnei Chato'enu* approach resolve this through the following Talmudic dictum: *Megalgin chov al yidei chayav* (Sifri, Devorim 22). But the Jews still emerge as the main culprits.

But although the main thrust of Orthodox thought has been to indict the Jews for causing the Holocaust, there are other, perhaps more acceptable, versions of the *Mipnei Chato'enu* theme. The most important of these involves the concept of *Eved HaShem*: Israel suffers to atone for the sins of the world, and not necessarily for her own sins. This thesis has been developed by Yashiah Wolfsberg in his books *BaProzdar*, and *Sha'arim le Bayot HaMachshava VeHazman*. Realizing that the state of Jewish morality is not what it should be, he nevertheless claims that the *Mipnei Chato'enu* thesis is not basic enough to account for the thousands of years of Jewish suffering. Wolfsberg seeks a historical solution which can come to grips with not only specific instances of human suffering, but which also can explain the Jews' consistent historical position as the victim of persecution.

The source of Wolfsberg's interpretation is in Isaiah 53. There the Prophet tells that the world will ultimately recognize the role Israel plays as God's servant, whose purpose it is to suffer for the good of mankind: "He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of pains, and acquainted with disease. . . Surely our diseases he did bear, and our pains he carried; whereas we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. . . All we like sheep did go astray. We turned everyone to his own way; And the Lord hath made to light on him the iniquity of us all. . . Therefore will I divide him a portion among the great, and he shall divide the spoil among the mighty; because he bared his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53).

Wolfsberg also draws from Judah Halevi—Israel is the heart of the nations of the world. She is the most sensitive to moral issues, and serves as a gauge of the quality of the general moral condition.

The main resistance to this thesis is that it is uncomfortably close to the Christian doctrine of vicarious atonement. Wolfsberg goes to pains to minimize the Christian overtones by claiming that the Christian concept is one of an individual atoning for all of mankind's past and future sins, whereas the Judaic concept is that of a nation suffering for the world's sins whenever those sins have accumulated to an intolerable degree. But this rather forced differentiation is not necessary. The fact that the source for this theme is in the Prophets is enough to legitimize it.

Wolfsberg, then, succeeds in removing the onus of the Holocaust from the Jews. They are pictured as a nation of high moral purpose who play a most crucial role in history; Israel's suffering is proof that she is God's chosen people.

But again the main obstacle to this interpretation is that it is not an accepted Jewish theme, and even most of the traditional Jewish commentators demur from interpreting Isaiah 53 as a source for the doctrine of vicarious atonement, possibly because of its Christian overtones. Even Wolfsberg hesitates at times from saying that Israel suffers for the world, and explores the possibility of returning to the *Mipnei Chato'enu* theme, but varying it somewhat: The Jews were punished because they failed in their duties as *Adei Hashem* to lead the world to higher moral standards. Although this is essentially the *Mipnei Chato'enu* thesis, it is a significant departure because it assumes that the Jews, by dint of their moral superiority, should play a significant role in world history. God, then, is punishing the Jews more out of disappointment than out of anger. Nevertheless, this argument also tests credibility; there is a limit to disappointment.

We see, then, that *Mipnei Chato'enu* is not the only Orthodox response possible to the Holocaust. There are other options and we have briefly touched on one. Of course, we have come to no conclusion, but it would be presumptuous to "know" anything about an event such as the Holocaust. We have no answers, just possibilities.

Simchat Torah in Leningrad

The following is the address delivered by Zev Yaroslavsky at the Oct. 12 Simchat Torah rally at Fairfax High School under the auspices of the JFC Committee On Soviet Jewry. Some 8,000 people heard this graphic description by the UCLA student who has just returned from the Soviet Union.

Today, we stand here in solidarity with the tens of thousands of Soviet Jews who demonstrate their Jewish identity on Simchat Torah. Recently I had the opportunity of demonstrating that identity with my Jewish brothers in Leningrad.

However, what had begun as a glorious and festive celebration turned into a violently brutal riot perpetrated intentionally by the Leningrad police upon 3,000 Jewish students.

Before I outline the events, let me just say a few words on what Simchat Torah means to the Jews of Russia. The primary significance of Simchat Torah, as many a Jew told me, is that it is their only holiday of the year. Jews, particularly young Jews, look forward to this day, for it affords them their only opportunity to openly demonstrate their Jewishness and their true love for Israel.

This is something that cannot be done normally without the risk of suffering fates similar to those of the imprisoned Boris Kochubiyevsky or Ilya Kipps. So, to "transplant" a phrase from another of our holidays, "this night is different from all other nights."

For some Simchat Torah is a chance to mingle with old friends whom one does not see often. Friends who sometimes won't dare to speak at the university find Simchat Torah a chance to really open up about the burning issues of the day. For others, it is truly the holiday's joyful spirit that brings them to the synagogue.

And, one of the most practical, yet touching reasons for this huge gathering of young Jews was conveyed to me by a student in Moscow on Yom Kippur. He said, "This is one of the few times during the course of the year where Jewish boys can meet Jewish girls. Many a marriage has started right here." To be sure, all the girls had dressed up in their best attire, and all the boys were similarly prepared.

On the street-car on the way to the synagogue, I saw many Jewish girls putting that last dab of lipstick and makeup on, checking in the mirror to make sure everything was in order. So, in brief, it is this happy and gay atmosphere which pervades the oncoming of Simchat Torah in the Soviet Union.

However, the government had other plans this year in Leningrad. The seeds were sown for the trouble during the week prior to Simchat Torah. On Sept. 29, 1969, the synagogue, by order of the Soviet authorities, constructed four barricades within the courtyard in front of the synagogue which had in the past facilitated the festivities of the Jewish students. The barricades were successful in inhibiting any semblance of demonstration in that area.

Government-paid synagogue officials had repeatedly warned "that any dancing and or demonstration on or around the premises of the synagogue would be met with the full force of the police."



The Leningrad Shul—Barricaded. "... any dancing and or demonstration on or around the premises of the synagogue would be met with the full force of the police."

The only problem was that the thousands of university and post university Jewish students had no means of learning of this warning until they appeared at the synagogue on Oct. 4, seeing the street barricaded by police and the courtyard barricaded by a series of 11-foot high wooden walls. As many members of the congregation described it privately, and I must concur, the area resembled a ghetto.

A little before 10 p.m., an agent of the secret police advised me to leave the scene because there would be trouble there before long. I looked around to see what could possibly be the problem. All that I could see and hear was 3,000 Jewish students singing Hava Nagila, Tumba Lalaika, Eretz Zavat Chaviv, Heveinu Shalom Aleichem, and every now and then a shout of L'shana Habaa B'Yerushalayim.

With this in mind, I turned to the agent and flusteredly asked, "What kind of trouble can possibly be expected?"

He replied in English, "it's going to be here like it was in Belfast."

Almost immediately, a number of things happened simultaneously. First, my New York friend, Gene Alexander, was assaulted and manhandled by five plainclothesmen in front of three uniformed Leningrad policemen who did not come to his assistance. Second, the synagogue was closed and the lights were turned off outside. Third, the police deliberately diverted traffic onto Lermontovsky Prospekt, the street on which the synagogue is located.

It was five minutes later that the police moved in to disperse the crowd of 3,000-4,000 standing on the street.

screams from the students as their breathing was almost entirely inhibited. Both students yelled, "Ich bin a Yid, Ich bin a Yid," at every opportunity offered them and at every outcry of that slogan, the assailants responded with more violence. At this point fights broke out between Jews and secret police throughout the crowd, once so radiant and gay. Yet the police were only interested in bringing excruciating pain and torture to bear upon the now three students being held at the gate.

It was only when Gene, his wife Susan, and I began yelling obscenities at the police, criticizing the Soviet government's anti-Semitic policies, and the resultant realization by the police that there were foreigners witnessing this crime that the police released the students.

I might add, they were released only after taking the names of the students, their passport numbers, and their institutes of study. I must interject here and give credit to my dear friend Gene Alexander, even in this short time allotted to me, for it was he who thrust himself into the center of the violence from the outset in an attempt to end this savage riot.

Finally, it was not my intention here today to draw any philosophical conclusions deriving from the events of last Saturday night in Leningrad. Indeed it was my intention here today only to report to you the festivities of Simchat Torah there. However, there is one humanitarian theme that recurrently comes to my mind about the plight of Soviet Jews, and it was magnified many times as I watched the helpless students getting the hell kicked out of them.

The theme begins in the Bible with Cain and Abel and brings forth the slogan that was originally adopted by the Soviet Jewry movement in Cleveland: i.e., "I am my brother's keeper." And that same theme which has dominated Jewish thought for thousands of years comes to light at this very moment in Israel where there is an unwritten law, if you will, in the armed forces which dictates that Israeli soldiers never abandon a helpless soldier in the field, even at the risk of their own lives.

Accordingly, I submit for you, for the entire national and international Jewish community, and to be sure, for the entire human race, let us not abandon our soldiers in the field, wherever it may be, even at the expense of our own comfort and well being, and if ever necessary, even at the expense of our lives.

(Reprinted from B'mai B'rith Messenger.)

A Letter To The Soviet Government

*37-year-old Grigory Solomonovich Vertib of Leningrad sent the following plea to the Soviet Ministry of the Interior (which includes the secret police), the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the Presidium and Supreme Soviet, the Prosecutor General, and the newspapers Pravda and Izvestia in the latter half of 1969 (excerpted) —

"I hereby apply to the Ministry of Interior of the USSR, the organ that is supposed to examine my appeal. I also apply to the Soviet party, state and public organizations: it is within your powers to restore justice to me and my family—please do so!

I am asking again—give me and my family the possibility of emigration to

Israel for permanent residence.

Why, have I decided to leave the USSR and to emigrate to Israel with my family? There can be only one answer: *We want to remain Jews!*

The long-suffering Jewish people has lived through much sorrow, but there had never been anything more horrible than the times when fascism was on the rampage. Jews were killed just because they were Jews—and blood flowed in a stream.

I want to kneel to their memory and perhaps to pray for them; I want to see the museum in Jerusalem that is devoted to the memory of the victims of Nazism and where the sacred memo-

ry of the victims is honored.

But I cannot understand why now—after so much suffering—I cannot think about my own Jewish people, why I cannot study my own language and cannot know my own Jewish history.

In the Soviet Union neither I nor my family can do this. There are no schools here where it is possible to study the Jewish language, the history of the Jewish people and the fundamental art and national-historical relics of our people (in particular, the Bible, which is a masterly religious art and historical monument).

I am 37 years old, my wife is 31, our son is 3 years old. Neither my wife nor

I had ever been engaged in any confidential work. I am a lawyer by profession, my wife is a mathematician. We ask for only one thing—to be given the possibility of going to Israel and to live there together with our relative, who has sent us the affidavit and who is ready to render us assistance in educating our son.

Men react in various ways to the misfortunes that befall their people. Some wish to withdraw from this people, others to help it attain a bright future. I belong to the second category. I again ask for one thing only: give me and my family the possibility to go to Israel to live and work there.