

HAMEVASER

A Student Publication of Traditional Thought and Ideas
Published by The Jewish Studies Divisions of Yeshiva University

Vol. 17, No. 4

© Hamevaser, 1979

NEW YORK CITY

January 4, 1979

Sephardic Rabbis Meet at Yeshiva for First International Conclave

Eleven leading Sephardic rabbis from seven Latin American countries journeyed to Yeshiva University in New York City for a historic meeting with their American and Canadian counterparts at the first of its kind International Conclave of the Sephardic Rabbinate of the Americas, where they confronted what was described as the "spiritual suicide" taking place among Sephardic youth.

The rabbis — among them the Chief Rabbis of Argentina, Columbia, Panama and Peru, and leading rabbis from Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela — resolved to make this Interamerican dialogue an annual event to be sponsored, by Yeshiva University and by the World Sephardi Federation. Plans are underway for the second conclave to take place in Mexico City in 1979. The initial

conclave was co-hosted by Dr. Norman Lamm, and Dr. Solomon Gaon, chairman of the World Sephardi Federation and director of Sephardic Studies at Yeshiva.

Setting the tone in his keynote address, Dr. Gaon said that "In their new surroundings, our people have often abandoned the family values which were so evident in the old countries (Turkey, the Balkan countries, Morocco, Iraq, etc.) with the exception of our Syrian brothers who by great sacrifice have built Torah institutions in their communities. We shall need experienced and well trained educators who will be able to face these difficulties and turn the tide of assimilation and spiritual suicide."

Reaching youth was a major concern throughout the three day conclave, as rabbis from each of the various Latin American nations described Jewish life in their communities.

The two Venezuelan rabbis, for instance, outlined the effects of living in a nation where Jews are a very tiny minority. Rabbi Pynchos Brenner, Chief Rabbi of the Union of Israelita de Caracas, pointed out that the entire Jewish population of the city amounts to less than one percent of its residents. Jewish youth, therefore, encounter far fewer Jewish influences as they attend local

universities than do young Jews in New York or in Argentina, where, according to Argentine Chief Rabbi Shelomo Benhamu of Buenos Aires, there are 800,000 Jews, two major Jewish newspapers, and numerous yeshivas.

Rabbi Jacobo Garzon of the *Asociacion Israelita de Venezuela* added that most of the teachers of Jewish subjects in Caracas are visiting Israelis who seldom stay more than a year or two and therefore can only establish a passing relationship with their students. Recently, he stated, an *Instituto Superior de Estudios Judaiicos (ISEJ)* has been established to provide a center for more advanced Jewish studies for those who would like to acquire Jewish knowledge.

Another major issue raised repeatedly at the Conclave was that of sharing experiences and resources. Informally commenting on the pressing need for further communication between the rabbis of the two continents, Rabbi Garzon remarked that "You here at Yeshiva University often know more facts about us (i.e. Latin American Jews) than we know about one another."

Chanuka Chagiga is Rousing Success

The SOY annual Chanukah Chagiga, held last December 27, lasted past one o'clock and left a lot of leibedek revelers screaming for more.

The evening's festivities began in F501 with a talk by Rabbi Meir Fulda. Dedicating the talk to his father, z"tl, Rabbi Fulda raised a number of ques-

Y'a'acov. He described the struggle Ya'acov had with the angel of Eisav, and ultimately the difference between detrimental and beneficial angels, and their use in our philosophy, by speaking in terms of Kodesh and Chol, and the fine line even among such so called Kodesh, and true Kadosh. The only way, according to Rabbi



D.J.

SOY Chanukah Chagiga in full swing

tions about Chanukah in regard to observance.

Wending his way through a myriad of sources, the JSS and SCW Rebbe began his answers by returning "to the dawn of our people's history," the time of

Fulda, one can function is to have one drive—to serve Hashem. If any other drive equals it, we result in abject schizophrenia.

After the talk, the crowd of over 400 walked over to the

continued on page 3



P.R.

Participants at the International Sephardic Convention

Jewish Affairs Committee Examines YU in Israel

by Stuart Verstandig

Upon the request of various members of the YU Administration, the Jewish Affairs Committee held a meeting on Sunday, December 10th to discuss the feasibility of forming a YU structured institution in Israel. Under the chairmanship of Joseph Klausner, the JAC investigated the basis of such a venture, and concluded that the purpose of such an institution in Israel would be to fill the gap between the religious and non-religious in Eretz Yisrael, based on the ideas of Torah U'Madah. The Committee felt that this should be in conjunction with YU with the purpose of developing a YU community in Israel deeply rooted in tradition, fully integrated in Israeli life and attuned to modern culture.

Mr. Klausner suggested that, as a starting project, the idea of founding a Yeshiva University-

type high school should be explored. "But we don't necessarily want an enlarged YU structure with all of its graduate schools per

continued on page 3

Councils Close Out Fall Semester HoPaC, Sepharim Sale are Highlights

With the fall semester nearing its end, the Jewish Studies Councils are meeting to evaluate their activities and plan for the new year.

The most noticeable activities under SOY auspices have been the Sepharim Sale, and the Chanukah Chagiga, both of which were highly successful.

Bumy Kaisman, SOY President, said that the publications promised last year and early this year, should be available shortly. Beginning with the revised

Abraham Carmel Speaks at Yeshiva Tells Large Crowd of Religious Odyssey

by Joel M. Wolf

On Tuesday evening, December 12, SOY and YCSC sponsored a talk by Abraham Carmel, a convert to Judaism. Mr. Carmel, who now teaches at the Yeshiva of Flatbush, was born in Scotland to an Episcopalian

mother and Presbyterian father, and was named Kenneth Cox. Eventually, Kenneth Cox took the name of the mountain in Israel where Eliyahu disproved the prophets of idolatry. The talk centered around the odyssey which transformed Kenneth Cox

to Abraham Carmel.

Mr. Carmel's deep Scottish accent and sense of humor made listening to him both delightful and informative. His decision to become Jewish was not made on the spur of the moment, but after years of serious thought and searching. He originally became disillusioned with his native religion when, during his teen years, he spoke to his bishop and realized that the man who was supposed to be his religious leader did not even believe in the tenets he espoused. This experience in his teens has made him especially sensitive to the groping for meaning in life which many Jewish youth seek.

When Mr. Carmel rejected the faith to which even his bishop did not ascribe, he embarked on a search that would lead him through all the major religions of the world. There were several criteria which had to be met to convince him to join a religion. The first was that it had to, in

continued on page 3

Festivals and Fasts, which is expected within the next two



D.J.

Sepharim Sale in action

weeks, a host of booklets should become available soon, including a Sofrut pamphlet edited by Stuart Fishman, *A Guide to Israeli Yeshivot*, designed to aid the Israel-bound student in selecting the proper place of study, and the long-awaited *Guide to Kashrut*.

SOY is also planning a t'fillin check which they will help subsidize, a tzizit sale, revision of the Tape Library, and at least one more Sepharim sale.

JSSSC president Jerry Kap-

continued on page 3

Welcome Back

It is finished. After months of eager anticipation, the gleaming new Bet Midrash is open for business. The sepharim may be worn, the furniture disappointingly familiar, but we can be proud.

HAMEVASER, on behalf of the entire student body, wishes to thank those proponents, planners, and supporters of the project, without whom this laudable effort could not have been achieved.

Equally, we appeal to the bochurim who will be using the new Bet Midrash to treat it with the respect and pride behooved of a yeshiva student and demanded by a Makom Kadosh, so that its sanctity may be matched by its unmarred beauty.

Welcome Decision

It is refreshing, amidst all the recent talk about "the validity of Torah U'Ma'ah," to find another prime example of what Yeshiva represents.

Recently, the question of instituting teacher evaluations was raised in the SCW Student Senate. At the time, it was wisely decided to table the matter until a halachic decision could be rendered by the appropriate authorities. When asked, the Rav decided that for various reasons, this teacher evaluation program should not be instituted. Based on this opinion, the Senate discontinued all further discussion, and the matter was dropped.

This is only one of the many examples of YU synthesis. The derech of basing a solution to an academic issue primarily on halachic principles is to be applauded, and should continue to be applied in all areas of University functioning.

Would be Welcome

The start of any school year is marked by noble promises on the part of student councils. Often, these promises for certain services are backed by the earmarking of funds, specifically for those purposes. Such was the case this year as well. Unfortunately, it is now January, the semester is drawing to a close and some of those services are far from being fulfilled.

Specifically, we are referring to the many

HAMEVASER

500 West 183rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10033. Editorial and Advertising Office 781-5440. Published monthly during the academic year by the Student Organization of Yeshiva, James Strine School Student Council, and Ezra Michael College Student Council. The views of signed articles are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of HAMEVASER or Yeshiva University. Editorial policy is determined by majority vote of the members of the Governing Board. Advertising rates are available upon request. Subscription rate: \$2.50 per year.

SAM SCHWARZMER Editor-in-Chief

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Jack Gross | Hyman Schwarzmer |
| Associate Editor | Executive Editor |
| Stuart Fischman | Joel E. Salzman |
| Managing Editor | Senior Editor |
| Michael Ackerman | Joel Seiter |
| News Editor | News Editor |
| Pesach Lichtenberg | Neal Auerbach |
| Feature Editor | Feature Editor |
| Tommy Weiss | Herzl Heller |
| Research Editor | Research Editor |
| Jeffrey K. Cymbler | Ethan Acev |
| Copy Editor | Layout Editor |
| Aharon Ungar | Ephraim Simcha |
| JSS Editor | Editor Emeritus |

ASSOCIATE BOARD

Art: Josh Teplow; Circulation: Isaac Sobelman; News: Shyiel Charlop; Copy: Yitzchak Chelitz; Research: David Fogel; Photography: David Jacobowitz; Typing: Sam Benson, Jack Stroh, David Fischer; Assistant to the Editor: Leebor Caplan

STAFF

Copy: JEFFREY INDIG, Moshe Rosner, David Schwab, Martin Himmel, Moshe Rosenberg, Yaakov K. Chaitzky, Joseph Friedman.

Feature: Jordan Beck, Sari Cohen, Sheon Karol, Joseph Klausner, David I. Mayerhoff, Marc Smeiner, Martin Sanz, Jerry Stein, Jack Straus, Joseph Zupnick.

News: Israel Sobelman, Joel Wolf, Robert Segal, Brad Herman, Louis Tuchman, Jeff Albinder, Allen Freidman, Hyman Kassoria

Layout: Stuis Kaplan

publications which were to have been published long before the end of the semester. For example, students have been eagerly and impatiently awaiting the release of the "Guide to Kashrut", and questions are being raised as to the existence of Hamashkif, EMC's hebrew language paper.

All of these projects are worthy of praise, but only once they come to fruition. Both, in their own way, serve an important function, and there is no reason for their absence.

If the sponsoring councils still consider these projects worthwhile, every effort should be made to insure their publication. If not, the funds currently set aside for their use should be rerouted to other projects that would equally benefit the students' needs.

From the Editor's Desk

Speaking Out

Sam Schwarzmer



An interesting question is raised in reference to Parashat Vayeshev. In discussing the activities of Yoseph in regard to his brothers, the Torah states, "And Yoseph brought the evil report to their father..." In spite of this seeming act of Lashon Harah, nowhere is there mention of any punishment for this act. In addition, when discussing the sin of the meraglim (spies), the Torah, using the same word in a milder form, states, "and they brought out the report of the land which they investigated..." yet in this case a most severe punishment was meted out. What makes the two cases different? Why was Yoseph not punished?

The answer lies in the difference in the delivery of the reports. Yoseph "brought" (Vayave) the evil tidings, but the meraglim "brought out" (yotziu) their report. The spies were punished for not telling the entire story, not for saying something less than praiseworthy about the land of Israel. Yoseph, on the other hand, gave all the facts. If the resulting report was bad, it not his to judge.

I bring this parsha to illustrate a point. There are those in the administration who feel that the undergraduate public media have been unduly harsh in our criticism on a number of issues in recent months. They state that there is a bias on the part of the newspapers to criticize for criticism's sake, to "feel our oats" and exercise our adolescent tendencies towards antagonizing authority figures in general.

I am deeply distressed by this attitude. It is a pity that student opinion is apparently given such little consideration. What is clearly a concerted attempt to furnish a forum for public sentiment, has been denigrated to yellow journalism.

In the past months, no less than nine separate articles have appeared in the undergraduate papers centering on the seeming dichotomy developing at YU in the area of Torah U'Mada'h. While a number of Jewish Studies programs are being added, an attitude is nevertheless being sensed wherein many upper level decisions are being made that seem to ignore certain tenets of Torah ethics. Yet, what is expressed as honest concern for an institution that has given us so much, is taken as petty criticism, to be ignored and discarded.

I will not attempt to defend HAMEVASER. I feel its articles and readership can attest to its integrity. If anything, we have been accused of being too fair, of not covering an issue when only one side is known to us.

If in the course of responsible journalism, a fact is uncovered or an opinion expressed that does not put ourselves in the most flattering light, it is our duty to insure that this is given equal expression; not for the sake of "feeling our oats," but to certify our ability to remain objective and give our readers the best possible forum in which to expound on their own thoughts, as well as glean opinions from those of their peers.

We are not like the meraglim, only picking those aspects to criticize as it suits us, ignoring the more positive points. A cursory glance at the past three years of HAMEVASER will show this. Rather like Yoseph, we report all we can and publish opinions when we feel it will be constructive, and we will continue to provide this service (to students and administration alike) as long as we are able to do so.

* * * * *

I should make mention of the following recent development. The Einstein Library is currently reworking its schedule to allow for closing on all hours of Shabbat. The matter of Yom Tovim is being discussed.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Are ethical character traits a definite by-product of a yeshiva education? Have we lost the "Masorah" for character education in our Yeshivah?

There has been much discussion lately as to the proper behavior expected of a YU student. Some students understand possible "misbehavior" as being due to the deficient facilities and conditions on campus. They fail to realize that what man does is no less than what man is, and the testing ground of what man is cannot be an ideal condition, for then it is no test. Some believe that "misbehavior" is due to improper application of halacha. Although correct, what they often don't understand is the possible personality split between what a man knows with what a man is. It is with this dichotomy that I will concern myself.

The Rambam states "Val-pi ha'deaf t'ehive ha'avahav"—the love of God and His ways goes hand in hand with knowledge of Him. Where would the dichotomy in our personalities have originated if not

through a dichotomy in our education?

Have we not separated our lives into morning shiurim and afternoon lectures? Have we not limited "Y'deat Hashem" to the Bet Midrash, not incorporating it into our nature? When we leave the Bet Midrash do we leave the search for Hashem behind?

Despite all our protestations, we are learning Torah as a science of laws to be applied rather than as a way of thinking and viewing the world. The search for and love of Hashem must not be limited to any place or time, but must be incorporated into our selves and change our frame of reference.

The Rambam states "And what is the method to love Him (Hashem) and fear Him? When man contemplates His great doings and creations and will see from them His wisdom that is unlimited and unbounded—immediately he loves (Hashem)."

"Y'deat Hashem" is a consequence of perceiving Hashem's wisdom in all His creations. It is a state of mind. This wisdom is the unifying force that may be found in

the Torah as well as throughout nature, both being creations of Hashem. Indeed there is this unity between mind and matter, the physical and the spiritual. The spirit manifests itself in material forms that mirror the wisdom of the whole. We must perceive this unity in and around us, be it in our work, our relationships, our learning, our every act. Work must constitute not a means to an end, but it must be converted into an art, the art of living and understanding with "Ahavat Hashem." We must invest our work with creative force and see beyond it to the entire body of creation and Hashem's wisdom in it.

We must develop the ability to appreciate and understand nature. Nature has always been the ally of religion. Our prophets and thinkers have constantly drawn from its source, and perceived Hashem's wisdom in its beauty.

We may dissect nature into its parts in our diverse courses. Yet we must always perceive in the microcosm, a reflection of Hashem's wisdom in the macrocosm. In psychology lecture we must remember

that the One who understands the workings of one mind understands the workings of all minds, of all life. In physics class we must remember the consistency, perfection and unity of nature's laws; understand the crucial interrelationships in biology and the wisdom in the parts that make us a whole. In our Shiurim, let us not create a dichotomy between knowledge and action, Halacha and Aggadah, law and the spirit of the law. Let us combine them into a way of thinking and living, through which we can "circumcise our hearts" to perceive "a world in a blade of grass and a heaven in a wildflower."

Anyone interested in discussing ideas related to this topic please contact me in Morg. 820 or tel # 923-9124.

Chaim Mond

HAMEVASER joins the entire YU community in offering our sincerest condolences to Mrs. Francis Streich on the untimely passing of her beloved husband, Hamakom Yinachem Otach B'toch Sh'ar Avnei Tziyon V'yirushalayim.

YU in Israel?

continued from page 1
 se. Rather, we are interested in a YU-type institution which would serve as the nucleus of a modern, orthodox, religious, Zionist, developing community which, unfortunately, is lacking in Israel today."

Michael Taubes, YC Junior and JAC Co-chairman, suggested an additional facet. He said that there is no place a college graduate can enroll to receive an education comparable to the one given in YU on the graduate Semicha level. "A new RIETS-Revel program should therefore be formed in Israel as a continuation of the system in YU. This would give those students who would like to receive Semicha and an M.A. in Jewish Studies a chance to continue in Eretz Yisrael." A combined Bet Midrash program and masters program was suggested, to enable a student to receive Semicha and an M.A. in either Jewish history or Jewish philosophy. This would be based on the expansion of the Gruss Center in Jerusalem.

Menashe Bryskal of EMC, a participant, pointed out that it would be better to start with some sort of college program. He explained that there are three institutions "that are not far away from us"—e.g., BMT, Machon Lev and Bar Ilan University. BMT is on an undergraduate level

established by YU students although not related to YU. Machon Lev has a program dealing with technology and is limited in its offerings. Bar Ilan University has a Yeshiva Program on a smaller scale.

Realistic Influences

In closing, Mr. Klausner said that aside from the major accomplishment, the planners of the project (to be known as "Operation YU in Israel") foresee beneficial consequences primarily through the increased aliyah of YU students and their families. "But we want this to be an Israeli project in Israel, meeting the particular needs of Israel and not just another BMT or Itri catering primarily to American students. The goal must be a network of schools and institutions inspired by the vision of the YU thesis that will, hopefully, in reality, influence the religious community in particular and the general society on a larger level."

Upon the occasion of the meeting, JAC received a number of telegrams and letters from various dignitaries here and in Israel on this subject. All of the well wishers favored this general idea. As a result, the Committee will continue delving into the possibilities of YU in Israel and submit their findings and recommendations to the appropriate authorities.

Chabad Club is a Viable Force Within the YU Community

by Moshe Rosenberg

To run a successful club at Yeshiva University, students must be greatly motivated. It is with Torah-inspired motivation, and with a desire to spread Yiddishkeit and increase the performance of Mitzvot that the Chabad Club has entered into its most productive year — a year which has seen the resumption of projects from previous years, and the introduction of many new activities.

New Additions

This year, in addition to its regular Sunday slot on WYUR for the Tanya shiur, the Chabad Club presents listeners every Tuesday evening with a call-in talk show, "Judaism on the Line," during which many issues are discussed at length and any Jewish topic is fair game. This year has also seen a pushka distribution campaign and the introduction of a regularly published news letter.

The most recent additions, however, to Chabad Club activities are the revival of the old Dombrov Shteibl and the festivities in connection with Yud-Tes Kislev. The Dombrov Shteibl, at 566 W. 183rd Street, was left without a minyan after Succot; its members had moved from the neighborhood or had started davening at the "new" Dombrov Shteibl. When the Chabad Club heard about this Makom Kadosh going to waste, it quickly laid

plans to re-open the shul. They renovated the shteibl, replaced the stolen telephone, and, one rainy night, dragged back the Bimah, Amud, and other religious objects from the "new" Dombrov Shteibl. Since Rosh Chodesh Kislev, a Nusach Ha-Ari minyan has been meeting weekday mornings at 7:30. It must be noted, though that the maintenance of such a shul, with its accompanying Mikvah, requires much effort, dedication, and funding. Recently, a broken Mikvah pump became a great strain on the shul's budget. Therefore, any help Yeshiva students can offer by attending the minyan or making a contribution would be greatly appreciated.

Finally, as for Yed-Tes Kislev, Yeshiva University students had not one Farbrengen, but two. Monday night, December 18th, a guest rabbi from Australia conducted a Farbrengen for students, complete with refreshments and Divrei Torah, until 1:30 A.M. According to participants, the enthusiasm and inspiration of the Farbrengen was unmatched.

That gathering, though, was only a warm-up, for the next night at 8:00 P.M., when seventeen students were breezing along in a specially rented van on the way to World Lubavitch Headquarters. Throughout the trip, strains of Nigunim and

Abraham Carmel Speaks at Yeshiva Tells Large Crowd of Religious Odyssey

continued from page 1

fact, be a religion. Mr. Carmel feels that any religion, such as Buddhism, which does not claim to be based on past revelation is just a philosophy, rather than a religion. He rejected Hinduism, not so much for its polytheistic nature but for its ignorance of ethics and morals.

After rejecting Islam, Mr. Carmel was attracted to Roman Catholicism, and was ordained as a priest in 1943. He became disenchanted with Christianity, however, when he came to doubt Jesus's divinity—the cornerstone of all Christian faiths. After extensive research, it became apparent that the majority of the teachings of Jesus were based upon Judaism, and it was this realization which brought him finally to Judaism.

An important factor which Mr. Carmel stressed was the reluctance of Jews to accept converts who are not properly inspired. Whereas it took five months to undergo the process of conversion to Catholicism, it was eight years before he was accepted into Judaism. The Bet-Din of London, before which he appeared, was occupied by some of the greatest rabbis of our time. This Bet-Din in London, which oversaw Mr. Carmel's conversion, has the most stringent re-

quirements for conversion of any court in the Jewish world. Guided by the writings of the Rambam and Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, and taught by personalities such as Dayan Grunfeld and Rav Herz, z"tl, he underwent what can only be described as a complete metamorphosis. After completing the conversion process, including a two-year period when he ate only vegetables for lack of kosher food, he decided to turn to the land from which Judaism sprung 3500 years ago.

During the years when Mr. Carmel was studying Judaism, he lived primarily in Carmel College, a Yeshiva in England. He went to Israel to learn more about its people. Having studied the Bible extensively, Israel was a Paradise for him. He expressed his desire to return to Israel to settle in a few years.

One of the main points made during the talk was that the Jews must worry about returning fellow Jews to Judaism, rather than attempting to convert the Gentiles. While there has been a resolution by a Reform group to attempt to create a "crusade" to convert the world, Mr. Carmel is very critical of such an undertaking. He pointed out that the realization of the true God by all people was a prophecy for the future, and we cannot expect the world to change its thinking overnight. It is for this very reason that the conversion process is so drawn-out, and Mr. Carmel thinks that it can only be this way.

The Jewish community suffers from what was termed "Bar Mitzvah-itis." A young person cannot be expected to retain ties to his people, if no effort was ever made to create any ties. Jewish education must be insured from the youngest age possible, and the only sure way to attract youth to Judaism is by enabling them to witness Judaism in the home. During the question and answer period which followed, he stressed this idea regarding Jewish youth who have become disillusioned with Judaism. The most important thing which can be done for them is to bring them into a home to witness a Shabbat—to see living Judaism. Mr. Carmel believes that Mashiach is quite near; that he is knocking on the door. He exhorts us to open the door to let him in.

Councils Review

continued from page 1

lan told HAMEVASER that in spite of the success of the "Ho-PaC" campaign, the council is not going to sit back. Plans are already underway for publication of Divrei Torah for Shabbat and Holidays. In addition to the annual Sepharim Drive, plans are in the works for special programs with guest speakers on a variety of topics. Kaplan pointed out that all announcements, messages and coming events can be found in the new JSS bulletin, "The James Striar Squire," which will continue to be published periodically.

A meeting of the EMC Student Council was held on Dec. 25. In addition to organizing the official committees, mention was also made of the advent of the Tzedakah campaign, and the publication of a bulletin on Jewish Events in the metropolitan area.

According to President Faivy Klapper, a number of activities are in store for the spring, including the gala Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration. He expressed confidence that what occurred last year would not happen again.

Lastly, when asked if and when *Hamashtif* will be published this year, it was pointed out that \$400 was just allocated to the paper to resume production. The President stated once again that barring any more unforeseeable delays, *Hamashtif* will be out soon.

Chanuka Chagiga

continued from page 1

recently reopened Beit Midrash for refreshments and music by the incomparable Stanley Miller Band.

The music was non-stop, the dancing energetic, and the atmosphere, nothing less than heimish. Playing everything from *Tzaevi* to *Macho, Man*, the band left everyone attending uplifted and astounded.

The absence of many of the RIETS rebbeim, was noted, and explained as being due to prior commitments.

President Bumy Kaisman said that the event was what he had hoped for, and is already making plans for the even bigger Purim Chagigah.



First nighters taking advantage of the new Beit Midrash

Mechitza: A Divisive Issue In American Jewry

by Jack Blinder

It is an issue which arose less than 200 years ago, yet it is one which for many years has been creating one of the most serious threats to Jewish religious unity in Diaspora history. It involves a question of halacha which had not been raised even once throughout the millennia of Jewish history, until the mid-nineteenth century, after which it became the most copiously discussed halachot of our time. It is a halacha which, although never mentioned specifically in any classical sources, has become the cause celebre of Torah observant Judaism. It is the issue of the mechitza (partition).

Although it is a well known and historically corroborated fact that synagogues have always been built with separate sections for men and women, a clearly formulated prohibition against mixed prayer does not appear in the *Shulchan Aruch*, nor in any other code of halacha, not to mention the Gemara. Therefore, when the necessity of separation during prayer was suddenly put to challenge in mid-nineteenth century America (the European Reform movement did not at first institute this particular break with Jewish tradition), the halachic basis for this principle had to be sought out from the sources and publicized. Some of the more cogent and popular arguments are cited in this article.

Perhaps the most well known and oft-quoted Talmudic source for the requirement of the mechitza is the Gemara¹ which, commenting on the Mishna and

"...a clearly formulated prohibition against mixed prayer does not appear in *Shulchan Aruch*...not to mention the Gemarah."

Baraita describing the gallery (the *tikum gadol*) which was constructed in the Temple to provide for separation of the sexes during the Sukkot festivities, asks how it was permissible to build such a structure, seeing that any type of construction carried out on the Temple grounds required divine sanction (*Hakol Biklav*), either through prophecy or scripture² (it may be demonstrated how serious a requirement this was from another Gemara³, which uses the principle of *Hakol Biklav* to waive the performance of "the covering of the blood," in the Temple, which is normally a Biblical obligation⁴).

Frivolity

The Gemara then replies that it was derived from a verse⁵, that in all large assemblies where both men and women are present a separation must be made to prevent improper behavior or frivolity, and it was this verse which was used as a basis to permit the construction of the women's balcony. Based on this Gemara, the following conclusion is drawn: if the prohibition of mingling of the sexes at any large gathering was deemed important enough to override the injunction against unsanctioned construction in the Temple (which was an injunction considered to be on the level of a Biblical injunction), then it must certainly be a most vital and urgent requirement, presumably on the *d'oraita*, Biblical level.

This Gemara has been cited by many great sages as a Talmudic basis for the requirement of separate seating in the synagogue by the Rav, Rav Moshe Feinstein, and Rav Aharon Kotler, to name a few. Rav Feinstein⁶ is of the opinion that separation between the sexes in the synagogue is a *din d'oraita*, Biblical injunction; although he concedes that one might argue against drawing a conclusion from the requirements of the Temple to those of the syna-

agogue, since in the Temple there was a Biblical prohibition against levity and lightheadedness, whereas in the synagogue, such a concept might only be *d'rabbanan*. Rabbinic prohibition (many gedolim, such as Rav Aharon Kotler, and Rav A. Y. Kook have adduced many proofs that the sanctity of the synagogue may indeed be compared to that of the Temple). However, he tends to reject this distinction on the grounds that the verse from which the requirement of the separation of sexes is derived does not deal with the Temple at all.

From this source, it would appear that not only during prayer is a mixed group prohibited, but at any large assembly, even if not in the synagogue.

Christianization

Another approach to the source of the importance of the mechitza has been expressed by the Rav. He noted the fact that mixed seating was one of the earliest reforms of the infant Christian religion; whereas Jewish synagogues had always had separate seating. Thus, the recent introduction of mixed seating into the synagogue is not, as some believe, a trend toward modernization, but rather a step towards Christianization, since throughout the ages the Jews have prayed with separation of the sexes while Christians have not. Therefore, how can a Jew with any sense of propriety and historical pride possibly concede to such a "reform" in Jewish worship? The Christianization of Jewish worship is a more serious matter, however, than mere historical pride. According to many, the adaptation of any non-Jewish form of worship into the Jewish service is a violation of a Biblical prohibition. For instance, the Rambam interprets a verse in *Re'eh*⁷ to read as follows: "Lest you...say, 'how did these nations serve their gods; even so I will do likewise.' You shall not do this [form of worship, even] to the Lord your God."⁸

The Rav, when referring to the law of the mechitza, has expressed the opinion that the issue may even be said to have the status of an "arka d'mesana," concerning which the Gemara declares that when religious persecution is involved, even the most minor and insignificant Jewish custom must be upheld even under threat of death (*Yehareg v'al ya'avur*).⁹ The Rav believes this concept to apply not only to situations of political or physical persecutions, but also where a minority of Torah-observant Jews are intimidated by the "tyranny of the majority" of other Jews, who embrace a false philosophy.

Perhaps the most obvious, if least noted, source for the separation of sexes during prayer, is found in the *Seder Eliyahu Rabba*.¹⁰ The version quoted in the *Yalkut Shimoni* on the verse "and thy

camp shall be holy,"¹¹ reads as follows: "One should not stand among women and pray so his thoughts will not be about, but should sanctify his camp five cubits on all sides."¹²

An interesting ramification of this source would be the application of separation of sexes to private prayer, a conclusion not generally quoted as halacha *l'ma'aseh*. In *Igrot Moshe*,¹³ in fact, Rav Feinstein specifically permits this.

continued on page 7

KASHRUT LECTURE SERIES CONTINUES

Rabbi Grunblatt Discusses Relationship Between RCA and UOJCA Kashrut

by Noah Wittig

On Wednesday night, December 6, Rabbi Jacob Grunblatt, Chairman of the Kashrut Commission of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA), and spiritual leader of the Queens Jewish Center, spoke to an audience of Yeshiva students.

Rabbi Grunblatt began by describing the RCA's relationship to the Kashrut department of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (UOJCA). The UOJCA is a lay organization whose Kashrut department administers a large number of hechsherim. The head office, consisting of an administrator, a co-ordinator, and one part-time assistant administrator, controls the machshirim and mashgichim. UOJCA's Kashrut administrators and office staff process the reports of the rabbanim hamachshirim and make payments to mashgichim.

Rabbi Grunblatt outlined the stages through which an application for a UOJCA hechsher must pass before being approved. The company seeking the hechsher submits an application to the UOJCA Kashrut office. If the application is not rejected immediately, the U-O sends field workers to investigate the facilities requiring hashgacha. The investigators file a preliminary report which is then forwarded to the RCA Kashrut Commission, which decides on the halachic feasibility of granting a hechsher, and the type of hashgachah necessary—*t'midi* or *yotzeh v'nichnas* (constant or part time).

Stamp of Approval

At a meeting of the Kashrut Committee, whose members include U-O and RCA representatives, a "conference of halacha and business" occurs and the final stamp of approval is given on the hashgachah. The U-O is then charged with carrying out the joint Commissions' decision.

Rabbi Grunblatt emphasized that though the RCA receives a stipend from the UOJCA to help defray expenses of the rabbanim hamachshirim and mashgichim, all the members of the RCA Commission donate their time and halachic expertise. Also, the legal matters and financial expenses incurred by the company are handled by the UOJCA, not by the RCA.

The RCA has an "implied power of review" on all its hashgachot. The maintenance of certain halachic standards is a prime concern. It is the "right and moral obligation" of the RCA to check the hechsherim which it has given.

"The caliber of the mashgiach, in the final analysis, makes the product," Rabbi Grunblatt asserted. Caliber is measured by knowledge and *yir'at shamayim*. A subcommittee on appointments recommends to the U-O professional staff mashgichim for the U-O hechsherim. Every effort is made to have an RCA member serve as the rav hamachshir. In any case, it is the professional staff of the UOJCA Kashrut office who carry the "ultimate responsibility" for the appointment of the mashgichim.

Because of the lack of trained personnel and the great temptation, a "super-

masgich" is engaged on a reasonable basis to keep tabs on the mashgichim at the local level. Some of these "super-mashgichim" travel so much that a rav hamachshir may be unnecessary. He would be "at least as good as a pulpit rabbi."

Rabbi Grunblatt then addressed himself to the three major problems in giving hashgachot: organizational, practical, and ethical. "Most problems are human problems; there are human dimensions in every situation." Since an objective set of standards—"by the book"—exists, when different groups share responsibility for one organization, Rabbi Grunblatt's position becomes "diplomatic in nature," to see that "various components work together smoothly." This is "as important as actual technical problems."

Speaking about practical problems, Rabbi Grunblatt remarked that there exists "a danger of a shortage of Kosher meat and particularly of meat that meets our standards." A decline in the number of cattle-breeders has increased prices and decreased the supply of animals. Though the kosher market is too small to have a significant impact on the amount of meat consumed, it is large enough to be a problem. Rabbi Grunblatt cited the closing of Allen Packing Co., which had supplied meat to the German kehilla in Washington Heights and to Lubavitch butchers in Brooklyn as an example of the phenomenon that he described. (For a couple of weeks in October and November, the kehilla was instructed by Rabbi J. Breuer not to eat meat.) "On the one hand we revel in the number of Yeshivot and other institutions of learning, while on the other, we've lost the middle-of-the-road Jew. A strong, fervent minority exists, but the rest are lost."

Pressures and Problems

There is pressure to replace vegetable shortening with animal fat, which is cheaper. Professional staff competent to deal with the very complex problem of food chemistry is necessary. "The Torah was not given to angels. These are the problems and there are ways to resolve them. I know many people who are nervous about Kashrut and I am one of them," asserted Rabbi Grunblatt. "When we deal with thousands of people we deal with statistics: x-per cent will be incompetent. There is an average, constant, level of incompetence."

"Kashrut is so big, it is therefore understandable why there is a certain amount of nervousness. Torah would be best kept in a less complex society"; it would be "easier to apply any set of standards, easier to keep values. I'd like to see the days when people churned their own butter without production pressure. That (production pressure) is the inevitable blessing or curse, however you want to look at it, of industrial mass production. (and) modern society."

The profit motive creates ethical as well as kashrut problems. Much integrity and strength of character is necessary to

continued on page 6

Rabbi Ralbag Gives Few Details in Regard to His Many Hashgachot

by Noah Wittig

On Monday evening December 18, Rabbi J. Ralbag, responsible for "fewer hashgachot than the U-O," addressed a huge audience in Rubin Shul. He was accompanied by his two daughters and his son-in-law.

Rabbi Ralbag began by acknowledging that he was "profoundly grateful for the opportunity" given him by the Student Organization of Yeshiva to speak to Yeshiva Students, and proceeded to review basic halachot of kashrut and their sources. He also gave his audience an insight into the way he supervises those companies who hire him.

Asserting that he was the *rav hamachshir* on General Mills, Rabbi Ralbag said that *chodosh* (grain before the seventeenth day of Nissan) was not a problem with those cereals he supervised. While discussing a former hashgachah of his on bread which required the printing of the words "take challah" he commented: "I was so happy to lose the hashgachah on Waldbaum's bread," because, being that the bread was baked by Jews, it was his responsibility to see to it that challah was taken. "I lost it or the U-O got it; what difference does it make?"

When asked how he could personally give the many *hashgachot* that he does, Rabbi Ralbag replied, "I have *mashgichim* in lots of places. I have two shuls so I'm a free man." He then went on to give the audience a detailed account of his bargaining sessions with the *ba'atni batim* of the synagogues which took place when he was asked to serve as the spiritual leader of the two congregations (one on 77th and First Ave., the other on 110th and Broadway).

It's America!

Continuing his response to the question posed, Rabbi Ralbag said that he has a registered trademark: a "K" in a triangle. "You can charter an organization for fifty dollars. A state charter costs two-hundred and fifty dollars. It's America! Everybody's good. *Ancha kulam kedoshim* (All of your nation is righteous). I have nothing against anybody." Rabbi Ralbag also indicated that the only hashgachot outside of the New York area that he personally supervises are in Pittsburgh and Miami.

During the lengthy question and answer period, Rabbi Ralbag was asked whether his *hashgacha* is *yotzeh v'nichnas* or *t'midi*, (part time or constant). He answered that he withdrew his hashgachah from Bernstein-on-Essex-Street Restaurant because he wanted a *mashgiach t'midi* and the hours of the store — 7 a.m. to 4 a.m. the following morning made it impossible. On the other hand, products like Minute Maid Orange Juice and Minute Rice do not require constant supervision, he said.

When asked if a non-kosher ingredient was ever mistakenly added to a product, which might happen if shipments were exchanged, Rabbi Ralbag replied "I don't give [hashgachot] on too many products where things like that can happen." He also

asserted that he had never had to recall a product off the shelf for reasons of *kashrut*.

Rabbi Ralbag refused to state the exact number of *hashgachot* for which he was responsible, or the number of *mashgichim* who worked for him; and even the number of people on his clerical staff — if such an entity exists — remains a mystery. He explained that it is not "lucky" to reveal numbers. When pressed, he said, "I have fewer hashgachot than the U-O."

Tzvi Kilstein, a Yeshiva College senior who worked in a factory in New Jersey which makes a variety of salad dressings including a blue cheese dressing, asked Rabbi Ralbag how he administered the *hashgacha* if the blue cheese — an unkosher product — was processed on the same machinery as the other dressings: Rabbi Ralbag claimed that the blue cheese dressing was processed at the end of the week and the machinery was washed out before the beginning of the week's run of kosher dressing. Mr. Kilstein insisted that he had never seen any Rabbi supervise this process.

Secret Machineries

Many members of the audience were curious about the nature of Rabbi Ralbag's *hashgacha* on Drake's products. Rabbi Ralbag stated that any Drake's product with a "K" on its wrapper is under his supervision. The actual *mashgiach* is Rabbi Eliezer Gordon. Gary Menchel, chairman of the SOY Kashrut Committee, asked Rabbi Ralbag if he would have any opposition to organizing a visit by the Committee to one of the plants under the Rabbi's *hashgacha*. Rabbi Ralbag replied: "Drake as such does not want anybody there" because of "secret machineries" but "I can take you to many of my places."

Rabbi Ralbag was asked if he ever intended to publish a list of the companies under his supervision so that people would not have to call him to determine if he is the *rav hamachshir* on any particular product. "Let them take the trouble to write [to the company]," he responded.

Asked about the infrequent appearance of his registered kashrut symbol, Rabbi Ralbag explained that the "K" rather than the "FK" within the triangle appears on products because the company wishes to retain a uniformity on the labeling of its products.

The *hechsher* on Hi-C grape juice is based on the fact that the juice is pressed, cooked, and steamed by a Jew during the short period of time (approximately three days) between the harvest and the canning process. Rabbi Ralbag said that Hunt-Wesson oils are transported in special trucks for those loads under oil. He then said it is Hunt-Wesson's policy to sterilize the inside of its trucks.

Rabbi Ralbag concluded his remarks by explaining that anyone can call him with specific questions about the products under his supervision. "Maybe," he jokingly concluded, "you have some hashgachot you want me to give; you call me up and I'll try and help you."

Weisenthal Center to Open in Los Angeles

by Marty Samosh

It is very sad and frightening that after only thirty-odd years the world is beginning to forget the horror of the Second World War and its death camps. In an effort to educate the masses, remind Jews of what happened to their parents and grandparents, and commemorate the six million victims that perished, a Holocaust center is opening in Los Angeles. It is called "The Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies" because, as Mr. Ephraim Zurroff, director of the Center, says, "Wiesenthal's name is magic; he is an authentic hero, and his name can motivate people to become involved."

And people are becoming involved. So far the response to the new center has been favorable and it is receiving sponsorship from Jews all over America. The idea for creating such a center, which will open in approximately nine weeks, came from Rabbi Marin Hier, Dean of YULA, who felt that Jews in America need a memorial to remind them of the Holocaust. The close connections that the Center for Holocaust Studies has with YULA are intended to symbolize that the Holocaust may have destroyed most of European Jewry, but it did not snuff out the indomitable spirit of the Jewish people—We are a living, visible nation.

Ephraim Zurroff, who previously

worked at Yad Vashem as Director of Overseas Activities and Assistant-Editor of *Yad Vashem Studies*, has big plans for the center. Not only will the center contain a museum, memorial, and library, it will also have an Outreach Program. This program, as its name suggests, will attempt to reach all those people, especially youths, who know next to nothing about the Holocaust. Lectures, in conjunction with a film, will be presented at various schools in the Los Angeles area, as well as at the center; emphasis being placed upon the fact that not only did the Nazis kill six million Jews, but five million non-Jews as well. Mr. Zurroff is also creating a multimedia facility which he hopes will produce the best and most accurate audio-visual presentation of the Holocaust to date.

The center is presently conducting a postcard campaign with the cooperation of Simon Wiesenthal against the statute of limitations in Germany which prevents war criminals from being tried after 1979. The postcards are being sent to Helmut Schmidt, Chancellor of West Germany, and so far three hundred thousand have been distributed. The center has also opened an association for the children of survivors. This association has already had a few meetings which were very well attended, and provided excellent opportunity

continued on page 7

Weisel's Writings Discussed at ADL "Teach-In" Seminar

by Tsvi Kilstein

The cattlecars crammed with people have long since ceased to roll. No longer do flames shoot up hundreds of feet, into the night, to cloud the air with the ashes of the six million. Yet, in classrooms and lecture halls all around the world, audiences sit transfixed as the years fade away and they, too, enter the Kingdom of the Night as they listen to the words of Elie Wiesel, whose mission is to teach and bear testimony. Whether Wiesel's talk concerns a Biblical hero or Hassidic master, beneath his words lies the bottomless chasm of the Holocaust.

The B'nai Brith Anti-Defamation League recently honored Elie Wiesel with its prestigious Joseph Prize for Human Rights for his work as "distinguished author and teacher, scholar and man of G-d." The presentation followed an all-day teach-in on "Building a Moral Society" which centered around certain Wiesel texts. Distinguished scholars, far too numerous to possibly name, gathered from around the United States to expound upon the meanings of the Wiesel works. Students of Wiesel, of all ages and religious persuasions, also gathered to listen to the various seminars and exchanged thoughts with the discussants and other students. At any given moment, an orthodox Jew might have been engrossed in conversation with a Catholic priest or Protestant minister.

High Standard

Since the material covered in the teach-in was so vast and diverse, the scope of this article to the two presentations that he felt were the most imaginative and most indicative of the offerings of the day as well as Professor Wiesel's response. This is meant in no way to detract from the other seminars presented that day with respect to their scholarship.

Dr. Norman Lamm, as the opening speaker of the day, set a high standard of research of the Wiesel text; his discourse was entitled, "The Theology of Elie Wiesel:

An Analysis of *Town Beyond the Wall*." Actually, the title is a bit misleading. The presentation was not an all encompassing exposition of the theology of Wiesel (as the audience had been led to expect by the literature on the teach-in) but a search for certain philosophical issues in Wiesel's *Town Beyond the Wall* and their sources in Jewish tradition.

"I do not believe," Dr. Lamm said, "that the real significance of *Town Beyond the Wall* (or for that matter, much of Wiesel's other works) can be decoded without a deep knowledge of classical Jewish literature." This statement turned out to be the main point of Lamm's presentation, which was followed by a brilliant analysis of *Town Beyond the Wall* in terms



Dr. Lamm addressing ADL seminar

of biblical, Midrashic, and Kabbalistic sources. Lamm was careful to say that he was not analysing Wiesel but rather, his own reaction to Wiesel.

Dr. Lamm set out to decode Wiesel by reading *Town Beyond the Wall* on both a peshat and derash level. As an example of the search for Jewish sources, Lamm asserted that Wiesel's choice of the name Michael for the leading character of the story, "who is largely a stand-in for the author himself," was deliberate. Michael, Lamm noted, according to the sages, is the name of the Guardian Angel of Israel who performs the role of a high priest in heaven, offering the souls of the righteous as his

continued on page 7

Grunblatt Discusses Many Aspects of Hashgachot

continued from page 4

resist the temptation to maximize profit at the expense of halakic imperatives. "It is in the interest of the manufacturer," Rabbi Grunblatt stated, "to mind his p's and q's. We have to put the profit motive to work for us; it's the only way."

"We have to do the best we can to cope with the problems and the halacha has the way to cope. You have to depend on the Shulchan Aruch: bitul, rov, mirsas, s'fek s'feka, chazakot. If you are in mass production," Rabbi Grunblatt reiterated, "you have to use the Shulchan Aruch, which states 'may a blessing descend upon he who is stringent.'"

An Ish Ne'eman

The first question asked of Rabbi Grunblatt concerned the dismissal of six shochem from a major slaughterhouse. The questioner was under the impression that this action had been taken because these men had publicly questioned the Kashrut of the facility which was under U-O hashgacha. Rabbi Grunblatt responded that Rabbi Zweigenhoff, an "ish ne'eman and an expert" had investigated the matter and determined that the shochem were dismissed for insubordination and because some of them had publicly announced that they do not eat from U-O sh'chita.

In response to a query about the number of sh'chitot carried out before b'dikat sakin (checking the slaughtering knife for nicks), Rabbi Grunblatt said that the shocheh does twenty to twenty-two sh'chitot before each check. "If we trust them, what are we supposed to do? All rumors have been checked out and found to be wanting, and not true." Should any

rumor be found to be true, "action will be taken," he promised.

"There is an enormous rumor mill and I think that it is a basic ethical requirement to check them out with people who are in charge. Nobody collects dividends and nobody makes money. Community service comes first. We have never cancelled a hashgacha because of money."

Avraham Kaisman, president of SOY, brought to light some issues which the Kashrut Committee had made known to him, including allegations of pet food and tuna being processed in the same ovens. Rabbi Grunblatt replied that records are kept concerning these ovens and that the two products are baked separately.

Gary Menchel, Kashrut Committee chairman, asserted that on a visit to Lindy's, a meat packing plant under U-O hashgacha, he had witnessed meat being salted in fifteen to eighteen minutes, rather than the necessary thirty, and that the facilities for draining blood were also insufficient.

Rabbi Grunblatt replied that post factum, eighteen minutes was sufficient time for salting. While not directly addressing the remaining allegations, he said that he had only been at his current position for two months and that he would check out Mr. Menchel's claims. "The U-O is more investigative than ever," he concluded.

When approached for his reactions to the lecture, Mr. Menchel said, "Although Rabbi Grunblatt appears to be a knowledgeable and sincere individual, with the best of intentions, the RCA does not seem to have the necessary control over the U-O hashgachot to command the utmost confidence from the kosher consumer."

Flight from Lithuania

continued from page 8

incorporation into Lithuania had to leave the city and move to the countryside. Therefore, during the early months of 1940, the yeshivot moved to various small towns throughout Lithuania.

While the move to the countryside was beneficial to the students, as it put them in an atmosphere more conducive to learning, the situation of the yeshiva leit was still uncertain. Lithuania's future as an independent state did not seem particularly secure and there were several roshai yeshiva who thought of transferring their academies abroad. Not that any concrete

"Hundreds of yeshiva students were murdered by the Nazis and the world of Eastern European Yeshivot was destroyed."

steps were made in that direction. On the contrary, during the first few months of their stay in Lithuania the rabbis and students were too preoccupied with re-establishing the yeshivot and resuming their studies to start emigration procedures.

Under Soviet Rule

The situation underwent a radical change in mid-1940. On June 15, Russian troops entered Lithuania and exactly seven weeks later it was formally annexed to the Soviet Union. The fear of Communist rule again galvanized the rabbis and students into action. By now, however, their situation had become much more desperate, since there were very few countries willing to admit Jewish refugees. Moreover the destinations preferred by the yeshivah leit—the United States and Eretz Israel—were practically closed to newcomers; the former due to the quotas established by the immigration law of 1929 and the latter due to the British White Paper of 1939. To complicate matters, most of the rabbis and students could not obtain

visas. Having entered Lithuania illegally, the overwhelming majority did not even possess passports and they obviously could not return to Poland to obtain such documents. The situation seemed bleak.

At this point, however, a combination of circumstances led to a solution. Some time in the summer of 1940, Nathan Gutwirth, who was studying at the Telshe Yeshiva, asked J. Zwartendijk, the local honorary Dutch consul, for a visa to Curacao, since he was anxious to flee Lithuania. The consul replied that he was not authorized to grant visas, but he would relay the request to his superior. Upon inquiring into the matter, Zwartendijk found out that no visa was needed for Curacao. Upon receiving this information, Gutwirth asked Zwartendijk if he would write on his passport that no visa was required for Curacao, omitting the fact that the governor of the island had to approve each applicant's entry. After obtaining permission, Zwartendijk agreed to do so on the condition that Gutwirth pay the regular fee for a visa.

Visa Market

Gutwirth worked the Curacao 'visa' to Dr. Zerach Warhaftig, one of the leaders of the Polish refugees in Vilna, and the latter told him to ask Zwartendijk if he would be willing to issue such visas to non-Dutch nationals. When the consul replied in the affirmative, Dr. Warhaftig notified the Polish refugees and hundreds approached Zwartendijk for visas. But at the very moment that a solution appeared on the horizon, a new problem arose. One of the first decrees issued by the Russians upon entering Lithuania was that all foreign embassies and consulates in the Baltic republic had to be closed by the end of August. Nonetheless during the short time which remained before his departure, between 1,200 and 1,400 refugees, among them many rabbis and yeshiva students, succeeded in obtaining Curacao visas.

At this point we must note that in the meantime quite a few of the yeshiva leit had obtained passports. Only one yeshiva, however, went about obtaining documents for the entire student body in an organized fashion—the Mir Yeshiva. Upon the initiative of its Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, representatives were sent to the Lithuanian capital to obtain the documents. It was due to this foresight that the entire Mir Yeshiva was saved. Other roshai yeshiva hesitated—and suffered dire consequences.

Ephraim Zuroff is currently the director of the Simon Wiesenthal Holocaust Center (see page 5). Mr. Zuroff lives in Israel. This article is reprinted with the author's permission.

Shifty B'vais Hashem

continued from page 8

In any discussion of corruption one cannot omit mention of the nursing home scandals. Religious Jews, some even calling themselves rabbis, not only cheat the government but fellow Jews as well. It is nothing less than disgusting to hear of a nursing home owner who kept bodies lying in a morgue without burial so as to collect their medicare checks. And recent New York State investigations have turned up numerous wrongdoings in many homes run by Jews. Aside from the ch'ilul HaShem, what sort of leaders and teachers do these people make? And what of the Jewish newspapers, who rightfully demand equal treatment with the goyim but never admonish these Jews for their wrongdoings?

Then again, newspapers are not immune to pressures, be they monetary or political. One small example involved HAMEVASER a few years ago. The paper published an article on the Jewish funeral home racket which told of the unethical practices of many Jewish funeral homes. Subsequently, certain students were called into an administrator's office and asked to desist from further funeral racket articles. The reason: The owners of many of the large funeral homes were also large supporters of Yeshiva!

One cannot expect Y. U. or any other yeshiva to be completely divorced from problems that are prevalent in our society. But one can expect a high level of integrity

in those people that run any yeshiva. Yet, how many yeshivot do not tamper with enrollment lists to get added government funding? I do not wish to lump Y. U. leaders with other Jewish leaders, good or bad. Y. U. is unique, in its philosophy and its problems. This uniqueness, though, is not an excuse for questionable actions. For example, as with the aforementioned kashrut situation, I was told conflicting things by two administrators. One administrator claims to have no previous knowledge of an issue, yet I know of information-containing memos sent him on the matter. When the union issue came to court the decision was based on the administration's contention that faculty are part of the decision making process at Yeshiva. Who are they fooling? Obviously the judge, but certainly not the students. Are then students supposed to look up to and admire these people for their leadership? Is it naive, or rather a natural reaction to wrongdoing, that produces student protest? And furthermore, is this the picture the Y. U. administration wishes to portray for its future alumni and financial supporters?

There is more to our cynicism than just anger and disappointment with our leaders. Their disreputable actions are compounded by their apparent lack of in-

Mr. Simpson is the Editor Emeritus of HAMEVASER, currently attending AECOM.

terest in students' feelings. Instead of listening, and considering our feelings, people label us overly idealistic, and even lie so as to be rid of us. Our questions go unanswered, our anger continues unabated, and our morale sinks. Is our cynicism then, so unwarranted?

Currently though we are not much better than our elders. Witness last year's various "scandals" at Y. U. And who else but yeshiva bochurim should be the ones to have copies of the N.Y. State Regents, year in, year out? And who else but yeshiva guys (not Y. U.) would tell a gentle teacher that they had to pray and then proceed to pass around exam answers out loud in Hebrew and Yiddish?

While we must continue to criticize and protest when we see something wrong, we must first police ourselves and act with honesty and integrity. We must not lose our idealism, we must not lose our cynicism, we must not abdicate to the "norms of society." We must try to find the correct derech and not be afraid to make changes. Above all, we should learn from the mistakes of the older generation and allow our Torah conscience, not our pockets, to rule our lives. We must strive to build a bright, respectable and honest future for Yiddishkeit. As it says in the words of the popular song "Achas Sha'alti": "Shivti b'vais haShem kol yemai chaya—let me dwell in the house of God all my life." The word is shivti, to dwell, not shifty.

**Camp TA-GO-LA
is seeking Counselors, Waiters
and Maintenance.**

Work Study Available

If interested, call:

David Luchins — 597-1572
Judy Frankel — 679-0804

**First priority to Yeshiva and Stern
students.**

Camp TA-GO-LA is sponsored by E. Nassau Hebrew Congregation, Member UOJCA; Morris Appelman, Rabbi.

Mechitza: A Divisive Issue

continued from page 4

Whether the source of the mechitza is seen as being the Gemara in Sukka, or as the Rav has said, as an application of "asai s'yag la'Torah," (make a protective fence around the laws of the Torah—he believes that only separation, not the presence of an actual physical barrier, may be derived from Sukka) or as being a manifestation of "sanctifying one's camp," the question arises as to what the exact halachic specifications of such a mechitza should be.

The answer hinges in part on another question: What is the actual purpose of the physical barrier placed between the women and the men? There are those who, based on the language used in the Gemara Sukka, and its commentaries, and in the Rambam,¹⁴ are of the opinion that the mechitza (or preferably a balcony) is to prevent mingling and social contact between the sexes.

Others, basing themselves on another Rambam,¹⁵ believe that the mechitza is intended to block out vision into the women's section, since gazing at women is also a possible cause of levity.

There are several implications involved in this dispute, e.g., if a mechitza may be transparent; if a women's balcony need have a mechitza in addition; if a raised women's section needs to have the mechitza raised accordingly; if the mechitza must be tall enough to preclude any vision of women, etc.

Rav Feinstein, who is of the former opinion, maintains that a mechitza of shoulder height, an obvious obstacle to social contact, is sufficient,¹⁶ and specifically permits a mechitza whose top third is glass.¹⁷ He also allows (post factum) the raising of the women's section without a corresponding raising of the mechitza.¹⁸

Those who are of the latter opinion, e.g., the Satmarer Rebbe,¹⁹ are more

stringent in all of these cases. It has been rumored that the Rav (except regarding the question of minimum height), is also in concurrence with the latter opinion. It should be noted that when the synagogue in question is likely to be attended by women who are not dressed modestly according to the halachic definition, there is no question that the mechitza should be made to obscure vision of the women, up to shoulder height.²⁰

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that although there is variance among poskim concerning the details of separation between sexes in the synagogue, not a single halachic authority has ever doubted the existence, and extreme importance of this concept.

Holocaust Center

continued from page 5

ties for the second generation members to interact. In addition, adult education courses are offered at the Simon Wiesenthal Center and at YULA.

The center's museum will contain photographic displays depicting three key years from the 1933-1945 period. The first exhibit will be of Kristalnacht (1938), the second from 1941 showing the ghetto and crude mobile killing units used in Eastern Europe. The third will reveal the concentration camps of 1943 in all their gruesomeness. Another pictorial exhibition will feature the photographs of Roman Vishniac, who caught the essence of Polish Jewish life in hundreds of his photographs which were taken right before the Holocaust.

The museum will also house a computer programmed for thirty-six basic questions about the Holocaust, and able to provide an answer in the form of a printout.

A Ner Tamid

The Center for Holocaust Studies will have a library, which will eventually become a major resource on the subject. A fledgling archive also exists, containing anti-semitic literature from America, England, and Germany, which appeared before and during the war. With regard to research work, Mr. Zuroff proposes to document the response of Orthodox Jewry in America during the Holocaust. The museum already has an abstract presentation about the reaction of world bystanders.

The memorial will be in the form of a commemorative plaza with a "ner tamid," the names of the Jewish communities that were destroyed, and six broken pillars representing the six million.

An article based on the rescue of many of Lithuania's Yeshiva population, by the director of the Holocaust Center, appears on page 8.

Lamm Analyzes Weisel

continued from page 5

sacrifices. "In Elie Weisel's story, it is Michael who shudders at and protests the sacrifice of the innocence which it was his tragic role to behold."

Lamm surveyed several of the dominant themes in *Town Beyond the Wall* including: suffering, evil, silence, the dialogue between man and G-d, and madness.

Dr. Lamm stated that he found, "Weisel's madmen and madwomen the most irresistible of all his characters." Yet, Lamm is well on the concept of madness as expressed in Weisel and finally rejected it as a solution to the problems of mankind for madness is "irresponsible."

Weisel, on the other hand, never rejected madness; instead, his approach towards madmen appears to be in accord with the Talmudic statement that after the destruction of the Temple, prophecy was given to fools and madmen. Weisel's madmen and madwomen do prophesize in his stories but are ultimately ignored by others.

Eliezer, the character representing

Weisel in the autobiographical *Night*, did not reject Moche the Madman, who warned the Jews of the upcoming deportations, or the unforgettable Madame Schacter whose screams of flames lighting the night on the road to Auschwitz turned out to be all too real.

Weisel stated that when rationalism failed philosophically, theologically, and humanely, the only remaining choice for man is madness. Lamm seemed content with rationalism. Weisel's madmen are mystics, not as Lamm avers, psychotics.

Lamm's presentation was marked by moments of genius yet overall seemed a bit mechanical. While Dr. Lamm displayed a tremendous grasp of Weisel, to have attempted to discuss the theology of Elie Weisel and make only a token (and fleeting) reference to Hasidut, Lamm's presentation seemed incomplete.

In the next issue of HAMEVASER, Dr. Irving Greenberg's discourse and Elie Weisel's response will be presented and analyzed.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Sukka, 51b
- 2) II Chronicles, 28:19
- 3) Hulin, 86b
- 4) Leviticus, 17
- 5) Zecharia, 12
- 6) Igrot Moshe, O. C. I, 39
- 7) Deuteronomy, 12:30
- 8) Avodah Zarah, 111r. Or Sanenach, Avodah Zarah, 111r. The Rav suggested that Tosefet in Sanhedrin 52b is also of the opinion that non-Jewish modes of worship have an especially negative status regarding "bechukotehem", Leviticus, 18:3
- 9) Sanhedrin, 74b
- 10) Chapters 8 or 9, depending on edition
- 11) Deuteronomy, 22:15
- 12) Yalkut Shimoni, 194c
- 13) Igrot Moshe, op. cit.
- 14) Bet Habechira, 5:9
- 15) Penei Hemitshavot, op. cit.
- 16) Igrot Moshe, I, 39
- 17) Ibid., I, 2
- 18) Ibid., III, 12
- 19) opud, sh. at, Sridei Esh II, 11
- 20) Igrot Moshe, I, 44



THE NEW INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS ALIYA MOVEMENT

OUR PURPOSE

TO PROVIDE A UNIQUE AND PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS ALIYA AND TO CREATE A COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT FOR BUILDING TORAH JUDAISM IN ISRAEL, BY:

- Organizing and settling new communities in Eretz Yisrael providing for the needs of religious olim. Our first town will be built in Gush Etzion near Jerusalem under the spiritual leadership of RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN. Settlement will begin in 1980/81.
- Focusing attention on the unique challenges that Israel and aliya pose for the Torah-observant American Jew.
- Providing information essential to prospective religious olim.

WE INVITE THOSE WHO FEEL A DEEP RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT TO ERETZ YISRAEL TO JOIN RAISHIT GEULA AND HELP BUILD MODEL TORAH-COMMITTED COMMUNITIES IN ISRAEL.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin
Chairman

Menahem Marcus, M.D.
President

Dr. Emanuel Glouberman
Vice-President

For further information contact: RAISHIT GEULA, c/o NAAM, 515 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10022. Phone (212) PL2-0600

SOY President

The Miracle of Eight

Avraham Kaisman



'Twas in the early hours of a Chanuka night, That the miracle of eight first came to light, You think I mean days, but I'm no duce, The miracle you see is of eight months.

In May word came of a new B.M., To replace the old before they could condemn, So in my senior year before Guadalajajara, I would see the truth of Torah U'Mada,

By the middle of June plans were finalized, All went home happy, but none realized, That words can be as sweet as honey, But you can't rebuild without the money.

July called for revisions in strategy, How to get a Beis Medrash rebuilt for free? It seemed like another case of the usual shstuss, When like manna from heaven there appeared the 'GRUSS.'

The start of August brought demolition men, With a combined I.Q. of barely ten, And what took two months for a simply guy, One toga party could completely destroy.

Then September arrived and the students returned, Shocked and dismayed at what they learned,

In the last issue of HAMEVASER we neglected to mention the author of "Fire and the Message of Chanukah." The author is Chaim Pass, a student of Yeshivat Itri.

"The Beis Medrash will be ready in a month and a half,"

But under our breaths we began to laugh.

By October we were settled in the Morgenstern shul, Each day was punishment both inhuman and cruel, We would have believed it was just a bad dream, If not for the ice cream and soda machines.

In November the floor, walls, and ceiling were done, But they postponed the reopening; they were having such fun, Who wants everything to turn out so right? Is it not boring enough in these Washington Heights?

December the work was nearing an end, The talmidei hayeshiva all questioned me, "when?" I pleaded with the talmidim to have no fear, And they opened Thursday night—when no one was here.

So what does it matter that we have no seforim? How many talmidim ever really show up to sedoring? And, so what if this thing has been such a mess? The fact we have a new Beis Medrash is truly a nesh.

Mazel Tov to former Feature Editor Josh Lamm on his recent engagement to Rivkie Stern. May they grow to build a Bayit Ne'eman B'Yisrael together.

Guest Columnist

Shifty B'vais Hashem

Ephraim Simpson



Young people are many times labeled "radicals." We protest, sometimes even violently, when we feel something is wrong. We are quick to condemn, much slower to forgive, and almost never forget. As is to be expected we make mistakes, but we are just as often right. Yet, rarely do "older"-people listen to us. Rather, most say, "Wait until they grow up. Then they will not be so naive." Young people are expected to "mature" with age so as to follow in their parents' footsteps. But, when one considers the path that many of these "wise" people's feet have taken in recent years (especially among Jewish circles) it may be better if we choose different ones and never lose our naivete, our cynicism, or even our "righteousness."

Corruption of Truth

The path which we, the younger generation, must steer away from is the one that leads to corruption. Not only corruption in the sense of kickbacks and payoffs, but also the corruption of truth, justice, and above all, ethics (i.e., the Jewish way). I certainly do not wish to condemn all our leaders, parents, and teachers. If I seem to generalize it is only because after being editor of this news-

paper and after close observation of even small segments of the Jewish world today, I have become a hardened cynic. I have learned, the hard way, that there is more to being a Rabbi than just learning, teaching, sermonizing, and performing weddings and funerals. Likewise, there is more to being a Jewish businessman than supporting a family, davening three times a day, and giving tzedakah. There is much, much, more and most of it is not very appealing.

Kashrut

Corruption can take many forms. In fact, the failings I speak of encompass diverse areas of Judaism, including Kashrut, funerals, nursing homes, and even Y.U. The people involved are not fools, they are not "Am Ha'aratzim." They are prominent rabbis and businessmen, well-versed in Halakha and in all aspects of Yiddishkeit. Yet many are also (forgive my bluntness—serious issues must be discussed openly) dishonest individuals. There is no excuse for dishonesty; not in a simple ba'al habayis, and most certainly not in a person of stature and leadership.

Examples are clearly in order, not to condemn any one individual, but so that we, the younger generation can learn from

them. I stress though that these are only a small part of what I have observed, and that my scope has been somewhat narrow.

Kashrut is on the mind of every Jew each day. We rely on various rabbonim to tell us if a product or establishment is kosher. We have faith that these rabbonim will insure our proper observance of this

there. His mashgich, who was a relatively old individual, could barely read English. But when confronted with questionable practices at the restaurant, he, of course, denied them all. Anyone who has ever worked in a restaurant or hotel kitchen knows the myriad of problems involved there. But each year more restaurants are

Recent events in the news and locally have caused the author to reflect on the seeming lack of morals among the Orthodox Jewish World.

mitzvah. Naturally, in something as complex as kashrut there are going to be problems. And just as naturally these will surface and questions will arise. The obvious answer to these questions is the honest one, because people can accept human error. But instead many rabbonim try to prove that they are infallible. So they lie; they deny the existence of any problems. For instance, one rabbi certified a well known N.Y. restaurant as kosher, yet by his own admission he had never been

becoming "one-hundred percent glatt." There are mashgichim who certify establishments kosher, yet do not eat there themselves. Some supervisory organizations even give hashgacha on various tours. One such tour last year was still certified kosher even after the mashgichim refused to eat there and left midway through the trip. One rabbi who gives hashgachot on countless products, refuses to say how many products he certifies or how many mashgichim he employs (not to mention his refusal to discuss his administration of these hashgachot). Need I mention the entire tuna fish controversy where it took over a year until rabbonim admitted they were wrong and began making changes. Meanwhile, all sorts of lies were propagated. I personally was told one thing by one rav, then another thing by a different rav, and finally a third version by yet another, all in the same afternoon.

But why do these things happen in kashrut? The answer is obvious—money. It is expensive to change or revise a hashgacha. It may be an economic hardship for someone to lose a position as a mashgich. So the rules are bent a little. We are all in some way victims of the almighty dollar but kashrut ought to be above material considerations.

Business

Someone close to me once said he would never go into business because he could never be a gonif and a swindler. This seems to be a prevalent feeling among people. Many businessmen are out to make a buck and so, many of us distrust them. Everything we read in novels, magazines and newspapers about the wheelings and dealings of the business world apply to Jews as well. As someone once said: "The longer the beard, the bigger the gonif." Whether a person is a diamond dealer, a clothing manufacturer, a doctor or a lawyer, there is always room for cheating. It is accepted that people cheat on income tax. These feelings certainly did not arise from themselves. Jewish businessmen have created their own image, and if they feel it is too late for change, then we, the young people must change it.

continued on page 6

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
New York, N.Y.
Permit No. 4688

A Modern Day Nes

Flight from Lithuania

Ed. note:

This is the first section of a two part article regarding the flight of the yeshiva population from Lithuania. Part two will appear in February.

by Ephraim Holoff

In the course of the Holocaust there was very little joy or consolation for the Jewish people. The number of Jews successfully surviving the tragedy was relatively small. Upon the conclusion of World War II, the Jewish people made an accounting—the devastation was staggering. Approximately six million Jews, more than one-third of the Jewish people prior to the Hitler era (16,600,000) had been murdered. The loss, however, was far more than demographic. What had been destroyed was an entire culture and a way of life—hundreds of synagogues, tens of shtetls, Jewish schools and academies of higher learning, libraries, archives, etc., were all razed to the ground, never to be reestablished.

The Torah world was no exception in this respect. Hundreds of yeshiva students were murdered by the Nazis and the world of famous East European yeshivot was physically destroyed. Yet, while the nigan of shakla and tarya was silenced in Poland and Lithuania, thanks to a series of events which upon reflection can indeed be considered miraculous, a significant number of the students of these yeshivot survived and were able to establish new centers of learning in Israel and America. The following is the story of their escape.

Russian Occupation

World War II broke out on September 1, 1939. Two and a half weeks later, the Russians invaded Poland from the East and occupied 'their' half of the country in accordance with the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Suddenly the yeshivot in Eastern Poland were faced with the threat of Communist rule—a prospect which they knew from previous experience would not prove beneficial for the learning of Torah. The students of the yeshivot in the Soviet-occupied zone had grave apprehensions

regarding their future. Thus, when it became known that the city of Vilna and its environs, which had previously belonged to Poland, would be given by the Russians to the independent state of Lithuania, many rabbis and students viewed it as a sign from Heaven that a haven had been prepared for them and began making preparations to flee to the city known for the high level of its Jewish life as the Jerusalem of Lithuania. Throughout the area a 'travel frenzy' swept the yeshivot and by the end of October, students from the yeshivot of Mir, Kletsk and Lomza had already set out in the direction of Vilna.

Lithuanian Capture

During the first month (October 10-November 10, 1939) following the return of Vilna to the Lithuanians, there was free movement between Soviet-occupied Poland and Lithuania and tens of yeshiva students took advantage of the opportunity to flee. In mid-November, the border was closed, but nonetheless the flight of Jewish refugees to Lithuania continued.

Towards the end of January, however, the Russians sealed the border hermetically, and this, coupled with the harsh weather conditions, made the crossing of large numbers of refugees almost impossible. Nonetheless, individual refugees continued to reach Vilna until it was incorporated into the Soviet Union in June 1940. During this period approximately 14,000 Jewish refugees from Poland reached Vilna, among them 2,440 yeshiva students and 171 rabbis. Included in these figures were yeshiva students and such leading figures in the Torah world as Rabbi Aaron Kotler of Kletsk, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman of Baranowitz, Rabbi Baruch Ber Liebowitz of Kamenetz, Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda Finkel of Mir, Rabbi Avraham Joffen of Yeshivat Beit Yosef in Bialystok, Rabbi Mendel Zacks of Radin and Rabbi Shabtai Yogel of Slonim.

Once the yeshiva left arrived in Vilna, their problems were not solved. They had indeed succeeded in fleeing spiritual oppression at the hands of the Russians, but

in Lithuania they faced much more basic problems, since the refugees had left behind their possessions and thus reached Vilna penniless. At first the masses of rabbis and yeshiva students crowded into the synagogues and batei midrash all over the city. They were aided by the local Vaad ha-Yeshivot, headed by the venerable Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, one of the leaders of Orthodox Jewry, and by the Jewish Refugee Committee founded to coordinate and distribute the aid received from abroad as well as to represent the refugees before the Lithuanian authorities. Also, a special committee to rescue the yeshivot called Vaad Hatzala or 'Emergency Committee for War-Torn Yeshivot' was established in New York by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis.

Despite these efforts to alleviate the plight of the refugees, the situation of the yeshiva students remained difficult. Yet, despite the terrible physical conditions, they managed to maintain their intensely spiritual way of life. The students of each yeshiva found themselves a synagogue or bet midrash and they continued their Torah studies unabated.

The relative peace which the yeshivot had found in Vilna was disturbed shortly after their arrival. In January 1940 the Lithuanian authorities decreed that all refugees who had arrived in Vilna after its

HAMEVASER
500 West 185th Street
New York, N.Y. 10033