

# HAMEVASER

A Student Publication of Traditional Thought and Ideas  
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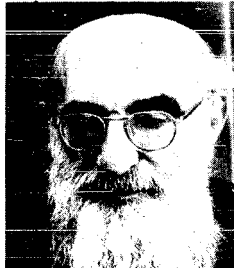
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NEW YORK CITY

May 26, 1976

## Memorial Assembly For Dr. Belkin

A memorial for Rabbi Dr. Samuel Belkin z"l, YU's late President and *Rosh Yeshiva*, was held on May 19th in the Nathan Lampert Auditorium. The



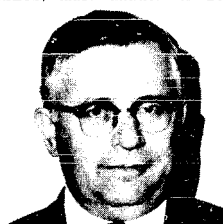
Rav David Lifshitz: "The students are the keepers."

memorial tribute was arranged to coincide with the end of the *Shloshim*, the thirty-day period since Dr. Belkin's passing. As part of this tribute, YU students undertook the learning of *Mishnayot* during the *Shloshim* period so that the entire *Mishnah* was completed in a joint effort.

The speakers at the assembly combined to bring out different aspects of Dr. Belkin's personality. Mr. Max Etra, Chairman of YU's Board of Trustees, pointed to the fact that Dr. Belkin's devotion to RIETS indicated his dedication to the centrality of Torah learning in YU. Mr. Etra credited Dr. Belkin with making the Jew "more aware of his Jewish consciousness" and making the non-Jew aware of the Jew. This dual awareness was achieved by the duality of the university which Dr. Belkin built: an institution founded on Torah ideals which nevertheless included branches such as Albert Einstein Medical School, an institution which served the Jewish and non-Jewish communities alike.

Rabbi Zevulun Charlop, director of RIETS, spoke of Dr. Belkin's never-ending devotion to Torah scholarship. Dr. Belkin hoped that his retirement from the YU presidency would afford him more time for Torah study, and even when entering the hospital he took with him many *sefarim*.

Rav David Lifshitz, *shilta*, and Rav Shimon Romm, *shilta*, both distinguished *roshei yeshiva* in RIETS, made mention of Dr.



Rabbi Morris Besdin

Belkin's great stature as a Torah scholar. Rabbi Romm, who learned with Dr. Belkin in Europe, pointed to Dr. Belkin's close relationship with the *Chafetz Chayim* and to the reputation Dr. Belkin had in Europe as a brilliant *Talmid Chakham*. Rav Lifshitz emphasized Dr. Belkin's aim to preserve the Torah integrity of YU. The students are now the *shomrim*, the "keepers" of YU, who must continue to carry out this goal.

Following a tribute from Rabbi William Herskovits, President of YU's Rabbinic Alumni, who pointed to Dr. Belkin's great influence on his students, the assembly was closed with moving remarks by Rabbi Morris Besdin. Rabbi Besdin, director of JSS, pointed to his role as teacher of boys with limited religious background, and showed, through a famous Talmudic passage, how it is this role that gives him the right to eulogize Dr. Belkin. Rabbi Besdin concluded the assembly by performing the *Siyum Mishnayot*.

## Holocaust Symposium Held at YU

### Educational Problems Discussed

On Sunday, May 16, a symposium was held at YU's Gottesman library addressed to the educational ramifications of the Holocaust. Officially entitled "Teaching the Holocaust: An Exploration of the Problem," the program was sponsored by the YU Committee on Interdisciplinary Holocaust Studies, in conjunction with the Stone-Sapirstein Center for Jewish Education, the National Commission on Torah Education, and New York's Board of Jewish Education.

The opening speaker, Professor Lucy Dawidowicz of Stern College, emphasized the value of studying the Holocaust, and history in general. She described such study as "Learning the past for present orientation and future direction." But while the teaching of the Holocaust seems a worthy task, it engenders many educational problems. We cannot convey to student a true understanding of the *shoah* unless they have an adequate background in subjects such as geography and history. The teachers must clearly divide the German anti-Semitism from the Jewish response and must decide whether to focus on Jewish communities or Jewish individuals.

Prof. Davidowicz pointed to other pitfalls that must be guarded against in teaching the Holocaust. One must recognize the uniqueness of the Holocaust and avoid cheap comparisons to other historical events. For example, the use of the

word "genocide" in effect universalizes the Holocaust, and robs it of its particularity. The Holocaust was a specific event emanating from a specific hatred and must always be recognized as such.

Teachers must also avoid specious reasoning. Fostering the JDL attitude that "all Non-Jews hate us" is a mistake, for in fact all Jewish survivors of the Holocaust owe their survival to gentiles. Furthermore the Holocaust should not be abused and



Prof. Lucy Dawidowicz  
Symposium Panelist

misused for promotion of the teacher's own ideologies, whether they are orthodox, Zionist, socialist, etc.

Dr. Menachem Brayer of Ferkauf Graduate School was the second speaker. He warned about the necessity of teaching the *shoah* without fearing psychological (Continued on Page 6)

## Religious Councils: The Year in Review

by Jay Gruenfeld

With the elections of next year's student councils having been concluded a common dilemma encountered by the concerned student is, what their new officers will do for them in the forthcoming year. This anticipation can be classified as "spring fever," for come autumn and the return to school, concern over this matter will fall like the temperature readings at that time of year. And by the time midterms arrive the student may have already forgotten that he is being represented altogether. For that student, HAMEVASER finds it necessary to review this year's Jewish Division councils, through interviews of each council's president.

Although there was some diversity among the three councils as far as setting priorities and execution of activities went, a commendable job was done by all. EMCSC's able president, David Gleicher, made it clear that his council's priorities were academic in nature and reported great progress towards fulfillment of major goals.

"EMCSC" stressed academic curricular rather than extracurricular activities this year," Mr. Gleicher opened in an informative interview.

The first academic obstacle to have been tackled this year was to alleviate the great difficulties with which the EMC student contends in order to obtain an EMC degree or diploma. Several "problem courses and requirements are at fault, and the council proposed an exemption

examination program to be implemented and run along the lines of the AP or CLEP exams. With a limitation on the number of credits that may be applied from this program to be understood, the student would no longer be held back from fulfilling degree requirements and thus would try to earn the degree. Mr. Gleicher reported that "Dean Rabinowitz is optimistic about the future of this proposal."

A second academic proposal set forth was the advent of EMC final exam exemptions for competent upper seniors, with competence to be judged by one of three factors proposed by the council. EMC faculty has already approved one of these factors, but the other two remain problematic. Mr. Gleicher stated that, "the EMC faculty has not expressed, or shown much confidence in their own representatives to the EMC student-faculty senate to pass over remaining two factors." However, Mr. Gleicher remains optimistic that the factors will be approved and that the program will be initiated with the class of 1977.

Among EMCSC-sponsored projects and events was a controversial lecture delivered by the Speaker of the Knesset, Yisrael Yishayahu, which prompted a most intellectually entertaining debate with EMC faculty. Other projects included sponsorship of *Yom Haatzmaut* festivities and a book drive which was run with JSS

(Continued on Page 3)

## HAMEVASER Selects Board for 1976-77 Muschel is Chosen Editor-in-Chief

HAMEVASER is proud to introduce its new Governing Board for the academic year 1976-1977. Our new board includes many veterans as well as several new faces, all of whom are dedicated to bringing you the finest issues of HAMEVASER.

Our new Editor-in-Chief is Michael Muschel, a three-year staff member, who served this year as Feature Editor. Mr. Muschel, a junior in YP and a pre-medical major, brings to his new job a wide knowledge of University affairs as well as general Jewish affairs. His most recent project for HAMEVASER was an examination of YU's Semicha Placement Program.

Working with Mr. Muschel will be Abe Rosenberg, who assumes the post of Associate Editor. Mr. Rosenberg, too, has been on the HAMEVASER staff for three years and served with distinction as Copy Editor on the '75-'76 Governing Board.

Joseph Rosenbluh, former News

Editor, has been appointed Senior Editor for the coming year. Mr. Rosenbluh has written extensively for HAMEVASER over the last three years, providing many informative articles on University happenings, cultural events, and human interest topics. Replacing Mr. Rosenbluh as News Editor is Moshe Schneider, a junior in YP, whose combined experience as a former member of our Copy Staff as well as the feature staff of *The Commentator* makes him a valuable addition to the governing board. Mr. Muschel's vacated post of Feature Editor has been filled by George Karasik, a junior in YP majoring in political science. He is joined by our second Feature Editor, Ronald Mitnik, a JSS sophomore, majoring in physics.

Moving up to the top positions of their respective staffs are Technical Editor Michael Herskovics and Copy Editor Ephraim Simpson. Mr. Herskovics, a junior in EMC, is responsible for the layout of this

issue's articles. Mr. Simpson, a YP sophomore, assumes the job of editing and proofreading the entire newspaper. Both board members have a year's experience in their fields.

The new Research Editor of HAMEVASER is Marty Thaler, a junior in YP. Herbert Lempel, a junior in JSS, assumes the post of Managing Editor after working this year on the Circulation staff.

Rounding out our new Governing Board are our Contributing Editors, Harvey Mayerson and Joseph Epstein. Mr. Mayerson, a newcomer to HAMEVASER, is a second-year RIETS student. His first column appears in this issue. Mr. Epstein, a former Editor-in-Chief, and one of this past year's Contributing Editors, returns to the back page for a second year. Joey's many memorable columns of past years have won him a regular following among our readers. We look forward to more of his talented work.

# HAMEVASER

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## An Effete Snub

The recent remarks made by Spiro T. Agnew on NBC's "Today" show comprised the latest example of the anti-Semitic trash which world Jewry has been forced to endure. In an effort to promote his new novel, (which contains a reference to a "Zionist lobby having too much strength") this former Vice President, a man who, at the very least, should have exhibited some degree of diplomatic responsibility, chose instead to practice his special brand of mud-slinging before millions of television viewers. Mr. Agnew accused Israel of practicing "imperialism," scored the news media, claiming it was "sympathetic to the Zionist cause," and charged that the "Zionist influence in the United States is dragging the U.S. into a rather disorganized approach to the Middle East problem."

As every Jew knows, these charges are so utterly false, completely distorted and maliciously anti-Semitic as to make their refutation a simple task. No educated man would confuse border survival with "imperialism," nor would he call reporting of the truth "sympathetic." Further, any high school student knows that countries construct their foreign policies to reflect their own national interests — not the interests of specific groups. The falsehood of Mr. Agnew's remarks is unquestioned. However, the tragedy goes far beyond the mere content of his words. The real tragedy is that this man suddenly sees fit to appoint himself Israel's judge and jury. A former Vice-President who pleaded no contest to tax evasion charges and resigned in shame three years ago is hardly fit to pass a moral judgment on any subject; yet Mr. Agnew did so for the benefit of the TV cameras.

In this election year American Jewry must be especially sensitive to such remarks. They expose a previously latent anti-Semitism which must be directly confronted. We urge our readers to use whatever measures they have at their disposal to counteract such statements. The Jewish community must clearly delineate its friends and its enemies.

## "Gruss" - ly Unfair

It was only a year ago that the University was finalizing its plans to launch a YU Kollel in Israel for the '75-'76 academic year. Announcement of this program, which was to be located in the Gruss Center in Jerusalem, generated considerable excitement among many students in the YU Semicha Program. When the announced plans ultimately fell through, the cancellation caused great inconvenience to a significant number of the prospective students. Some had already passed up job opportunities for the year ahead; some had gone so far as to begin making plans for subletting their apartments.

It was hoped that if there were to be any revival of the plans for the Gruss Center at a future date, such indecisiveness on the part of the administration would be avoided.

HAMEVASER notes with disappointment that such has not been the case. Once again plans for an "Israeli contingent of YU" are being discussed; once again these plans are vague and unclarified, bespeaking a lack of initiative and responsiveness on the part of the administration.

HAMEVASER urges the administration to carefully consider the students' needs and to announce the exact nature of the plans for the Gruss Center next year. Prompt action will prevent a repetition of last year's mistakes.

## A Good Sign

The three religious councils recently held their elections of officers for next year, and all three elections attracted a large percentage of the eligible voters.

HAMEVASER hopes that this participation is an indication of renewed student interest in their government. The newly elected presidents are always available to interested students and can suggest different ways that student interest may be channeled into constructive projects.

We hope further that the coming year will be marked by a spirit of genuine cooperation among the religious councils.

For, after all, these councils do share a common goal: to make the Jewish experience at YU a more meaningful one.

## A Bad Sign

HAMEVASER is, and always has been, a forum for "traditional Jewish thought and ideas, published by the Jewish Studies divisions of Yeshiva University," as we have stated on our front page for nearly fifteen years. Our purpose is neither to provide controversy, nor to offend our readers. However, we will always defend and uphold the content of our newspaper and the right of our contributors to express their views. We have always welcomed both financial and literary support from all divisions of YU. Anything expressed in our paper has consequently been available for rebuttal and comment, through Letters to the Editor, a follow-up article, or other similar means. Unconventional, and, in some cases, childish methods of voicing opposition to an article or editorial published in HAMEVASER are, therefore, unnecessary and counterproductive. Such tactics only strengthen our determination to protect the rights of our contributors and preserve our editorial integrity. It is our sincere hope that the overwhelming majority of our advocates among the student body, faculty, administration, and alumni, continue to demonstrate their support, and that it will never be necessary to call attention to this unfortunate problem again.

## From the Editor's Desk The Eleventh Commandment



Michael Muschel

The passing of Rabbi Dr. Samuel Belkin, our institution's master builder, has brought into focus many important questions. First and foremost of these, is the future of YU — the direction it will take in academic, financial, and communal policy. But the events surrounding Dr. Belkin's death have raised in my mind other questions: questions not confined to our own university, but that affect instead the entire Jewish community. It is these issues that are my concern here.

The large funeral assembly for Dr. Belkin brought together many strata of the YU family. Students, alumni, teachers, administrators, and *rebbeim* came in scores to pay tribute. Furthermore, the presence of leading Jewish educators, representatives of the other religious movements, and important political figures evidenced the fact that Dr. Belkin's vast achievements were felt even outside the sanctuary he built. But a search of the many faces in Lamport Auditorium revealed the absence of one important group of people. The *roshei yeshiva* outside of YU, the leaders of many higher centers of Torah study in the N.Y. area, were not in attendance.

The conspicuous absence of these individuals is most distressing. While it is true that the religious outlook of these men is, in certain respects, significantly different than the YU *hashkafa*, it is also true that Dr. Belkin, the President, was also Rabbi Belkin, the *rosh yeshiva*, and moreover, a man who always displayed the utmost respect for other Torah scholars and their institutions. It is one thing to speak of diversity in outlook; it is quite another matter to fail to pay tribute to a fellow *rosh yeshiva*, to a man indisputably recognized as a leader of world Jewry.

This affront to our yeshiva and its leadership is not, however, what is most troubling. Our major concern should be with the serious repercussions that could result from such offensive practices on the part of important religious figures.

These men are, after all, the sources of religious inspiration for thousands of students. Our sages have constantly cautioned us that a true Jewish leader must embody both scholarship and piety. Only an individual who blends Torah wisdom with Torah-oriented behavior can be recognized as a genuine *gadol b'yisrael*.

How can *roshei yeshiva* hope to build in disciples sincere religious personalities if their own behavior appears to fall short of the desired religious ideals? How can they expect to inculcate in *talmidim* a sense of respect for Torah and *ahavat yisrael*, if the students cannot clearly discern such qualities in their teachers?

We live in an age that has been marked by gross upheavals in the scientific, social, and moral spheres. Concomitant with these changes has been a welter of religious chaos and a multitude of difficult questions which the religious Jew cannot avoid facing. In searching for ordered solutions in these crises, how are students to derive a consistent set of principles from people who present a dichotomy of theory and practice, whose conduct is irreconcilable with their teachings?

It would be comforting if we could say with certainty that the lack of participation in Dr. Belkin's funeral tribute was an isolated phenomenon. But some brief reflection precludes such reassurance. When our *maschiach*, Rav Lesin *zt"l* passed away a year ago there were some *roshei yeshiva* outside YU who thought it appropriate to deliver eulogies. These *hespedim* were not, however, given as part of the large funeral assembly at YU, but were instead delivered at a Williamsburg chapel. Here too one is led to question whether certain Torah leaders recognize the existence of an "eleventh commandment," a commandment which prohibits any form of direct association with Yeshiva University.

If Orthodox Judaism is to continue to thrive, more time and energy must be devoted to solving the manifold problems that confront us. We only hope that the same care and caution which have been exercised in safeguarding the "eleventh commandment" will be applied with equal fervor to preserving the other, divinely transmitted, commandments.

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Roy Kaufman

# Religious Councils Reviewed Leaders Discuss Achievements

(Continued from Page 1)  
cooperation and offered EMC students special rebates.

For the future Mr. Gleicher calls for continued pursuit of previously mentioned academic goals, a restructuring of the current EMC curriculum to include new courses and the patterning of EMC requirements for majors along the lines of YC majors.

In conclusion, Mr. Gleicher commented, "These are things that have to be done. We have done our share and hope future councils will follow suit..."

## JSSSC

When Stan Frohlinger was elected as JSSSC president, he stated that the council's major purpose was "primarily to make it easier for the JSS student, who has generally come from a background deficient in Torah knowledge to go about his learning without hassles." JSS projects have basically been geared to this philosophy, and this year's execution of council business was no exception.

The JSS student body printed and provided *Mincha* booklets for the entire campus in order to facilitate the return of *siddurim* to the dorm shuls. Numerous *halakha* bulletins were both printed and bought by JSS. Subsidies were allocated for the JSS Kollel at Camp Morasha, and for the *Chumashim* and *Gemarat* that were made available to JSS students.

A new innovation this year called the "Home Hospitality Committee" made arrangements for out-of-town students to eat *shabbat* meals with families in the neighborhood. Mr. Frohlinger commented that there was great student response to this project in particular.

JSS made one major academic proposal this year. Unfortunately it encountered conflict, not with JSS administration, but with university administration. The proposal set forth was to change the last day in which p/f requests could be filed, from where it stands now, to the end of the semester. JSSSC's reasoning behind this proposal was to make the student strive harder to succeed in all of his courses throughout the semester instead of "slacking off" in his p/f course. Mr. Frohlinger commented that "the JSS student-faculty senate agreed to the change and Rabbi Besdin was most cooperative. The trouble came from the Registrar's Office and the Office of the Vice-President of Academic Affairs. They were very unfair by giving us a long and uncalled for "run-around," and at the end, telling us that it could not be implemented."

Mr. Frohlinger commented that Dr. Belkin's death was an especially tragic loss to JSS. "He was the dreamer and developer of JSS. He took a special interest in us and we felt it. He was *Rosh Yeshiva* of both the JSS teachers and the JSS students."

Sponsorship of the university's *Yom Ha-Shoa* program and a special radio program on WYUR devoted to the holocaust were the highlights of the JSS calendar of events.

## SOY

SOY president Philip Kazlow saw his council's function as two-fold: first, as a service organization to the

students and second, as a liaison to the administration.

Mr. Kazlow's initial priority was to be "Mechezek the Yeshiva, a goal which could be accomplished" with the help of SOY's various drives and functions. However, with Dr. Belkin's deteriorating physical condition and subsequent death, this goal could not be completely fulfilled as anticipated. "There were definite hardships encountered by everyone in the Yeshiva, from the higher-ups on down the line to the students, due to Dr. Belkin's health." On commenting about SOY's setbacks in particular, Mr. Kazlow said that "among his other functions, he was our *Rosh Yeshiva*. He was responsible for the *Semicha* program. All through his illness there were many strains. *Semicha* revisions were impossible without him. The *Chug Ha-semicha* was halted."

For an organization pressed by lack of rabbinic leadership, SOY did a most commendable job in all the services, drives and programs which they offered the students. The public *shiurim* this year stressed *halakha* *Imaaseh* and featured such topics as *yichud*, birth control and *lashon hora*. With regard to the *shiurim*, SOY tried to enable the

students to hear as many *Rebbeim* as possible.

Their most significant accomplishments were the appointment of Rabbi Bronspegel as *Mashgiach*, the approval of the Gruss program in Israel, and the donation of hundreds of dollars worth of *sefurim* to the old *Beit Medrash* library.

Mr. Kazlow classified overall student participation as "good." Rapport with Rabbi Charlop was likewise and there were "no substantial difficulties to provoke confrontation."

Previously, the Purim *chagiga* was the subject of much controversy, but this year's *chagiga* was handled with grace and defused for future confrontation. Mr. Kazlow sees the new rule for admitting YU students, faculty and alumni with ID as a "status quo" that should hold for the future. In addition, he predicts that the university will become a more viable and stronger institution in future years. Mr. Kazlow concluded by looking forward to the upgrading of the *semicha* program to a "level of excellence," and the continuation of the new *ruach Torah*, which can be attributed to students returning from Israel.

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Two former Dirshu leaders wrote bitter post mortems in your issue of 10 Adar II about their organization. I believe that to be constructive, one need not dump verbal abuse on all of one's "competitors" for *mitzvot*.

Although the organization began as an offshoot of Yavneh, the only link mentioned was a gratuitous pot-shot (pun intended) by one columnist who saw fit to recall that "one time we co-sponsored with Yavneh a really poor *Shabbaton* at a large school," while to add insult on injury he saw fit to add that this very *Shabbaton* "was topped off with a *Melavah Malkah*... while next door a superb black jazz ensemble played for a packed crowd (including me) for free." His sub-caption on page seven was "offering our heart." Must this Dirshu post mortem cause those organizations of similar aims to have their hearts pierced?

The other articles cited Yavneh by name once, to wit, among the Jewish establishment (sic) organizations that Dirshu "tried to impress" with "the importance of our work and the crucial need for funds to continue." Is this the way to talk about a parent who helped get its child on its feet and repeatedly demonstrated cooperation? Is this the way to talk about an organization that came to its aid in time of need when Dirshu had hundreds of excess *haggadot* to sell and we scraped together almost our last dollar of ready cash so that I signed a receipt with trembling hands for over \$900.00 when our own creditors were forcing us against the wall (and our debtors were overdue)? This article was

captioned "A Lesson Learned — DIRSHU."

True we couldn't help out as much as we would have liked to help, but after the Yom Kippur War, what independent student organization had the resources?

The well-intentioned former leaders of Dirshu should seek out a lesson to be learned from their own remarks. In a constructive sense, I suggest this may help solve the post mortem.

Aaron Reichel,

Former National Pres., Yavneh  
YC '71, BRGS '74 RIETS '75

## Reply by Danny Landes, Contributing Editor

I really don't catch Aaron Reichel's puns nor his frantic complaints. David Abramchik and myself have nothing against Yavneh—it was always irrelevant to the program, direction, and growth of our organization. The idea that Dirshu was Yavneh's child is absurd and it would be somewhat funny if it wasn't so insulting—after all, dear reader, how would you like it if Yavneh claimed to be your mother? Now the reason why Reichel wrote out that check to us was because he had ordered and picked up the *haggadot* way before *Pesach* and when he tried to return them after *Pesach* we told him to pay up. The check did not bounce and we have no complaints. But Aaron, you don't really think that you were financing our operations? Aaron, what was sweet you taste as bitter: your hands tremble: you have delusions as to whom your children are; your talk is of post mortems, and your heart is pierced... I'm worried.

## EMC PRESIDENT

June 10, 1976

David Gleicher

I suppose that over the past four years, I have become a bit of an EMC chauvinist. Though I'm willing to joke about its shortcomings, I've always defended EMC as being a quality Torah institution, which merits more respect among outsiders than it sometimes gets.

EMC, of course, isn't perfect. For one thing, there are too many obstacles in the way of those students who want to receive a degree or a diploma. The biggest obstacle is the large number of required courses. EMC, through the efforts of the student-faculty committee, will soon institute exemption examinations in selected subjects. A nominal fee will be charged to defray administrative expenses. If, for example, a student is knowledgeable in history, there is no reason why he cannot get exempt from sophomore history by demonstrating his knowledge on an objective exam. Students would thus have a wider selection of courses to choose from, and more students would get diplomas.

I am confident that most of the proposed reforms beneficial to EMC and its students will become realities in the near future. One reason for this confidence is Dean Rabinowitz. Throughout the past year, he has expressed strong support for student-sponsored reforms of EMC rules and regulations. He is always striving to make EMC a better college and does not begrudge student ideas which can accomplish this objective. Credit must also be given to Mr. Sabban and Dr. Orlian, the faculty members of the student-faculty committee, for supporting reforms such as upper-senior exemptions.

Many members of the EMC faculty have made my four year stay here more enjoyable: Dr. Herskovits and Mr. Sabban were among the more amiable persons I had as teachers in my freshman year. Dr. Sokolow was always willing to give much-needed advice on all topics of Judaica and esoterica. Dr. Havazelet was a non-traditional, sometimes controversial Bible teacher. One EMC faculty evaluation stated, "He's an absent-minded professor whom EMC needs more of." It is truly unfortunate that he will not be with EMC next year.

Of all Yeshiva secretaries, I have found Sarah Bass to be one of the nicest and most helpful. This is despite the additional chores Dean Rabinowitz's new responsibilities have given her. Mrs. Owngang helped enable me to make it through my year as President without any slip-ups, goof-ups, or screw-ups.

And of course, how could I leave out Rabbi Louie Bernstein, my *Rebbi muvhak* of EMC? I haven't always agreed with everything he's said, but I admire his bluntness in saying it. I hope that his forthcoming doctorate neither curbs his candor, nor deradicalizes his religious philosophy.

## SOY PRESIDENT

Days of Future Passed

Phil Kazlow

As the semester draws to a close, one is inclined to engage in a *chesbon hanefesh*, an accounting of what has transpired during the year gone by. Needless to say, the past year has been a very trying and difficult one. The gap which has been left by Dr. Belkin's ztl death seems difficult if not impossible to fill. As each day goes by, we realize ever more, the unique role he played in leading Yeshiva and coalescing its varied parts into one unified whole. Nevertheless, as Yeshiva enters a transition period, which will soon lead to a new chapter in its history, it is incumbent upon us, to address ourselves to those issues which will confront the next president, and Yeshiva University, in the days and years ahead.

We are living in unprecedented times, such that the respect granted to *limud hatorah* (the learning of Torah) and the esteem in which *lomdei hatorah* (those who learn Torah), are held is unparalleled in the annals of American Jewish History. It is the feeling of this columnist, that for Yeshiva University to miss this golden opportunity of helping restore the crown of Torah to its glory of old would be an inexcusable crime.

It is our responsibility to attract the elite of our Yeshiva College graduating classes to enter careers in the Rabbinate and in Jewish education. We cannot allow many of our finest young men to forsake this vital role of traditional Jewish communal leadership. For many, the idealism and spiritual motivation are there, but the economic realities prove to be insurmountable roadblocks on the paths to such careers.

Perhaps, we should first remedy the inexcusable economic station of our own *rebbeim*, who, by one's own admission "are being treated like slaves." How can one expect someone to give up an acceptance to Harvard Law School, or a place at Albert Einstein, if what awaits him after years of intensive toil and study is a life of poverty, misery, and a form of twentieth century serfdom?

Is it necessary to see that those who are ready to dedicate themselves to *limud hatorah* in our Kollel, receive stipends so small that I am embarrassed to put down the amount?

How can we stand idly by, and see members of the Judaic Studies Department of Stern College be among the first to go? These people should be untouchables even if they are lacking a few years seniority.

The challenge facing Yeshiva University in the years ahead is a great one. The days of the proverbial thirst for Torah knowledge, spoken about by the prophet Amos, seem to be upon us. The question facing those who will lead Yeshiva during its third epoch is whether we can rise to the challenge and quench that thirst. I feel that we can.

# Cancer: A Metaphor for Death

The following essay is excerpted from a letter received by HAMEVASER and has been printed here because of its general interest. A lengthy, philosophically-oriented section, has been omitted to conserve space.

Dear Michael,

Thank you for sending me the Op-Ed page of the *Times* (January 4, 1976), entitled "Cancer as a Metaphor for Death," about which you requested my reflections as a religious individual. What follows are some remarks that occur to me in contemplating this suggestive piece. But first, in case you have forgotten, let me recap the original article.

The starting point for the authors of the article is the realization that "everything causes cancer": beef causes cancer (of the bowel); the plastic in which meat is wrapped causes cancer; pesticides cause cancer (their absence causes famine) and the chemicals that replace them will probably be found to cause cancer as well. Some substances (cigarettes, for example) are highly carcinogenic; others are less deleterious. But, say the writers, "all of the things that cause cancers are part and parcel of our daily life... Thus the only way to cut back on the cause of cancer may be to cut back on living. Stop eating. Stop taking medications. Stop using cosmetics. Stop enjoying life?"

The second major theme in the article is the relationship between our concept of cancer and our weltanschauung, our general way of looking at the world, our *haskafah*. While

"All of the things that cause cancer are part and parcel of our daily lives..."

at one level, cancer is a disease, or more precisely, a congeries of pathological processes, generally associated with an extremely painful death, at another level cancer is a metaphor for death, a rebellion of the body's cells against the disciplined laws of growth and decay that constitute life. Like a kind of biological entropy, cancer returns the body to random, disordered chaos. The very process of cell growth and multiplication which creates life, runs amok and creates death. Our biological existence is not immortal, but, by its very law of growth, finite and dead-ended. No amount of biochemical tinkering can cheat our body of its ultimate anachronic deterioration.

Because cancer is, philosophically and psychologically more than just a sickness, but rather a metaphor for the real sickness unto death (i.e., the confrontation with one's own mortality and human nothingness), it is not surprising that scientific theories of cancer have tended to follow the various changes in the modern consciousness. Early researchers stressed the genetic factors in cancer and other individual "defects," reflecting the notion that cancer, meaning failure, meaning death, is caused by some

flaw in the individual. With the rise of technology and belief in its power to solve all human problems, many discovered the virus theory of cancer, with its implication that an efficient technology would readily find some simple vaccine that would "cure" cancer or some drug that would "zap" it. (For virus, substitute Communist, for vaccine, substitute "pacification program" and you have just cured cancer in Vietnam!). Now, when we have lost faith in our abilities to provide solutions to all problems, when we have become painfully aware of the fact that our own optimism and wasteful idealism have contributed to our troubles, we blame the ecology, pollution, etc.

The authors conclude that "we are relearning the ancient truth that the ultimate cause of death is life. Maybe we should think more about what to do with life rather than futilely trying to postpone an inevitable death."

The questions that this article raises in my mind as a religious individual, are of two sorts: first, I must come to grips with the philosophical-psychological points being made; second, I must consider the practical implications of the attitudes expressed by the writers, which involves *halakhic* formulations which I shall try to adumbrate, but not to determine or judge. You will notice that, in making these remarks, I will be broadening the canvas to include various forms of our contemporary, health-preoccupied, iatrogenic consciousness.

...The whole analysis has, as you mentioned, practical implications, as well. For most of us, a carcinogen is an obvious no-no: most of us maintain that, from a *halakhic* viewpoint, cigarettes, for example, are *assur*. Now if we believe that eggs cause heart disease, beef causes cancer, etc., these should be prohibited as well. The conclusion could, in effect, be the prohibition of everything, or, since total abstinence would result in death by starvation, the prohibition of everything not absolutely necessary to survival. This would constitute a radical form of asceticism, backed by the awesome authority of *pikuach nefesh*. Again, as I mentioned earlier in the letter, such a concept would be rather curious in the light of our belief in the basic goodness of creation. After all, G-d permitted the fruit of all the trees of the garden save one; we are not told: "You may eat of all the fruit, but only what is absolutely necessary to prevent starvation, for anything more would be an invitation to cancer, heart disease, etc."

One may distinguish between substances that are normally part and parcel of human nourishment and those that are not. A cigarette would then be excluded, but an egg would be permitted, as it is a nutritious substance serving a constructive function in the human diet. What of meat, which may not be a necessary component of the diet

(whether this is so depends on views of *Rishonim* on the question why meat was not prohibited to Noah, though it was not permitted to Adam: one opinion, quoted by *Abraham*, I think, states that after the Deluge, man lost the ability to achieve balanced vegetarian nutrition)? Insofar as there are Jewish thinkers who consider vegetarianism to be the Jewish ideal (Rav Kuk and his disciples are the best known modern examples), the dangers of meat consumption may be a spur towards the actualization of the vegetarian lifestyle. (That is to say, if meat can kill you, you can live without it).

Or you may distinguish more radically (in the spirit of your authors) between the safeguarding of health and the mere prolongation of life. While it would clearly be

"We are relearning the ancient truth that the ultimate cause of death is life. Maybe we should think more about what to do with life rather than futilely trying to postpone an inevitable death."

prohibited to engage in actions damaging to health and life (e.g., cigarettes), it would not be necessary to artificially extend one's life span: one need not refrain from "normal" practices just because we are told that such abstinence may add a few years of life. A radical reorganization of diet may prevent the normal deterioration of the body, but I am not required to pursue this end.

Let me illustrate with a hypothetical case: if an individual is suffering from cancer, there is no doubt that he would be permitted to drink animal blood if this is considered a reputable cure. But let's take the following possibility (assuming, for the sake of argument, that it holds water scientifically): I am told that, in the normal course of events, my body, specifically my heart valves, will conk out when I'm sixty-five. If, however, I drink a daily blood cocktail, the process will be stalled indefinitely. In such a case, it would be difficult to justify violating the *mitzvah*, since (?) I am not really preserving my life as much as I am interfering with natural processes of decay, with the body's quiet obedience to the laws of its own nature. I'm not sure how strong this argument would be *halakhically*, and can only suggest the possible (but weaker) analogy among *Achronim* who point out that there is no requirement to resurrect the dead as there would be a *mitzvah* to maintain the living. (Cf. cryogenics).

(By the way, to digress for a moment, the last example suggests to me the possibility of a vampire movie in which the protagonist visits a *posek* and argues that vampirism is justifiable in terms of *pikuach nefesh*. Far-fetched: since vampires, unlike wolves, are distinctly remorseless and single-mindedly un-self-questioning. But then again, we know people like that, too. Ve-dok).

There are several objections to these approaches which should be evident by now:

1. Regarding the last point, as mentioned, it is doubtful whether it is *halakhically* valid.
2. How can one distinguish between what is normal for the human diet, as opposed to the artificial? If you place cigarettes on one side and eggs on the other, the contrast seems clear enough. But what of meat? What of wine, which we are told "gives joy to G-d and man," but which we are also told destroys our brain cells, even in moderation?

But there is another argument here which may be stronger than the preceding precisely because it is pragmatic rather than metaphysical. I might claim that the need for enjoyment, or at least the need to be able to choose certain activities that are aleatory, i.e., not compelled by absolute necessity, is itself basic to human well-being. One thinks of individuals, dying of cancer, who continue to chain smoke. They may disgust us (and themselves) but their doctors believe that taking them off the weed, would damage the will to life beyond any benefit to the body. No wonder contemporary *G'dolim*, despite their probable repugnance, do not seem eager to issue a formal *issur* on cigarette smoking. To be sure, there may be a great nobility to the life of the ascetic, the person who is able to reject all earthly pleasure; but for most of us, as Shalom put it "This world also He put in their hearts, without which man would not comprehend the action which G-d has done from beginning to end." In a sense, I am here arguing in a manner similar to my first suggestion, that radical asceticism questions the basic goodness of the garden; only I am here adding the pragmatic claim that the undermining of the normal pleasures of physical existence may lead to the undermining of our health as surely as an egg or a steak.

Don't forget some additional factors and qualifications: the certainty of the nexus between the substance supposedly causing disease and the disease may not be totally clear (again contrast cigarettes with regular food); moreover, what is bad for you today may be food for you tomorrow, and vice versa. Which is precisely the nub of the problem: if indeed death is caused by living, then any attempt to blame death upon particular components of life (eggs, meat, salt, etc.) is essentially futile, since it is rooted in self-delusion, in the unwillingness to come to terms with the finite, vulnerable status assigned to us, in His Wisdom, by our loving Creator.

Thanks again for sending the article along. I hope I've been able to say something intelligent, though unauthoritative, on the subject, and eagerly await your reactions (not allergic, I hope).

Your friend,  
Shelly J. Cramer

## Ex Libris HAMEVASER

**Crisis and Faith**, by Eliezer Berkovits; Sanhedrin Press, New York 1976, 180 pp., \$5.95.

Reviewed by Sheldon Chanales

"A sense of uncertainty about the future of the Jewish people seems to be... all-pervasive among Jews... There is little doubt that Israel is passing through one of the most perilous periods in its long history. It is involved in a three-fold crisis." These are the crisis of the spiritual collapse of Western civilization; the internal Jewish crisis of spiritual exhaustion following the tremendous loss of resources in the Holocaust; and finally, the crisis of the total threat to Jewish existence, a concept

unique to our times. To meet these crises the Jewish people must "put their own house in moral and spiritual order and... gain an adequate understanding of who we are and what we stand for..." This is the aim of Dr. Eliezer Berkovits in his latest work, *Crisis and Faith*. In pursuing this aim, he touches upon almost every major problem bothering conscientious religious Jews today, and presents some ideas which will surely be discussed for some time to come.

Dr. Berkovits begins with an analysis of the moral collapse of Western civilization. This spiritual malaise is attributed to the loss of the sense of meaningfulness of

existence, both in the personal and in the universal realm. Man who has encountered the Divine Presence can never view anything in life as having no meaning. But science and scientism have freed the world from the anchor of a Creator and have set it on a random, purposeless course. Man himself is merely a chance event, the result of a "slight malfunction in cosmic engineering." This view has stripped man of his personal identity, preventing him from facing the problems of life with any notions of value and meaning.

The confusion caused by these developments has led to the birth of many fads and movements, such as

the drug culture and the Eastern mysticism-guru cults, movements which are merely the attempt to surrender personal identity in conformity with the new cosmic view. But the most serious result of all this, according to Dr. Berkovits, has been the New Morality, or situation ethics, which denies all predetermined ethical principles (except love), and claims that right or wrong in an ethical decision depends on the particular situation and is to be determined solely by the individual. Dr. Berkovits discusses this theory at length, showing that while it is the logical consequence of the spiritual problems of Western civilization, the New Morality is also

merely a cosmetic mask for the *hefker veit* of a morally bankrupt civilization.

Jews, who are deeply involved in the current erosion of society, are bidden to turn inward to the ideas of Judaism to find answers to these problems. Dr. Berkovits explains how Judaism gives meaning and purpose to life. If man accepts creation, life can never be meaningless; he knows that purpose exists, even if what it is escapes him. But Judaism does not end there, leaving the individual to search on his own for that meaning. While each Jew must indeed search for subjective meaning in life, he is

(Continued on Page 7)

# A Theory of Legal Theocracy

by Bruce Graeber

Contemporary states have arisen either through political revolution or via the system of colonial release. The basic dilemma confronting any new state is the construction of a legal structure. For the state under colonial control, the selection of a law system is most often narrowed down to the law of the mother country. This may be a result of instability, particularly because the colonial masses were, for the most part, primitives prior to Western imperialism. The mother country's law had weathered the course of time and it seemed therefore advisable for the new nation to begin on a solid base by adopting the habit of its mother.

## Law and State

Israel is a member of the commonwealth of former colonies. Yet, unlike its colleagues, Israel may be ultimately considered the source of Western law itself. Roman law, which is considered the foundation of Western law, finds its very basis in the corpus of Biblical and Rabbinic laws, according to the late Prof. Boaz Cohen, an authority on Jewish and Roman law.

Modern Israel failed to recognize the validity of Jewish law as a utilizable state law and chose rather to incorporate a conglomeration of Ottoman and British law as "Israeli law." Both of these powers once dominated the area, inflicted grave hardships on the Jewish population and finally granted the "natives" independence. How absurd for the oppressed to adopt the legal systems which oppressed them!

With the passing of a quarter-century of existence, very little has changed. In fact, according to Israeli law, civil courts are required to rule in accordance with Ottoman law, and with English law, common law and equity in effect in Britain (Section 46, Order in Council). Recently this has changed to the extent of giving Knesset laws priority. If a case arises to which Israeli legislation has not yet addressed itself, English law must still be used.

The very existence of the State of Israel is in itself an attestation to the vitality of Jewish law. "Our people are a people only because of the Torah" (Saadya, *Emunot V'deot*). To place Jewish law on the same level as the laws of the pre-colonial territories of Africa and Asia is to compare it with a collection of primitive tribal rites and customs. The modern state of Israel never had reason to follow the practice of instituting "mother law" nor does it have cause to continue this practice.

Of more gripping importance than presenting the "pros" of implementing Jewish law as state law, is evaluating the feasibility of such a suggestion. That is, can the initiation of Jewish law withstand the plethora of problems presently displayed by the heterogeneity of the population?

## Religion and Secularism

The predominant religious philosophy of those who are concerned with religion is that of traditional Judaism. Their expressed belief is that the Torah is a product of the Sinaitic revelation. Jews, thereby, are bound by it because they are members of the

covenantal community. Samson Raphael Hirsch in *Jeschurun* made it clear: "Let us not delude ourselves; the entire matter lies in a question: is the statement 'and the Lord spoke to Moses', which introduces Sinai, true or not." Without Sinai, Jewish law is essentially no more special than American law. It assumes a level of human demand rather than Divine purpose.

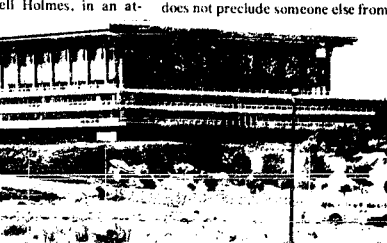
Then there is the secular Israeli. It is a secularism tinged, however, by a Jewish orientation and a re-interpretation of religious truths into secular-nationalistic ideologies. According to Prof. Zvi Werbalowsky of Hebrew University, the secularists who might drive their own cars on the streets of Tel Aviv on *Shabbat*, would never vote for a bill to permit public transportation to operate on the Sabbath (related by Rabbi Menachem Kasken).

The extant two societies attempt an uneasy coexistence. Logically, a secular Jew would resent being subjugated to Torah law. But is this really true? We are dealing here with a strange heterogeneity, one with a strong common denominator. No matter what one labels his brand of Judaism, its origin is based at Sinai. There is a bond which mysteriously ties all Jews. The *Maharal* of Prague, in commenting on *Sanhedrin* (43b) said that Israelites were not responsible for one another until they crossed the Jordan. The reason, he says, was that the Land of Israel makes all Israelites dwelling there as one person.

Whether one chooses to regard the event at Sinai as a theophany or as a constitutional convention, the result is ultimately the same, particularly under the nomenclature of state law.

Law, in the long-run, assumes its own unique meaning. A number of years ago, Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, in an at-

tempt to justify the Sunday Blue Laws, remarked that Sunday in this country no longer had a religious significance; rather it had become the "national day of rest." Holmes was propounding the notion that for Americans, Sunday was a day of rest for the religionists, the secularists and even for non-Christians. Although the Christian views Sunday in a religious sense, the secular American may well regard it as a day of rest from an entirely different vantage point. If this is to work in a nation not enjoying a common heritage, shouldn't it work in a state predicated on a Jewish historical consciousness?



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## Culture

We all pray that one day the Torah will be recognized as the

proposing that the essence of Jewish law is expressed by folkways, culture and social behavior. The latter view has been rehearsed on numerous occasions by secular Jewish thinkers. Such a consideration on our part will prove beneficial to *dati* Jews. Salo Baron in his *Modern Nationalism and Religion* emphasizes the fact that in three thousand years of Jewish history there has yet to survive a Jewish community whose foundations were purely secular. Twentieth century secularists have found it necessary to mark various Jewish holidays and customs from their own standpoint. Passover, for example, is the celebration of national liberation and not a G-d-centered redemption.

Of particular importance in state law is the significance of the private and public domains. Although some laws exist to regulate life "behind closed doors," there is still the general judicial notion of the privilege of privacy. In the case of *Shabbat*, it is the blatant public desecration which disturbs the sensibilities of the religious Jew. Obviously the secular Jew does not feel an obligation to Jewish law *l'shem shamayim*. Rather his adherence is rooted in his constituting an integral part of the national group. A group invariably demands and expects a certain line of behavior and a multiplicity of acts of identification with the group. Even in the United States, the Sholom Aleikhem Folk Institute which sponsors a network of secular Jewish schools has a curriculum concerned with *Shabbat*, the historic national day of rest, and even *kashrut* and the *arba minim*, elements of Jewish folklore and group custom.

It is, therefore, inconceivable that nationalists would abide by the laws adopted from foreign sources. A corrective trend has actually begun to take place in Israel. In a case dealing with a moral problem, the Israeli court had to decide whether or not to follow English common law. In a slander case, *Amos Ben Gurion vs. Shurat Hamitadivim* the judge decided that although Israelis are ordinarily bound by English law, this case was different. In a question of morals we cannot simply follow English law; we are Jews living in Israel with a moral code of our own. Instead, he quoted Maimonides (*Hilkhos De'ot*, Ch. 7). Whether or not the Rambam was a religious

philosopher does not enter the thinking of the identified secular Jew. His attachment is with the history of the Jewish people, its folklore and folk-law.

## Autopsy-Abortion

In respect to autopsies, it is the prerogative of any legal system to maintain its own standards of ethics. When states in the U.S. prohibit abortion, people agree that the law has the right to make such a requirement of its citizenry. Such standards, once legislated, have nothing to do with religion; they are state law in and of themselves. In other words, there is nothing unusual in regarding the law as having the right to regulate personal ethical behavior.

Legislation for state affairs or foreign relations is not in conflict with Torah. Maimonides in the *Guide to the Perplexed* (II, 40) states that the aim of human law is "only to insure the good order of the state and of its affairs, and to remove from it injustice and strife." In regard to domestic law, it is well known that Rav A. I. Kook, *z"l*, who continually promoted Jewish law in Israel, saw two aspects of law at constant work: re-interpretation and *takkanot* (but this is a subject for a longer study). The legislative process can remain a viable vehicle of government in a state governed by Jewish law.

## Conclusions

The traditional Jewish law is a means of commitment and identification with the historic Jewish People. The religious Jew regards the Torah as Divine law whose eternality is a product of its truth. The secularist believes the Torah to be the corpus of Jewish folklore, customs, and patterns of national group behavior. Despite the difference between the groups, the traditional law can take effect in the State of Israel. Within the State, the law-abiding individual will adhere to it because it is the law and because it serves the function of maintaining his heritage.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev was once asked: Why are all questions unanswered in the Talmud (*trayka*) eventually to be answered by Elijah? It would seem more logical that Moses the lawgiver would answer them! The Berditchever replied that since tradition holds that Elijah never died, he is the one who is able to answer the questions. Only one who is entirely involved in this world can answer questions of this world.

Thus it is with Jewish law; it never ceased to be fully involved in every dimension of the post-industrial, technological age. It is not as though the advent of the Jewish state, caused the Torah, Talmud, and array of Responsa to be dusted off from a shelf in a *genizah*. The law never left the body or soul of the Jewish nation.

Now that the Jewish people have been restored to their land, perhaps Jewish law will be returned to its rightful place in *Eretz Yisrael*.

The editor-in-chief and governing board of HAMEVASER extend a hearty *Mazel Tov* to Rabbi Shmuel Borenstein (*Rebbe YUHS*) and his wife upon the birth of a son.

## ISRAEL

Am I in Israel? Is this the *Kotel*?  
Are those the ancient ruins of Massada?  
And shall I sup where Moses at Mount Sinai  
Saw his beloved G-d, and now sleeps by Him?  
Such questions hourly do I ask myself;  
And not a sign in a roadway inscribed  
"To Jerusalem" — but excites  
Fear, Doubt, and Consternation.

O Israel, how desolate you are.  
And so I weep — for you are lying still,  
Low in the dust; And I admire you now  
As I admire the beautiful in death.  
Yours was a benevolent gift, when you were born.  
And burdensome. But would you not have it?  
And now, though they beset you and make you their slave,  
Would He have loved you less, or feared you more?

But why despair? Twice you have already lived:  
And again shall you shine among the nations of the world.  
The hour will come,  
When they who, by their deeds, seek to bind  
The ethereal spirit;  
Who, like the eagle hovering above its prey,  
Discerns with a careless eye,  
And strikes and strikes again.  
If but the heavens vibrate, shall confess  
Their misguided wisdom.

Yet even now the flame bursts forth.  
Where it shall again burn so gloriously.  
And alive like the splendor of the day  
Bless the earth with faith and commitment.  
Greatness will be endeavor, contemptuous will be death;  
God-fearing men.

Echoes that were heard through  
Dachau and Auschwitz,  
Were themselves invoked by  
"Next year in Jerusalem."  
Awake, then, from among the multitude, heed the call,  
And from your ranks, from person to person hear,  
Instead of rage,  
The voice of valor.

Joram Graf Haber

# Survey Results: Skullcaps and Attitudes

by Chava J. Wink

The following article presents the results of a survey conducted by the author in the Kew Garden Hills Section of Queens, N.Y. The hypothesis under discussion is that religious attitudes are correlated with external appearance; specifically, that there is a high degree of correlation between the style of skullcap one wears and one's attitude toward the State of Israel. In our last issue the author elaborated on a set of questions posed to individuals wearing black skullcaps (hereafter called the B-group), and others who wear crocheted skullcaps (the C-group). Please note that the author has offered interpretive comments only in those cases when the obtained results differed from those anticipated. Here then are the results: (In order to conserve space, abbreviations are used below — e.g., SA for Strongly Agree, MA — Mildly Agree, U — Undecided, MD — Mildly Disagree, SD — Strongly Disagree).

## 1. Are you a Zionist?

	Yes	No	Uncertain
B	2	7	2
C	10	1	0

## 2. Do you support the State of Israel financially?

	Yes	No	Not regularly
B	10	0	1
C	11	0	0

## 3. Do you support the State of Israel ideologically?

	Yes	No	Uncertain
B	2	7	1
C	10	0	1

## 4. On Israel's Independence Day, do you say Hallel?

	Yes	No	No response
B	0	10	1
C	11	0	0

## 5. If yes, do you say Hallel with or without a benediction?

	With	Without	Different each year	No response
B	0	0	0	1
C	4	6	1	0

## 6. "A Jewish State can only be founded on the law of the Torah. A Jewish State not governed by Torah principles cannot possibly call itself a Jewish State."

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD	No response
B	2	1	4	1	2	1
C	5	5	1	0	0	0

The results here were a bit unexpected as the item failed to discriminate between the B- and C-groups. It is possible that members of the B-group considered the wording of this statement a bit too harsh, since in reality, Israel is called "the Jewish State."

## 7. "The State of Israel is the start of the Redemption."

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD	No response
B	2	1	4	1	2	1
C	5	5	1	0	0	0

## 8. Philosophically speaking, do you consider Israel, in our day, to be just as much a part of the Diaspora as any other country?

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD	No response
B	4	3	2	0	2	2
C	0	0	0	0	11	0

## 9. "Aliyah is a Divine injunction and hence, it is a religious obligation today to live in Israel."

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD	No response
B	1	0	3	2	4	1
C	7	2	1	0	1	0

## 10. Theoretically, which would you prefer: —Living in Israel among gentiles —Living in America among Jews

	Israel	America	No response
B	0	11	0
C	2	9	0

## 11. "Rabbi Goren should not be Chief Rabbi of Israel."

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD	No response
B	7	2	1	0	1	0
C	1	3	1	3	3	0

Here again, the results were rather surprising in that the C-group was not in total

### CORRECTION

The subjects of this survey were in fact 18-29 years of age, not 18-19 years as stated incorrectly in our last issue.

disagreement with this declaration. Apparently, Rabbi Goren was more widely unpopular in the C-group than had been anticipated.

## 12. Israeli Yeshiva students (should/should not) be drafted.

	Should	Should not	No response
B	0	11	0
C	5	6	0

## 13. Israeli Yeshiva students (should/should not) join the army.

	Should	Should not	Uncertain	No response
B	3	6	1	1
C	10	1	0	0

## 14. If you were an Israeli Yeshiva student, would you join the army?

	Yes	No	Uncertain	No response
B	2	7	1	1
C	7	2	2	0

## 15. If you were an Israeli Yeshiva student, would you plan to join hesder?

	Yes	No	Uncertain	No response
B	0	5	4	2
C	6	1	4	0

## 16. If you were an Israeli citizen (not a Yeshiva student), would you plan to

## join the army?

	Yes	No	Uncertain	No response
B	9	1	0	1
C	9	0	2	0

The exceptionally nationalistic response made by the B-group was most surprising. One cannot help but think that the recent conflict in the Middle East had at least a minor influence on the participants in that group.

## 17. Below is an alphabetical list of opinionated people. Rate these people in descending order.

Since this item called for a rather unstructured response, resulting in an unlimited number of possible ratings, a sketchy appraisal will be presented here.

	1st Choice	Last Choice	No response
B	Chazon Ish (7)	Goren (4)	2
C	Satmar Rebbe (2)	Gurion (3)	1
	Chazon Ish (6)	Rebbe (5)	1
	Rabbi Kook (3)	Porush (3)	0

As can be seen, the Satmar Rebbe (who was rated highly to some extent by all members of the B-group) was the most unpopular figure in the C-group, as his anti-Zionist philosophy would imply. On the other hand, the B-group rated Rabbi Goren below the non-Orthodox Ben-Gurion and Meir, thus attesting to their condemnation of his liberal rulings.

## 18. "Autopsies, under all circumstances, should be prohibited in Israel."

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD	No response
B	7	1	0	0	3	0
C	3	3	1	3	1	0

Although most of the wearers of black skullcaps agreed with this statement, as expected, the C-group was not as liberal as had been anticipated regarding this issue.

## 19. How do you feel about the kibbutzim that produce crops during Shmitah year on the basis of Rabbi Kook's heter?

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD	No response
B	1	1	6	1	0	2
C	2	5	2	2	0	0

[Questions 20-24 refer to an incident in 1972. Two Yeshiva students were arrested, accused of blowing up a pornography shop in Tel Aviv. They were tried, found guilty and sentenced to jail.]

## 20. Did they do it?

	Yes	No	Uncertain	No response
B	9	0	1	1
C	10	0	1	0

## 21. If yes, were they right in doing it?

	Yes	No	No response
B	3	7	1
C	1	10	0

## 22. Should they have been arrested?

	Yes	No	No response
B	9	2	0
C	11	0	0

## 23. Should they have been sentenced?

	Yes	No	No response
B	5	6	0
C	10	1	0

## 24. "These students were not given parole for the High Holy Days because the government is anti-religious."

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD	NR
B	4	4	2	0	0	1
C	1	4	1	1	4	0

This response pattern shows that the B-groups responded precisely as anticipated, but that the C-group did not unanimously reply as predicted.

## 25. How do you feel about Rabbi Goren's decision re: The Langer Case?

	Correct	Incorrect	No response
B	2	8	1
C	9	1	1

## 26. How was the decision made?

	I.H.N. — In Heaven's Name, D.C. — In Direct contradiction to P'sak	I.H.N.	D.C.	N.R.
B	2	7	2	0
C	8	1	2	0

## 27. How do you feel about Neturei Karta?

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD	NR
B	0	2	3	1	4	1
C	0	0	0	3	8	0

[28-29 refer to Anti-Zionist ads the NETUREI KARTA prints in the TIMES]

## 28. Are these ads printed in Heaven's Name?

	Yes	No	Unc.	NR
B	4	0	6	1
C	4	4	2	1

## 29. How do you feel about the ads?

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD	NR
B	0	0	1	2	8	0
C	0	0	0	2	9	0

## 30. During the recent Mid East war, which organizations if any, received a donation from you?

	U.J.A.	Y.I.	Zeirei
B	4	0	0
C	11	0	0

The remaining members of the B-group listed other more religiously oriented charities, as anticipated.

## 31. Which of these organizations have you associated with?

	BA	Noam	Pirch.	Y.I.	Zeirei
B	0	0	3	1	8
C	9	1	0	7	1

## 32. Which of the following political movements do you identify with most?

	A.Y.	Mizr.	P.A.Y.	None
B	9	0	0	2
C	0	7	4	0

### Conclusion

In conclusion, one may deduce — bearing in mind, however, the small size of the tested population — that the results of this survey support the investigation's hypothesis. Response to twenty-seven of the thirty-two items presented indicate that there is, in fact, a substantial correlation between one's yarmulka and one's attitude towards the State of Israel.

# Holocaust Symposium

(Continued from Page 1)

damage to the children. Since all children have traumatic experiences, and avoidance of all anxiety is tantamount to death, we need not guard against adverse psychological effects by hiding the Holocaust from children. We should, however, provide children with an environment of emotional security and family stability to minimize any deleterious psychological effects.

Dr. Brayer also stressed that we need not fear our inability to explain the Holocaust to children and students. Inability to explain is not grounds for disbelief and these concerns should not hold us back from studying the *shoah*.

Dr. Walter Wurzbarger, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Yeshiva College was the final panelist. Dr. Wurzbarger addressed himself to theological problems encountered in teaching the

Holocaust. He stressed at the outset that it is futile to view the Holocaust as being unique. All events are unique, and yet to be understood, all events must be related to the universal, and to categorizations that are universal.

The Holocaust has raised many difficult philosophical problems. There is a strong position in many circles that it is difficult to see any meaning in the historical process in view of the events of the *shoah*. All

schemes proposed as philosophies of history have been discredited. Another question is the eternal problem of evil. To maintain that there is a loving, benevolent G-d begs the question: How did He let the Holocaust happen?

Dr. Wurzbarger emphatically rejected the solutions commonly offered to answer these questions. The statement that it was our sins that brought the Holocaust upon us is incorrect as is the argument that it was necessary for the establishment of the state of Israel and thus was part of a higher divine purpose.

Dr. Wurzbarger sees the

Holocaust not as a problem but as a mystery, something which cannot be solved, but only apprehended. The existence of the state of Israel is an indication that what happened in the Holocaust is not due to the fact that G-d withdrew from history, but is an unfathomable mystery. The G-d of Israel is present in the historic process and the existence of Auschwitz is not a counter indication.

Following the three panelists was a display of Holocaust pictures and several workshops which focused on the teaching of the Holocaust at different academic levels.



# Crisis and Faith

(Continued from Page 4)

given an objective frame of reference, the Torah and the *mitzvot*, within which meaning is to be found. The Jew must search for, and often may not find, the subjective, personal element of the meaning of existence, but all Jews share in common the objective meaningfulness to be found in the Torah.

The latter part of this work deals with the crisis within Judaism itself. We are faced with problems with regards to sexual mores, divorce, the status of women, conversion, and the State of Israel, issues which threaten to tear apart the moral and spiritual strength of our faith. Dr. Berkovits sounds the call to the *halakic* authorities of our age to undertake some bold initiatives in order to solve these problems. His suggestions are certain to be quite controversial, but his plea for action is nonetheless quite powerful.

Berkovits bases his approach on the notion that the function of Torah *SheB'al Peh* is to apply the general principles of the Torah *SheBiklav* to each specific human situation as it arises. The Torah gives us a set of values and principles to work with, and these principles may come into conflict with each other in practical situations. *Halakha* must find the solution of the conflicts within a Torah context. The very nature of *halakha*, then, demands that it be an oral tradition, one that is flexible enough to be applied differently to different situations. The great tragedy of *halakha* is that, albeit for compelling reasons, it was committed to writing, which has severely limited its life and vitality. In discussing the current *halakic* dilemmas, Dr. Berkovits suggests that the same *heter of et la'asot* which permitted the shackling of the Oral Torah, now gives us the responsibility to return it to its original freedom. The risks involved are indeed great, but the consequences of inaction, which we are witnessing today, are greater still. Contemporary problems such as *agunah*, *halitza*, the status of women in the community, *gerut* and *mamzerut* can all be solved within the context of the guiding principles of a living *halakha*, and Dr. Berkovits delivers a stinging indictment of the current rabbinate for not moving to act with the necessary degree of innovation.

In his final section, Dr. Berkovits discusses the State of Israel and the historical destiny of the people of Israel. He laments the fact that the *Medinah* has not become the *Merkaz Ruchani* it was once heralded as, and that the Torah of *Eretz Yisrael*, which should be more creative simply because of the wider scope of application of *halakha* possible within the state, has really remained the *Torat Hagalit* of the *shtetl*, an artificial transplant on the soil of *Eretz Yisrael*. The religious establishment in Israel, claims Dr. Berkovits, has failed to live up to the opportunity to move forward spiritually.

However, the deeper problem in Israel, which became evident with the Yom Kippur war, lies in the secular establishment. The Zionist movement has always aimed at the goal of a state for the Jews *K'chol hu-amim* — like all the other

nations. This, Berkovits shows, is an untenable position, for if Israel is to exist merely as one nation among many, then there is no rational basis for its existence, or, for that matter, for the against-all-odds survival of the Jewish people over the centuries. The Jews cannot be a "normal" people, and the Zionists' attempt to escape from the inevitability of Jewish History has been proven futile by the Yom Kippur War. Dr. Berkovits presents a fascinating essay on the destiny of the Jewish people in terms of the concepts of *galut* and *geulah*. It is the task of the Jewish people to accompany the *galut haShechina*, to link our destiny to the destiny of G-d in the World. Redemption does not merely mean the redemption of the people of Israel, but it must be accompanied by the redemption of G-d from His man-created exile. We, as Jews, cannot escape our destiny; our choice is either to merely endure it or to actively embrace it, thereby giving the greatest meaning to our lives.

The problems which the reader may find in this work are two-fold. First, the volume is actually a compendium of discussions of several different topics, and while Dr. Berkovits does a brilliant job of maintaining a common theme throughout, the connections are somewhat tenuous. Secondly, not intending to present a *halakic* work, Dr. Berkovits skims over the *halakic* argumentation of his *chidushim*, which leaves the reader without the ability to judge the merit of his arguments. But these are very minor drawbacks in the face of a brilliantly written work by one of the most authoritative voices in Jewish thought today.

# The Yearly Cycle of the Jewish Food

By Rabbi Meir Havazelet  
*In memory of my beloved grandmother Sarah: a daughter, wife, and mother in Israel. Her quiet faith, serene piety, and gentle wisdom has enriched my life and the lives of those fortunate enough to have known her.*

One understands the various moods of the Jew throughout the year by studying the five *megillot* which are read in the synagogue according to the order of the seasons, each of which has its particular mood.

Passover, and its mood, is exemplified by the reading of the Song of Songs, *Shir Ha-Shirim*, a collection of impassioned love lyrics. For generations, this book was explained as an allegory of love between G-d and the Jewish people. The simple interpretation—that these beautiful poems celebrate the physical love between man and woman—was, however, never rejected by the Jews. This dual interpretation is unique to the Jewish soul. It gives expression, in poetic terms, to the aesthetic world view of Judaism which denies any dichotomy between body and soul, between matter and spirit, because it recognizes them both as the twin aspects of the great and unending miracle called life. We read this impassioned love story at the traditional time for love, rejuvenation and rebirth, the Spring.

On *Shavuot Ruth*, the tender story of a Moabite woman who, after the death of her Jewish husband, remains faithful to his family and religion, is read. *Shavuot*

is the holiday of the receiving of the Torah (*Z'man Mattan Torateinu*) which above all celebrates the equality and dignity of the human being without discrimination, and supplies the *Shavuot* mood of universal love to all people.

Kindness (*Hesed*), which is a key word in the Book of *Ruth*, is found throughout this *Megillah*. "Rabbi Ze'ira said: This scroll (of *Ruth*) tells us nothing either of cleanliness or of uncleanness, either of prohibition or permission. For what purpose then was it written? To teach how great is the reward of those who do deeds of kindness." (*Midrash Rabbah* II 14). In the inspired writings the term *hesed*, according to Maimonides, occurs mostly in the sense of showing kindness to those who have no claim to it. For this reason the term *hesed* is employed to express the good bestowed upon us by G-d: "I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord." (*Isaiah* 63:7). It appears that the major reason for reading this *Megillah* on *Shavuot* is to demonstrate a mood of loving kindness towards our fellow man.

From this spirit of love and brotherhood, our mood changes drastically in the month of Av. Lamentations (*Eicha*) consists of five heart rending poems bewailing the downfall of Jerusalem and praying for her restoration. At least for this day of *Ti-sha B'Av* the Jew's spirit should be one of melancholy and solace, dedicated to meditation and contemplation of the many holocausts his people have experienced throughout their history.

Ecclesiastes, read on *Sukkot*, is a fascinating and in many ways baffling book, of doubt and pessimistic reflections on the vanity of human effort. In the midst of the celebration of life, the hero of the book suffers terribly from boredom and detachment and sincerely searches for a deeper meaning for his life. I do not all experience this mood so often during the cycle of the year? Even at the height of the most joyous holiday of the year, *Sukkot*, one may fall into this kind of mood. The preacher, *Kohélet*, is like a guide leading us on our search for a deeper meaning in life through G-d and the *Mitzvot*.

The final *Megillah* brings us to Purim. Esther is an exciting narrative telling us how the Jews of Persia were saved from extermination by the courage of their Queen and the unity of the Jewish people. Strangely enough this holiday was stripped of its true meaning. Originally it was aimed at instructing the Jewish people living among the Gentiles, to reserve one day a year to think about the unpleasantness and danger facing them, including pogroms and the threat of annihilation. The striking contrast, "*Mordechai* the Jew" and "*Haman* the Agagite (*Amalekite*)" conveys to us the purpose of the story. The Jew must be constantly alert to the danger of his mortal enemy.

Instead, Purim became merely a day of drinking and rejoicing. Drinking was never a Jewish tradition. Even on Passover, the holiday of freedom, our Rabbis limited the amount of drinking to four cups. Purim, the holiday established in exile, became the day of drinking, following, it seems, the example of our Gentile neighbors. The Rabbis wondered why G-d's name is absent throughout this story of miraculous salvation. The answer seemed to imply why this holiday has lost its original meaning. They say that the absence of G-d's name is a part of the many evils and troubles that shall befall Israel when they forsake the ways of God and this was the case in the time of Esther. (*Babylonian Talmud, Hulin*, 139 B).

Thus does the Jewish mood change from holiday to holiday, from season to season.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

Anyone who knows the location of, or possesses any of the editions of the SOY newspapers HAZEDEK (besides editions of 1944-45) and HAMELITZ (besides editions of 1955-56) are asked to please contact HAMEVASER by writing, or calling No. 781-8339. We are in the process of binding a complete set of these newspapers, and would appreciate your help in this project. Thank you.

lights of stairs and knocked on an apartment door. The door opened and we said, "Mikhail Marantzboim?" The young man at the door nodded. "Shalom," we said. He looked at us for a moment and answered, "Shalom. I've been waiting for you." The Jews of the Soviet Union are indeed waiting for us. The only question is, how long can they wait?

# The Russians Are Waiting

(Continued from Page 8)

Jewish survival. If anyone would like to know how we have survived the two thousand year night that we euphemistically call the diaspora, let him meet Vladimir Kislik and Gleb Kuperman. Let him meet the people to whom we became so close in Kishinev. We met well educated people there, people with good jobs, who, since applying for exit, were out of work or doing menial labor. We met people who know nothing of Judaism and hunger for any scrap of knowledge that is available to them. We saw how precious a picture postcard of any sight in Israel is to them. We heard their stories of how they were followed and arbitrarily imprisoned. We saw the bare walls of the home where KGB had recently entered and torn down all wall hangings of Jewish interest. We saw all this, and finally we asked, "Why do you want to go to Israel? Why do you bring all this upon yourselves?" The answer was simple, too simple. We were disappointed. "Anachnu Yehudim—We Are Jews." But what other answer is there? What more can be said than that in the soul of every Jew there is some force that pushes him to confront the fact of his Jewishness? In many Jews the force is not strong enough to do very much, but in others its power is boundless. This, more than anything, is what we saw in Russia. We did not understand it. But it was

there, palpable and real.

Time is running out, though. There is no institutionalized way of transmitting Judaism in the Soviet Union. Nothing resembling a Jewish school has existed for years. The only young faces one sees in synagogues are those of KGB men. In fewer than twenty years, there simply will not be anyone who remembers how to daven. The vast majority of activists are painfully ignorant. Emigration is down. True, this is mostly due to increased pressure by the Soviet authorities, but it is also at least partially due to the difficulties that Russian emigrants experience on the outside. Jews in the Soviet Union are acutely aware of these difficulties, and this awareness discourages many.

The protest movement is lacking in enthusiasm and direction, trying not very successfully to keep the mass of Jews in the West at a crisis psychology with regard to Soviet Jewry. New thrusts are needed. Attending one mass rally a year is not enough. More tourism is needed. The Soviet Union should be inundated with Jewish tourists. Some should meet with activists; others should make it their business to ask to be taken to synagogues and points of Jewish interest. Every guide in Russia (according to SSSI's Glen Richter every guide must report to the KGB each evening) should be asked about the

mistreatment of Jews.

Self study curricula in Russian must be developed for tourists to bring in with them. That the Soviet Jewish community is terminally ill is clear. Only serious attempts at Jewish education can prolong its life span. The longer that real Jewish consciousness exists, the longer the trickle of emigration will persist, the more Jews will be saved. Up to this point no serious effort in the direction of seeing to the Jewish education of Soviet Jews has been made. This is an essential new area of activity.

Perhaps most importantly, the Jewish communities of Israel and America must make a much more conscious effort to aid in the adjustment of recent Russian emigrants. Adjusting to life in the West is difficult for Russian Jews, for many reasons. Knowledge of this fact is a significant deterrent to emigration. A Jew wishing to leave the Soviet Union must know that he has a good chance for a decent life on the outside. To assure this will require great outlays of money by the Jewish community. It will also require the voluntary efforts of individual Jews who must be willing to open their homes and their social cliques to the new arrivals.

On our second night in Kishinev, we managed to locate the first of our addresses of Jewish activists. With a mixture of excitement and trepidation, we climbed several

## CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

## THE RUSSIANS ARE WAITING

HARVEY MAYERSON

Any traveller to the Soviet Union who has even minimal contact with Jews is haunted by one realization—that he is observing the death throes of a major Jewish community. To put it simply: within fifty years or less, there will be no Judaism in the Soviet Union. At approximately three million, the Soviet Jewish community is the second largest in the world. There are more Jews under Soviet control than there are in the State of Israel, and in less than fifty years there will be no Judaism in the Soviet Union. There will be Jews, people born of Jewish mothers. If, however, the present course of events does not change radically, the fact that there are people living in the Soviet Union who are Jewish by *halakic* definition, will have absolutely no meaningful implications to those people or to the remainder of world Jewry. Don Kates and I decided to travel to the Soviet Union on *Pesach*. We spent a total of twenty days there. We visited four cities. In each city we perceived a different facet of the tragedy.

In Kishinev, where our arrival at the synagogue was apparently expected, we learned first hand of the Soviet methods of intimidation. When we entered the synagogue, the *gabbai* left. About three minutes later he returned with three young

men whom we had seen loitering outside. They stood in the back in their improvised head coverings, their very presence silently daring anyone to speak with us.

In Kiev, we felt with poignancy the passing of the last traces of Jewish scholarship. Examining *sefarim* on the wall, we piqued the interest of a cheerful little man who told us his name was Yaakov Lvov. A Pensioner, Yaakov spends most of his time learning. Even after a brief conversation, we could tell that he was a *lamdan*. After I returned, I spoke with Rav Teitz, who is well acquainted with the Jews of Kiev. He told me that Yaakov, who as a *chabadnik* learned in Lubavitcher *yeshivot* in his youth, is a true *gadot* in learning. Yaakov told us that he makes his own wine and that he knows a man who slaughters chickens for him. Beef he hasn't eaten for the last thirty years. Yaakov Lvov, one of only a handful of Kiev's 200,000 Jews who do any learning, is 82.

Real fear greeted us in the city of Chernovitz. One tiny little synagogue remains there of some seventy or more that existed before the mass closings began. When we arrived at the synagogue, we were delighted to find that sitting directly across from us were two men both of whom were fluent in Hebrew. Our

delight ended quickly when one told us simply, "We can't talk to you; we're not allowed." From then on, communications with these two were short and hurried. They whispered to us when the *gabbai* turned his head. "The *gabbai* is crazy. His head is filled with water. People have been jailed for accepting *sefarim* from tourists. The *gabbai* knew you were coming even before you arrived."

In Moscow, the last city we visited, we were shocked to find a truly magnificent synagogue in beautiful condition. It was quite a change from the dilapidated synagogues that we had seen in other cities. We arrived there for *mincha* on *shabbat*. It was the only synagogue which we could enter by the main door. They even have a small *beit midrash* where they daven *mincha* saving the large sanctuary for *shacharit*. Of course the Moscow synagogue is well kept. It is the synagogue most visited by tourists. "Why, it's just propaganda that our Jews are mistreated. Come we will show you a typical synagogue right here in Moscow!"

But synagogues are not the only facet of Jewish life in the Soviet Union. If davening in a Russian synagogue is, something akin to holding the hand of a *goose*—a dying man—spending the evening at

the home of a young activist is like being present at the difficult and dangerous birth of a long awaited child conceived during the waning years of middle age.

A top researcher and author of scientific treatises, Vladimir Kislik lost his respected position and comfortable life when he applied for an exit visa to Israel. He was one of the people present at the *seder* which we attended in Kiev. Why, I wondered, was his face such a portrait of quiet desperation? I found out when another of the activists told us Kislik's story. Three years ago the authorities told him, "Your wife and child may go to Israel, but you will have to stay." Wanting their child to grow up in Israel, the Kisliks decided to accept the enforced separation. The man has not seen his wife or child in three years. I looked at him when we said *I'shanah habu'ah b'yerushalayim*, but his face betrayed no emotion.

On the last night of *Pesach*, we attended a going away party in Chernovitz for Gieb Kuperman. Gieb is about twenty six years old. He has been waiting for an exit visa for quite a long time. When he decided to apply, he dropped out of the university thinking that as an uneducated man he would be less of an asset to the worker's paradise

and that perhaps the authorities would not mind letting him out. Instead of receiving an exit visa, however, he received a draft notice. That was six years ago. Between then and now, he has done his service and worked as a common laborer since his discharge. About a year ago he married a girl crazy enough to share his dream, and now finally they had received permission to leave. They would be leaving Russia even before we would. Gieb rose to lead off a round of toasts. When our turn came, I said that in America it is easy to be Jewish, yet many Jews are not willing to identify in any way. "It is a privilege, therefore, to sit at the same table with Jews who are willing to fight for their Jewishness." I told them that Jews around the world admire them, and I concluded with a prayer that we might all be reunited some day in Israel. In response to my remarks, Gieb rose again, this time with "A toast to the Russian government who, by its oppressive policies, has made Jews of us."

To meet with Russian Jewish activists is to learn something about Jewishness that is virtually inaccessible to us in America. Without coming even close to fathoming it, you confront the raw driving force of

(Continued on Page 7)

## CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

## THE NUSACH WILDERNESS

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

*Nusach HaTefillah*, the traditional Jewish melodic patterns and prayer modes, is the musical accompaniment of prayer in all the synagogal services. The chanting of prayer with set melodic patterns is traditional and obligatory (see, e.g., Orech Chayim 619:1). *Nusach HaTefillah* is included with those customs which have *halakic* status and cannot be interfered with (see Yoreh Deah 336:4).

Much of our *nusach* is of ancient origin and can be traced back to the liturgy of the *Bet Hamikdash*. It took hundreds of years until the various melodic patterns of prayer were standardized and unified. In the Ashkenazic rites, the *Maharil* (R. Jacob Halevi Molin c. 1365-1427) was responsible for setting standards in the liturgy and music of the synagogue and in the community. According to tradition, he sanctioned numerous synagogal melodies. It is from him that we can directly trace many of the *nusach* chants which are in use in the Ashkenazic rites today. And it is he who ruled that so sacred is synagogal *nusach* and so ancient its origins, that it should not be changed (see Concise Encyclopedia of Jewish Music by Macy Nulman).

The importance of *nusach* is understandable. It is *nusach* which adds that extra feeling of reverence for prayer. It is *nusach* which sets the mood and sharpens the feelings of those who pray. It is *nusach* which leads us to a better appreciation and understanding of true prayer and teaches us the proper enunciation of words and the correct phrasing of sentences.

After all, how would we feel on Yom Kippur eve without the eerie

and inspiring *Koi Nidre* chant? The traditional *shabbat minchah* chants set us in a slow, reflective mood which fits the sense of loss upon the outgoing of *shabbat*. On *Tisha B'Av*, the sad and mournful *nusach* sharpens our feelings while on the *Shalosh Regalim* the joyful and uplifting *nusach* heightens our feelings of freedom and happiness.

*Nusach* is primarily based on eight prayer modes, each of which is a unique melodic pattern and scale combination. Our *nusach* consists of a combination and variation of these prayer modes. The different styles of *nusach* are matched to the various parts of the service to serve a particular liturgical and musical function. *Nusach* complements and enhances prayer. An example of this is the *Magen Avot* mode (simple minor) which is sung in a relaxed and peaceful manner, expressing faith, hope and thanksgiving and is used in a large part of the weekday services.

## Unity

Significantly, prayer and *nusach* are perhaps the strongest unifying forces in Jewish life. Wherever a Jew prays (I speak throughout of the Ashkenazi Jew, although I imagine the same would apply with the Sephardic Jew), similar, if not identical, chants are used. The bonds to the same G-d, to the same Judaism, are strengthened. Religious unity is reinforced by liturgical and *nusach* unity. *Nusach* speaks in all languages and no matter where the Jews find himself a close affinity to his fellow Jew will be fostered when he hears the traditional *nusach* chants.

*Nusach* is that which connects us with the eternal. It has taken

centuries to develop our present day *nusach*. As such, it expresses the collective craving for G-d of all Jews. It is more than a tune, for a tune is here today and forgotten tomorrow. *Nusach* contains that spark which has ignited the hearts of Jews throughout the centuries. It is our connection to the past and our link to the future. The greatest concert and the most recent musical hit cannot inspire the Jew as much as the simple *Koi Nidre* melody. And *Koi Nidre* is only one small particle of *nusach*. Imagine if all *nusach* would be treated with the same reverence!

It is with all the above in mind, that I am saddened by the low level of *nusach* knowledge in the Jewish community. We are in a wilderness in which few know where to go and even fewer care to escape. The traditional art of the *baal tefillah* is being forgotten and our age old musical traditions are being lost. A generation is growing up which lacks the appreciation and even worse, the knowledge of our musical heritage. And we are the losers; the level of prayer in our synagogues is testimony to that.

I have heard enough times the Israeli tune "Erev Shel Shoshanim" in the *Shabbat Musaf keduah* to convince me that our *kedushah* no longer has any hellness. It hurts to hear those who lack even a fundamental knowledge of *nusach* flaunt their ignorance. One no longer hears the proper *nusach* used in *shabbat pesukai d'zimrah*. The correct *nusach* for weekday *shacharit* is nearly forgotten; only the old men in shul still remember how it was done in the old country.

I find a direct correlation between

the level of *nusach* used in a synagogue and the decorum observed. The less correct the *nusach* the stronger the din of voices. The less knowledgeable the *baal tefillah* is in *nusach* the more disrespect is shown in davening. People can sense when correct *nusach* is being used. They stop talking, and they even pray.

I speak not of the art of *chazzanut*, for that is holding its own. I speak of that which every Jew should know, *nusach*, and of that which every Jew should be, a *baal tefillah*. Even a person with the most unattractive voice can chant *nusach*. His recitation of the prayers will sound better than any contemporary melodic rendition of prayer.

## Solutions?

What is needed is an increased sensitivity to the age old musical traditions of Judaism. We need good *baalei tefillah* before prayer becomes devoid of meaning and our synagogues completely lose their decorum. We need to recognize the

importance of *nusach* and we must train ourselves to use it.

I believe many rabbis, *chazzanim* and teachers have abrogated their responsibility in this area. They have the prime obligation to set the musical and liturgical standards of the synagogue. They can insist that only those competent should be allowed to be *baalei tefillah*. They must teach their communities how to daven. They must lead the way and not let their synagogues turn into *nusach* wildernesses.

To those who detract from *nusach*, I can only say that you miss out on a glimpse of the Divine and you deprive yourselves of a religious sense of beauty and serenity. Your souls are closed to the flow and ebb of prayer. Your minds blur the meaningful words. A void is created in your hearts and into this void the profane drives out the sacred.

*Nusach* "speaks" for itself. You should just listen more carefully. Remember, your religious personality can only benefit from the experience.

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