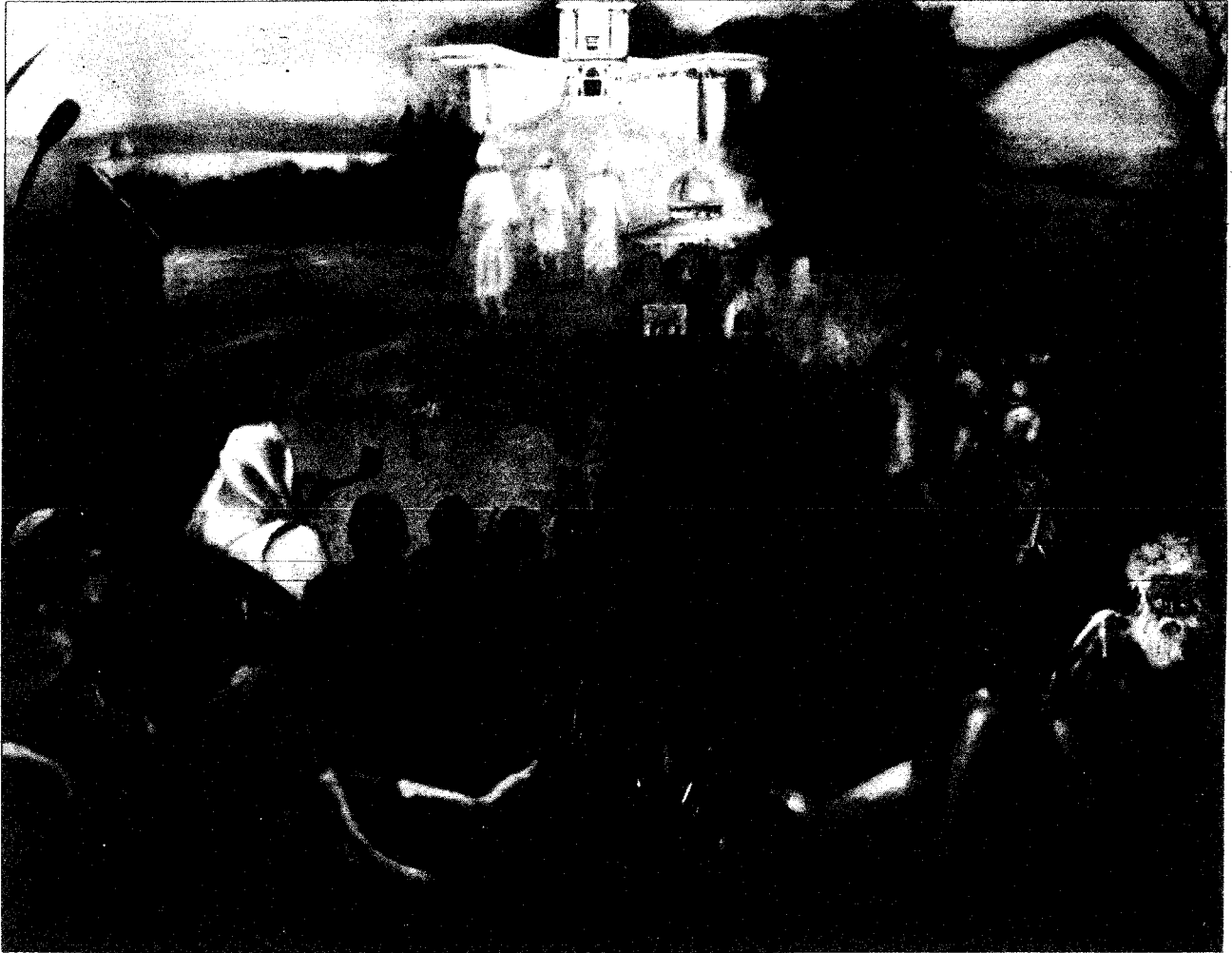


HAMEVASER

A Student Journal of Traditional Thought
Published by the Jewish Studies Divisions of Yeshiva University

Volume 30 No. 1

Cheshvan 5751, October 1990



Azriel Cohen

IN THIS ISSUE

Interview With Rav Simcha HaCohen Kook	p. 3
Maimonides and the M-16	p. 4
Redwoods and Religious Revival	p. 4
Soviet Jewry: Inside and Out	p. 6
The Tower of Babble: Utter Confusion	p. 8
You Can Run But You Can't Hide: Jonah's Escape	p. 9



Salvation is in the Mail

Iraq's unprovoked violence against Kuwait has rudely reminded us of Israel's vulnerability. As the threat of war looms on the horizon, we cannot help but think that one Iraqi missile, equipped with a biochemical warhead and targeted at Yerushalayim, can exterminate thousands of Jews within minutes. Israel cannot thwart this threat alone; it needs the strength of the United States to back it up.

American condemnation of Israel's reaction to the Chol Hamoed Sukkot rock-throwing incident could not have come at a worse time. With the Gulf crisis worsening every day, we must realize that the state of American-Israeli relations bears directly on the stability of the Middle East geopolitical balance. If this breach of diplomacy is not repaired, the consequences could prove disastrous to all those involved.

Hamevaser, SOY, YCSC, and the Dormitory Office, in conjunction with the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, will be supplying the entire Yeshiva College community with Congressional addresses and suggestion form letters expressing our outrage at U.S. support for the recent U.N. resolutions. We cannot allow busy schedules to translate into apathy at this crucial juncture in Jewish history.

Sloppy Attitudes Cause Disorderly Conduct

During his tenure as *gabbai*, Asher Meth constantly stressed the importance of an orderly *Beit Midrash*, pleading with us: "Help prevent *Bitul Torah Derabbim*." Yitz Rosenblum appeals to us every night, "Please put the *seforim* back on the shelves..." Toward the end of the week, we receive reminders to put away our pencils, pens, and other *muktza* possessions *likvod Shabbat*.

Apparently, these repeated announcements have dulled our senses to the seriousness of the *Beit Midrash* situation. Books piled high on the tables bury potential *mekomot* which might otherwise be used for learning. Pencils, pens, tape recorders and garbage from Tuesday's breakfast contaminate the *Shabbat* atmosphere. A sign-up sheet for *Beit Midrash* clean-up had been posted; the small list of volunteers has since disappeared.

The time has come to rattle our complacency and conquer our apathy through a policy of *kofin oto ad sheyomar*, "rotze ani!" Hamevaser therefore suggests the following:

- 1) An official rotation of *talmidim* to clean up the *Beit Midrash*.
- Every student with a *makom* in either *Beit Midrash*, without exception, should contribute on a regular basis to the restoration of order in his *Beit Midrash*.
- 2) An official seating chart. Much of the confusion in the *Beit Midrash* results from a first come, first serve seating system in which a three day *chazaka* is more than sufficient to establish squatter's rights to a *makom*. An official seating chart will not only alleviate any questions as to the rights of an individual to a *makom*, but may also ease the shortage of *mekomot* by revealing some that have been commandeered by the multitude of books which refuse to find their way back to the shelves.



To the Editor:

I have recently been troubled by the all too negative attitude expressed by many Orthodox Jews regarding the string of *Yamim Tovim* we experienced in the last few weeks. "Thank God it's over," "It's been too long," and "Too much" were relatively common refrains I would hear from people in our community. The comments frequently focused on the gluttony of food, frizziness of one's hair, or sheer boredom. A possible implication from all this is that the *Ribono Shel Olam* wants us to be neurotic, fat or unkempt.

This was quite disturbing to me, as I shall explain. We all believe in *Hashem* and his benevolence. We also believe that he gave the Written and Oral Torah at Sinai. Contained in the Torah are the *mitzvot* and their purpose, as explained in Numbers (15:40), "And you shall do all my *mitzvot* and you shall become holy unto your God." In other words, the purpose of doing *mitzvot* is to become spiritual.

Ramchal writes in the first chapter of *Mesilat Yesharim* that the only way to achieve *Shelemut* (in this context, translated as "fulfillment") is through a closeness to God. *Hashem*, he continues, gives us the means to establish this

closeness through the performance of *mitzvot*. In other words, the more *mitzvot* we perform, the closer to God we will come, and the more fulfilled we will feel.

Keeping all this in mind, it appears that we should be grateful for all the *Yamim Tovim* we have celebrated during the last few weeks. We had the opportunity to fulfill many biblical *mitzvot*, e.g. *shofar*, *teshuva*, *sukkah*, *lulav*, *simcha*, etc. Through these, we had the opportunity to draw closer to *Hashem* and be fulfilled. Through *zemirot* and *niggunim*, *tefiot*, *mitzvot hayom*, and learning, we had many opportunities to increase our spirituality. I really feel sorry for those who were not able to experience the *chaggin* in such a fashion.

The Kloiznberger Rebbe, *shlitia*, before he made *aliya* in the 1950's, held a farewell *nisch*. At the *nisch* he started crying, explaining that he was mourning the five precious holy days of *Yom Tov* that he'd be giving up by moving to *Eretz Yisrael*.

We must ask ourselves why we do not even desire to weep.

Shmuel Landesman
YC '89

HAMEVASER

500 West 185th Street, New York, NY 10033

The views of signed articles are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of HAMEVASER or Yeshiva University. Editorial policy is determined by a majority vote of the members of the Governing Board. Subscription rate: \$7.50 per year. All material herein copyright HAMEVASER 1990.

Benjamin Samuels

Editor-in-Chief

Mitchel Benuck

Executive Editor

GOVERNING BOARD

Lowell Abrams Aharon Haber Sammy Levine

Adina Mosak Moshavi Beth Zuckerman

ASSOCIATE BOARD

Steven Bush

Simi Chavel

Doy Chelst

Yitzhak Hollander

Jonathan Koschitzky

Shmuel Landesman

Kevin Taragin Lawrence Teitelman

Chaviva Levin

Ilana Sacknovitz

Gavriel Shapiro

STAFF

Elisha Anselowitz

Yaacov Blau

Daniel Bouskila

Leah Brueckheimer

Ari Ferziger

Noam Goodman

Gila Iskowitz

Binyamin Kaminetzky

Steven Usdan Yair Yaish

Ricki Leiber

Alex Margolis

Michael Shurkin

Robert Sidlow

Ronald Ziegler,

editor emeritus

To the Editor:

When Mr. Blazer had charge of the *Beis Midrash*, the *raison d'être* of our institution, we knew that we had a cooperating partner genuinely interested in the welfare of its physical plant, not merely the university's image and its impressions thereof. Those of us who have been involved in its day-to-day activity have sensed an attitude inconsonant with the respect due a synagogue, or *Beis Midrash*. The university component ought to consider the *Beis Midrash* its focus, for without it, we dare not call ourselves Yeshiva University, but University of Washington Heights!

The *Beis Midrash* has evolved into a large all-purpose room whose functions include: study hall, center for Torah lectures, and site for *chagigot* (religious celebrations). Other functions, however, such as closed-circuit baccalaureate programs, pre-graduation preparations and the associated photography sessions, etc., could well be held elsewhere. The High School lunchroom, Weisberg Commons, and the two large gymnasias (MSAC & Tannenbaum) are possible options.

Last June, a meeting was convened in Rabbi Charlop's office by Mr. Rosengarten and Mr. Sobol to discuss the *Beis Midrash* situation. Rabbis Blau and Bronstein, some officers of SOY, *gabbaim* of the *Beis Midrash*, and Mr. Steve Berkowitz of Housekeeping also attended. I presented a detailed report of the situation: background, causes, etc. Discussion followed. Rabbi Charlop suggested a solution that received a favorable reaction from all, he said that we must hire a responsible person to take charge of the *Beis Midrash*, one who would be the "point man" to coordinate all necessary efforts with all departments, who would be "in charge" and responsible to keep the *Beis Midrash* in a condition appropriate with its stature in our Yeshiva. It was further agreed that all parties involved would cooperate with each other, not taking unilateral action to "clean up that mess" without prior warning or consultation.

Rabbi Charlop asked the parties involved to each draft a proposal describing such a position and its responsibilities. I submitted such a proposal to Rabbi Charlop, who revised it and submitted it to the administration.

I am sorry to note that the cooperation agreed upon was not fulfilled. There have been nu-

merous "raids" into the *Beis Midrash*, during which people cleaned tables by dumping their contents elsewhere, and removed the contents of the coat-racks without prior notification. (Housekeeping is not responsible for this; it has actually been cooperative.)

Still, there is no position or, more accurately, no person hired to replace the volunteer work I have performed over the last four years to coordinate *Beis Midrash* cleanup and related activities with other departments.

WHY NOT?

Asher Meth
RIETS '86

ABOUT THE COVER:

"Faces in Stone," 4 ft. x 6ft., oils, by Azriel Cohen, 1990. From the private collection of Ami Maishlish, Toronto. Superimposed upon a landscape of modern-day Jerusalem, this painting depicts the four pivotal points in the history of Jerusalem: the original state, when the Temple was standing; the destruction and subsequent exile; the recapturing of Jerusalem in the Six day war; and full circle to the ideal state of the future when the exiles will return and the Temple will be rebuilt. In the foreground, the two figures and their environment personify the extremes of sentiment in the history of the Holy City. On the left, the youth, hopefully yearns for the future. His sitting in a lush, green field represents the life, beauty and optimism of Jerusalem. On the right, the old man, introspective and retrospective, lies amidst a barren patch of land with a scorched tree, which represents the death, destruction and sorrow in Jerusalem's past.

About the Artist: Azriel Cohen, YC '89 is a freelance artist and has studied extensively in Toronto, New York and Jerusalem. His work for private clients include Ketubot, paintings and a range of illustration and graphic art work. He is presently the director of Yavne Olami of North America and resides in New York. He can be reached at (212) 740-4981.

The Views and Visions of Rav Simcha HaCohen Kook

Rabbi Simcha HaCohen Kook, a great-nephew of the legendary Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook, currently serves as the Chief Rabbi of Rechovot and as Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Meor HaTalmud. During his twenty year tenure, he has developed in his community the tolerant, harmonious, cooperative atmosphere he would like to see unite all the divergent streams of world Jewry. His efforts toward this goal include religious programs for secular Israelis and, more recently, Rechovot's plans for the spiritual absorption of 4,000 Russian olim. This week, while in the United States, Rabbi Kook discussed his views and visions with Hamevaser's Benjamin Samuels and Simi Chavel. Excerpts from the interview follow.

Hamevaser: Let us begin with a general question. What is the Rav's vision of rabbinical leadership, and in what way does the Rav try to transmit this vision to the students at his Yeshiva?

R. Kook: First of all, I must correct you. I am not a leader; I am an *eved*, an *eved nirtza*. As you know, the late Rav Kook used to sign his name *eved I'am Hashem*. That is how I feel as a rabbi... I believe that the most important tasks in the Jewish world today are *rabbonus* and education. All other problems, though important, are only secondary in nature. We must renew lives, create *neshomos*. This is in the hands of rabbis from one side, and Torah education from the other. We require the best *yeshivos* and *gedolei Torah* to rebuild that which we lost in the Holocaust, and what we lost after the Holocaust, in the spiritual holocaust that has happened in the Soviet Union... What Hitler had done to the Jewish body, Stalin and the other Soviet leaders did to the Jewish soul, to Jewish spiritual life. Because this [rebuilding] is so important, we have a responsibility to *Am Yisrael*. We can't look after one part of *Klal Yisrael* and not another. A rabbi must not be a rabbi for only one group or party; he must be a rabbi for a whole city, and if we are speaking about the *Rabbanut Harashit*, he must be a rabbi for every single *hakatan* in the country. If so, the rabbi's private life cannot be simple, because the Rav belongs to everybody. So, my *haskafa* is to belong to all groups, not only to one or the other, and, if possible, to make the different groups come together.

Hamevaser: In Israel, where religious beliefs and political view-points often color relationships and divide towns ideologically, the city of Rechovot shatters the stereotype of polarization and prejudice. How did the Rav accomplish such harmony? And what does he suggest be done to extend this sense of unity to other cities?

R. Kook: There are two different ways to bring different groups together. One way is to cry and to demonstrate. But there is another way - with love... I believe that today there is only one way, to love and to acknowledge that every group has something unique, and one must respect them because they believe that their way is the correct way. Yet, if you believe that their way is not exactly the right way, you must try to correct it through *kiruv*, and not by *richuk*... This is the way we try in the city of Rechovot. Sometimes we succeed; sometimes we fail. We look to common interests to act as the force which creates unity between the Orthodox groups in the city. Every group wants to feel the *Shabbos*. Every group wants Orthodox education. Some want a *cheder* with Yiddish, some want a Talmud Torah, some want a *mamlakhti dati* (religious public) school, and some want a co-educational school, but all want religious education as a top priority... With all the different groups there is an equal level of success.

Hamevaser: It would seem that the Rav is also including the *Chilonim* (secularists) in this vision

of harmony.

R. Kook: Of course... the *Chilonim* don't need the *Rabbanut* in the same way as the *datiyim* (religious). The *datiyim* need *kashrut*, *mikvaot*, *Shabbat*, and *pesak halakha*... The *Chilonim* don't need the *rabbonim* for this... But if a Jew understands what it means to be a Jew, he will understand the need for *rabbonim*. He'll want to hear some lectures about Judaism. But not too strongly (the lectures) — since *Chiloni* parents are afraid that the Orthodox will take away their children... its unbelievable how afraid they are. But if the Rabbi goes slowly — speaks cautiously, speaks from deep within his heart, there is a wonderful possibility that he will be able to reach even the non-observant Jew. For instance, we have programs in all the schools to prepare seventh graders for *Bar* and *Bat Mitzva*. Here we have a greater responsibility to the non-religious schools



than to the observant ones because the observant schools have religious role models like teachers and principals. But the non-religious schools only have the *rabbonim*... We have a program which we named *Asseh Lecha Rav* in which the student asks the Rav anything he wants. Perhaps, he (the student) will not agree with us, but at least they will understand that we are not doing *siam meshugaas* (silly things), we are doing things which are connected to his traditions as a Jew. [He must understand that] there are not two nations in *Eretz Yisrael*; every group has a responsibility to the other.

Hamevaser: Recently, Rechovot received over 4000 Russian *olim*. How does the Rav propose to absorb the *olim* without losing them to the *chiloni* world? Does the Rav think that the Russian *olim* are more open to the religious world than the *Chilonim*?

R. Kook: ...I have been connected with Russian *Jew* groups for a long time before they started coming to Israel. I have visited the Soviet Union many times as a member of an international board for Soviet Jews with members in Yerushalayim, Rechovot, New York, and Toronto. We are working as a group to organize *yeshivos*... for the Jews in Russia. I believe that if someone says that the Russian Jews are not *dati*, he can say as well that they are not *chiloni*. They are not *dati* — that's true — because they don't know anything about *dat*, but they are also not *chiloni* because they don't know what *chiloni* is. We hope that the *Beit Hamikdash* will be built, with God's help, quickly in our time, and [at that time] every *shomer shabbos Jew* will have to bring to the *Beit Hamikdash* hundreds of *chatasos* because of the many times he was *mechalel shabbos beshogeg*. But a Soviet Jew will only have to bring one *Chatas*, even if he was never *shomer shabbos* in his life, because he is a *tinok shenishboh*. He never knew what *shabbos* was until he started to learn

that there is such a thing as *shabbos hayom lashem*... We must make an educational revolution! 150,000 Jews have come to Israel in one year — that is a miracle from heaven — *kibutz goliot*. The *Ribono Shel Olam* is doing everything, but we are not doing enough — that is clear. We have to love them... The *pasuk* in *Shir haShirim* (5:2), "*Ani yesheina velibi er*" (I was asleep, but my heart was wakeful) refers to this generation of Soviet Jews. Through *limud Torah* and *limud mitzvot* we must awaken Soviet Jews to Torah and mitzvot... But this is not easy... very few Russian children enter Orthodox schools. And with every generation we lose, our task will become that much harder... In Rechovot we have performed over 500 *brit milot* on Russian Jews. And they come with such love. Older boys and men are coming into the operating room for their *brit* — they come of their own will, they come

rect interest in the *Rabbanut*. Why? Because according to the law of the State of Israel, a wide part of life is connected with the religious judicial system. If somebody wants to be divorced from his wife, he has no way other than to come to the *Rabbanut*... If somebody wants to be married, there isn't any other way to do it... *Baruch Hashem*, I know that today, 99% of *Klal Yisrael* is going to a *Chevr* *Kadisha* and not to [other types] of burial. So a great part of life is connected to the *Rabbanut*. So, they have an interest in who will be the Rav... and 50% of the government delegation (to know the rabbis) is not from... and a non-*Dati* man has a totally different *haskafa* as to who should be the Rav from a *shomer Torah u' mitzvot*. Of course, the non-*Dati* doesn't need somebody to be a *talmid chacham*. The opposite - the less a *talmid chacham*, the better for him, because someone who is not subject to the *Torah* can... perform *hatarat issurim* 365 days a year. This is impossible... The Rabbi who will want *Shabbos* in the whole city - of course the non-frum people will not choose him...

The other problem lies in any city which has *Moatzot Datio* where the *Moatzot Datio* are appointed by itself - [anticipating future problems,] HaRav Kook *z"l* wrote against the *Moatzot Datio*. Today, in many cities in Israel, there is a tremendous source of argument between the Rabbi and the *Moatzot Datio*. And today we have another problem — that in the *Moatzot Datio* they have come to a decision to push Reform and Conservative... And you understand what this means: the Rav will ask to make an *eruv*, to fix the *mikva*, to have more *meshgichim* for *kashrus*, and the Reform will ask why it's important. They will take all of the money and put it in lectures or something else, [everything] according to their *haskafa*. So it's possible that if there are more Reform and Conservative people in the *Moatzot Datio*, the whole budget that the government has given for Orthodox activity will become the budget to attack Torah and *mitzvot*. So it's a tremendous danger... We stand today at the beginning of this revolt, and nobody knows what will be the result of the whole situation. Therefore, we have to think again what will be the roadway out — how to build the road of the *Rabbanut* in every city, and not assume that what was good seventy years ago is good for our period. The whole situation has been changed, and our attitude toward the *Rabbanut* must change as well.

Hamevaser: Does the Rav think that the Israeli government will confer religious legitimacy upon the Conservative and Reform movements? The Conservative and Reform movements want government recognition very much. What would be the practical implications of such a move? Does the Rav think it would undermine the authority of the *Rabbanut* in Israel?

R. Kook: ...Most of the cities in Israel have no Reform or Conservative rabbi. They have *Dati* and non-*Dati*, but not Reform. Because most of the Israelis laugh at the way of the Reform and the Conservatives. They use [these movements] as a stick to beat on the head of the Orthodox Jews and Rabbis, but not because they believe it's the right way... Even in the biggest cities like Tel Aviv and Yerushalayim, there are hundreds of Orthodox synagogues and only one, two, three Reform or Conservative temples, even though non-religious Jews [make up] 50% or more of the population. Why are they not going to the Reform synagogues? Because they laugh at them... If you have such a *shofar gadol*, to announce every Conservative reverent or Reform reverent, the tumult will be so big that everyone will believe that the whole country is Conservative. It's not.

Continued on page 10.

HOLY HAND GRENADES: Morality, Halakha, and the Israeli Arms Industry

by Steven Usdan

Within the world of international politics, nations often issue morally reprehensible decisions for the sake of preserving their national security interests. More often than not, in a state's struggle between national ideology and national security, the latter takes precedence. Israel's additional concern with Judaic morality further complicates the issue.

Today, the sale of arms to South Africa and other Third World countries confronts Israel with such a dilemma. How can a nation based upon the ultimate morality — the Torah — sanction such an enterprise? Can this ultimate morality possibly condone, or even commission, such conduct?

This dilemma acquires an added dimension when it confronts an Orthodox Jew's understanding that halakha and morality function as an inseparable unit. If a decision does not conform to halakhaic guidelines, it will in all likelihood be rejected by the Orthodox Jew on moral grounds as well. We must therefore investigate to what degree the policies and actions of Knesset, in a given situation, parallel the verdict of halakha.

Few commercial enterprises invoke the derivation of classical Judaic sources as does the arms industry. The Gemara (*Shabbat* 63a), while prohibiting the carrying of weapons on the Sabbath, declares that swords are "shameful" possessions. Rambam (*Hilkhot Rotzeach* 12:12), based upon a passage in tractate *Avoda Zara* (15b), states: "It is forbidden to sell non-Jews weapons of war. Nor is it permitted to sharpen their spears, or to sell them knives, manacles, iron chains, bears, lions or any object which can cause harm to the public; but it is permitted to sell them shields which are solely for defense." He continues, "Anything that is forbidden to sell to a non-Jew is forbidden to sell to Jewish bandits because [by giving one such weapons] you are strengthening the hand of the transgressor and causing him to sin" (12:14).

Rambam bases this prohibition on the negative precept, "You shall not put a stumbling block before the blind" (Lev. 19:14). This prohibition applies not only to the physically blind, but to the morally blind as well. Thus, it forbids a Jew to take advantage of another person's lack of awareness, for in doing so he may harm him. In prohibiting the placement of such a physical or moral stumbling block, the Torah makes no distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish victims. Therefore, the sale of weapons to any party who will abuse them clearly falls under this prohibition.

The Talmud identifies one exception to the general prohibition of arms sales to non-Jews. In *Avoda Zara* (16a), it permits the sale of arms to "the Persians who protect us." Rambam (*Hilkhot Avoda Zara* 9:8) expounds that this passage authorizes the sale of arms to foreign governments who protect the state, "since we dwell among them." Similarly, in *Hilkhot Rotzeach* (12:13) he permits the sale of arms to "the army of the populace, because they protect Israel." The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh De'ah* 151:6) rules in accordance with Rambam's position. Rabbi I. David Bleich, in *Contemporary Halachic Problems*, vol. 3, thus concludes that the "exemption from the general prohibition is...predicated upon the general consideration of self-defense."

To what extent is Israel's arms industry grounded in an ideology of national security? Thomas Friedman, author of *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, writes in a 1986 article that Israel ranks among the top ten arms exporters in the world. Defense Ministry sources indicate that Israel exports \$1.2 billion in arms and security services each year. Internationally, Israeli-made jets, weapons and security systems have been sold to South Africa, Argentina, Zaire, Cameroon, Honduras, Chile, Belgium, Holland, Kenya, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Thailand, among other nations.

Although the government, which owns most of the Israeli arms industry, classifies their fi-

nancial data, Friedman estimates that 140,000 Israelis — 10 percent of the work force — engage in the manufacture and sale of military hardware. Israel earmarks roughly 80% of its arms production for export, leaving only 20% for domestic defense.

These figures would seem to indicate that the scope of Israel's arms industry extends far beyond the realm of self defense. However, some argue that Israel relies on their international sales for purposes of national security as well. According to a representative of Israeli Aircraft Industries, "we can no longer rely on the domestic market. You have to go abroad to bring the contracts. The defense budget cannot help you anymore. Without exports today, the defense industries would be dead."

Friedman explains that Israel depends upon foreign deals to compensate for the fact that all military contracts are written in dollars. When the government freezes the dollar to shekel exchange rate at the same time that it must pay domestic salaries at the current rate of the falling shekel, the arms industry must compensate by selling internationally in foreign currencies.

Furthermore, Israel's arms industry generates three by-products essential for Israel's overall health: 1) It helps Israel's economy and balances some of its trade deficit, 2) It generates the money needed to advance new weapons, and 3) It reduces the degree of Israel's overall arms expenditures (A. S. Klieman, *Israel's Global Reach: Arms Sales as Diplomacy*, pp. 58,65).

Because of geopolitical realities in the Middle East, Israel must maintain a military defense apparatus to protect its people. As long as it requires such a force, it must rely on its own arms industry to supply the hardware. Israel's history of alliances with France and other nations proves that it cannot trust the good-will of other nations to equip it with the arms it needs for defense and deterrence in the Middle East.

Without its arms industry, Israel would not only become dependent upon other nations to arm it, but would experience a significantly

weaker economy. Liquidating or even significantly reducing the volume of the industry would result in mass unemployment and recession, eliminating approximately 25% of its total exports. Such circumstances would, in turn, increase Israel's vulnerability to both internal and external military attacks. We can thus consider a reduction in economic volume equivalent to a partial compromise of its defense position.

According to Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, author of *The Israel Connection*, Israeli leaders agree that any radical movement aimed at facilitating the process of decolonization in the Middle East and the Third World represents a threat to Israel. This threat causes Israel to respond accordingly. Israel's official response, "the periphery plan," calls for the forging of alliances with non-Arab nations on the periphery of the Arab Middle East which share Israel's interest in slowing the process of decolonization. This diplomatic strategy has led Israel into alliances with outcast or "pariah" nations such as South Africa and Taiwan. These alliances have virtually always allowed for the sale of arms to the pariah state. For example, according to the U.S. Defense International Agency, South Africa, Taiwan, and Israel have collaborated in the field of nuclear weaponry. These alliances with outcast nations are therefore necessary for Israel's overall defense strategy.

The reason Rambam offers for the prohibition of arms sales is that such sales will cause harm to the public. His restriction of arms sales to non-Jews might refer specifically to non-Jews who are naturally belligerent, as they were in his day. His addendum to this law, however, does allow for the sale of weapons solely for defense.

Rambam also imposes a commandment on non-Jews to establish a judicial system, and to enforce the laws of this system (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 9:14). For example, no one contests, on halakhaic grounds, the right of a police officer to carry a gun. We might interpret Rambam's commandment to allow Jews to help provide them with such a force. If this is so, why would it not also be permitted to sell weapons to an international police force commissioned to keep peace and maintain international order? Such a force would presumably be supported by the passage in *Avoda Zara* which allows Jews to supply arms to the "Persians who protect us."

This argument acquires increasing credibility in the arena of twentieth century international politics. Through the establishment of the United Nations, the world has deemed war not only undesirable, but illegal in almost all circumstances. *Continued on page 8.*

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF A BA'AL TESHUVA

by Michael Shurkin

On Yom Kippur, I hid. I was the outcast, and I was sure the mob in the *Beit Midrash* would cast me off a cliff during *Musaf*. I fled to my room and locked the door behind me. Ruben Hall, for once, was quiet. I stretched out on my bed and soon fell asleep.

Whenever being someone else proves too exhausting, I take refuge in sleep. Since coming to Yeshiva, the thoughts and values with which I have always interpreted the world have been so subtly usurped that I no longer know how and what I think. I do not recognize myself, and I can never be sure that reality as I perceive it is, in fact, real. My dreams, however, remain a sanctuary for my familiar self; sleep is the only place where I can be secure.

I dreamed. It was Friday night and some friends and I were celebrating nightfall among the redwoods of California. We sat in the replenishing waters of a hot spring that flowed from the face of a cliff. The water was heavy with minerals; I leaned back and floated. With my ears submerged and my eyes above the surface, I listened to my heart and watched the stars shift with the pulse. I began to fade away and float up beyond the trees and touch the heavens, but my friends' laughter still reached me through the water and tethered me to the ground.

I woke up and walked across the dorm room to the mirror. Studying my reflection, I recognized my eyes, my face, and my yarmulke dangling from my hair. They were the same eyes that had stared into the night sky, the same face that had felt the steam rising from the spring waters. Had I really been there? I moved the yarmulke back to the top of my head and reclippered it. It felt no more secure.

I've read that if one assumes a role advocating a position, one comes to believe in that position. At Yeshiva, I play Jew. But here, all things Jewish begin with the presupposition that Torah is truth and therefore Judaism is reality. Gradually, I am coming to accept, and almost believe, this claim. When friends of mine outside Yeshiva criticize aspects of the Orthodox world, I find myself defending what I'm not sure I believe in,

and trying to justify what I normally consider unjustifiable. As Torah continues to undermine my construct of reality, I can no longer discriminate between who I really am and who Yeshiva says I am.

Once I heard a rabbi talking about what women are like and what they are good for. The rebbeitzin standing near him seemed oblivious — sheltered behind a mental *mechiza* that freed her to absorb herself with her baby. I wanted to ask her who she was. How did her reality compare with the one her husband painted for her? Perhaps she was sleeping and we were all part of her dream? Could I too live an imagined existence?

When I went to college in California, I used to wake up early on Saturday mornings to go bicycle riding in the mountains. I rode five miles up into the redwoods and twenty miles down the back side to the Pacific ocean. From four thousand feet up I could see the mountains on the other side of the San Francisco Bay. Once it snowed. Once I watched eagles tacking across the coastal range. Once I saw otters playing with children in the surf.

On the first night back home in Philadelphia after Yom Kippur, I was up most of the night staring at my bicycle, now leaning against the foot of my bed. Feeling the scratches in the paint with my toe, I remembered the wrecks and the races and every mile of California road. My bicycle is

a monument to a parallel reality. But in the darkness of my room the bicycle seemed no more than a silhouette of what it had been, and that other reality was just an elaborate dream.

I broke away from the mirror in my dorm room and returned to the *Beit Midrash*. From the hallway I peered through the doors at the praying men, but I could not step across the threshold to join them. I turned to go but could not leave the building. I was stuck between two worlds. I sat down on the steps by the security desk and a mob of four-year-olds surrounded me, demanding to know why I wasn't davening. One child called me a goat. Another told me to go away. Somehow they saw me for what I was. Somehow they knew to cast me out. I reached out to touch the child nearest me, but he vanished into the air like the sound of spoken words. Although the children were no less real to me than any of my memories, that they actually existed and that they were anything more than reflections of my inner fears, I can never know.

The men were singing now. Yom Kippur was ending. I walked down the hall to look inside the *Beit Midrash* and saw the men dancing around the room. Still, I could not join them. The wall between us remained.

A rabbi ran up to me, smiled, and shook my hand as if to say, "It's all right." I wish I could agree.

Hamevaser wishes its
Editor-in-Chief
Benjamin Samuels
Happy Yom Kippur
and engagement to
his fiancée
Deborah Newman

Adon O'Lam: A Literary Analysis

by Lowell Abrams

Almost every Jewish child adds *Adon Olam* to his *tefilla* repertoire at an early age. Far from being *kinderlieder*, though, *Adon Olam* carries a deep message for all religious people. The complex structure and rich literary detail of the poem only add to the strength of its delivery.

Adon Olam easily divides into two sections. The first (lines 1-6) describes God using a purely objective tone: God, who has always ruled, created everything in one instant, was then recognized as King, and does not share His eternal rule. On the other hand, the second section (lines 7-10) constantly emphasizes a subjective point of view: He is "my God," "my saviour," "my portion when I cry," and "I will entrust my spirit to Him."

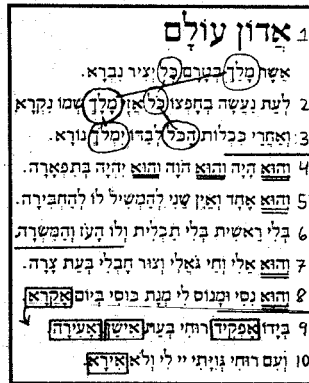
Each of these two sections divides further. In the first section, lines 1-3 each have a form of the root *m.l.kh* (to rule) and the word *kol* (all). Arranged in increasing chronological order, these lines present the most important "historical" facts about God. The second half of the first section then draws out the lessons to learn from the first half. Line 4 reemphasizes God's spanning of the full spectrum of time with its implied pairing of "*haya*" with "*malakh*" (1), "*hoveh*" with "*melekh*" (2), and "*yihyeh*" with "*yimlokh*" (3). Line 5 develops the concept of God's uniqueness, a basic assumption of the first three lines, although explicitly mentioned only in the word "*levado*" (3). Line 6 neatly combines the two main ideas of the first five lines, the timelessness and uniqueness of God, closing the first section.

The second section also contains two halves.

In lines (7-8), the poet describes God as a personal protector and benefactor. "*Vehu eli vechai go'ali vetzur chevli*" (7) reflects such passages as "*adonai tzuri vegoali*" (Ps. 19:5) and "*hu yikra'eni eli vetzur yeshuati*" (Ps. 89:27). Similarly, "*Vehu... menat kossi beyom ekra*" (8) draws key phrases from the famous "*kos yeshuot essa uveshem adonai ekra*" (Ps. 116:13), as well as "*beyom ekra maher aneini*" (Ps. 102:3) and "*adonai menat chelki vekhosi*" (Ps. 17:5). In the next two lines, the poet speaks of the trust he places in God. Not only does he give his spirit to God when he sleeps, but "*ve'im ruchi geviyati*" (10), "and with my spirit, [I also entrust] my body," since, asleep, he cannot fend for himself. "*Beyado afkid ruchi*" (9) clearly echoes "*beyadekha afkid ruchi*" (Ps. 31:6), but, strangely enough, the line in Psalms speaks directly to God, while the poet here chooses third person.

Both the intentional deviation from this line in Psalms and the poet's free use of typical Psalms phrases reflect an important aspect of *Adon Olam*. The poet never addresses God directly and builds *Adon Olam* on strong, recognizable sources because he presents his poem as a form of catechism. The first section describes God as He is in an absolute sense, and the second speaks of a personal relationship with God. The satisfying balance between these two sections emphasizes the need for equal awareness of both these facets of religious existence.

While this division of *Adon Olam* yields two nearly static sections offsetting each other, use of a binary division scheme reveals a subtle development over the course of the poem. The first section, lines 1-3, set off by the use of the root



m.l.kh and the word *kol*, present the first and most fundamental creed of Judaism. God alone created, and rules over, all. The poet states these facts with absolute conviction, and no emotional overtones, because the entire poem rests on the assumption of God's omnipotence, and can admit no doubt in this regard.

The prominence of the word *vehu*, "and He [is]," in lines (4-8) implies that these lines form a second section. The six-fold repetition shows the poet becoming more emphatic in his description of God; his emotional response to his beliefs continually grows. Although the poet begins this section describing God in an objective tone, he shifts, in lines (7-8), to the emotional description of God as a personal benefactor.

The heightening emotion carries the poet to

the last two lines, the only section in *Adon Olam* with verbs whose subject is the author (with the exception of the last word of the previous section, which anticipates this section). Here the poet does not just plainly state a creed or energetically put forth accepted beliefs; he steps forward and shows his willingness to act on his convictions. Having done so, the poet reaches a new plateau of faith. He began with the distanced description of God as "*adon olam*" (1), "the universe's Lord." Now, using the *shem havaya*, which reflects a more personal and merciful aspect of God, he says "*adonai li*" (10), "God is mine."

The poet specifically chose "*adon*" ("master") for the opening of the poem because of the special implications of a servant/master relationship. The first three lines present the epithotal description of God's transcendence over time and matter, leaving no room to doubt God's universal right and complete ability to rule. In the last two lines, the poet willingly entrusts God with his life, showing with the greatest possible clarity his acceptance of the role of servant.

Certainly, only an all-powerful master deserves such a level of servitude. From the other point of view, though, the poet has such great trust in God precisely because of his profound recognition of God's absolute power. The development over the course of *Adon Olam* thus bridges the gap between the recognition and the trust. The poet weaves together the two division schemes in order to show the subtlety of this development.

The process described in *Adon Olam* leads to trust in God, but its completion does not consummate Man's relationship with Him. Rather, as in every deep relationship, trust lays at the foundation. Only now, when the poet can exclaim "*adonai li*" (10), fully accepting God in His role as the merciful and concerned master, can he continue on the path taking him even closer to God. Now, confident in divine protection from any harm during his journey, the poet concludes: "*lo ira*," "I will not fear."

EPHEMERAL ETERNITIES: MITZVOT IN THE MESSIANIC ERA

by Yakov Blau

Judaism clings tenaciously to the belief that the Torah represents an eternal entity. Rambam enumerates this tenet among his Thirteen Articles of Faith. Yet, certain passages in the halakhic literature seem to allow for different interpretations of this principle. For example, the Talmud (*Nidda* 61b) states: "...one may bury the dead in shrouds of *kil'ayim* (wool and linen fabric) ... [because] the *mitzvat* will be nullified in the future." How can we reconcile this statement with our belief in the Torah's timelessness?

Rashba (*Chiddushei HaRashba*, *Nidda* 61b) and Rivash (Response, No. 124) opt for a non-literal meaning of the text. In truth, the *mitzvat* will forever obligate *B'nei Yisrael*. They understand the Talmud, however, to mean that live people have no obligation to ensure that the dead obey the commandments. Without this ruling, one might have incorrectly compared dead people to minors, thereby concluding that just as adults must prevent their children from sinning, so too the living must protect the dead from sin.

Rashba quotes the Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (92b), which relates that the dead whom Ezekiel resurrected wore *tefillin*, as proof that *mitzvat* will continue to bind us even after *techiyat hametim*. Ritva, however, contests the Rashba's application of this citation in two ways (*Chiddushei HaRitva*, *Nidda* 61b). First, he argues that the principle of the nullification of *mitzvat* only applies to the era following the final resurrection of the dead. Ezekiel's resurrection, however, did not relate to the ultimate *techiyat hamayyim*, as the individuals he resurrected later died a second time. Rather, Ritva maintains, Ezekiel simply gave these people a second chance at life and another opportunity to perform *mitzvat* before the ultimate resurrec-

tion. Second, Ritva feels that the dead had no obligation to wear *tefillin*; they simply considered it an appropriate way of displaying their intimate relationship with God. This type of practice will continue even in the Messianic era.

Rashba introduces another important factor in his commentary on tractate *Berachot* (18a). Here, in contrast to his views in *Nidda*, he understands the Gemara in *Nidda* literally: *mitzvat* will cease to bind us in the future. Because of this, he feels that Shmuel, who maintains that "there exists no difference between this world and the Messianic era save for the lack of oppressive rule" (*Berachot* 33), will claim that the status of *mitzvat*, like everything else, will not change, and thus performance of the *mitzvat* will remain obligatory. If so, Shmuel might understand not only Ezekiel's resurrection, but even the final resurrection as a second chance at life for all those who will be revived (Cf. Ritva in *Nidda* (61b), who disagrees).

Many other commentators adopt a literal interpretation of the passage in *Nidda* as well. R. Elchanan Wasserman posits a limited view of this approach (*Kovetz Shiurim* # 29). He argues that the Talmud only refers to those who will be resurrected at the time of *Mashiach*; however, the *mitzvat* will continue to obligate those who are alive.

Ritva carries the literal interpretation to its extreme by applying this passage to both the living and dead. He quotes the gemara in *Shabbat* (121b) which contends that in the Messianic era there will be no reward or punishment. From this passage he concludes, "As long as this world exists, [a world] which contains [the concept of] reward and punishment, from [the Torah] we should not subtract... But in the world to come, in which there will be neither reward nor punishment, the

mitzvat, in and of themselves, become nullified" (Ritva, *Nidda* 61b). Similarly, he interprets the Gemara in *Eravin* (22a), which states, "Today to do [the *mitzvat*], tomorrow to receive their reward," as referring to the rewards of the Messianic era which the people earned through their previous observance of *mitzvat*.

Ramban may express a similar idea in his explanation of the verse "and God will circumscribe your hearts" (Deut. 30:6). He contends that during the Messianic era, "man will return to his state of being as it was before Adam's sin, when he, through his natural instincts, did what was right... Therefore, *mitzvat* will contain no rewards and no punishments, for reward and punishment hinges upon the desire." While Ramban, in contradiction to Ritva, does accept the existence of *mitzvat* in the Messianic era, they both agree that one can no longer receive reward for performing them. I believe that both Ritva and Ramban consider the Messianic era a time to enjoy the close relationship with God that one has earned through one's performance of the *mitzvat*. Without the concept of reward or punishment, however, one can no longer perform *mitzvat* to bring oneself closer to God.

In light of this approach, I believe one can give

the interpretation of R. Wasserman a broader understanding. If those who died no longer receive reward for their *mitzvat*, we might say they have no more potential to become closer to God. Their existence in the Messianic era will simply be one of enjoying the fruits of their labor. However, those who still remain bound by the precepts can continue to strive to approach the Divine.

Rav Kook (Selected Letters, No. 17) also refers to the future as a time to simply enjoy one's close relationship to God, but his formulation is even more extreme. He not only agrees that reward and punishment will no longer apply and that *mitzvat* will no longer bind us, but says that nature will change in a way that will render *mitzvat* impractical. For example, since people will no longer need to eat, there will be no *mitzvat* of eating matzah on Passover. Similarly, there will be no prohibition of *kil'ayim*, since people won't wear clothes as a source of warmth (which is the nature of the prohibition).

We might summarize the general approach of the literal commentators by treating *mitzvat* as a means to an end, namely, one's personal spiritual growth. If one has reached the limit of his or her spiritual growth, then the *mitzvat* might lose their relevance. However, as long as there remains room for an individual's spiritual improvement, the *mitzvat* might eternally bind that individual in his effort to climb the rungs of the Torah's spiritual ladder.

The entire Hamevaser staff extends its condolences to:
 Rabbi Norman Lamm and Rabbi Maurice Lamm upon the very recent loss of their father,
 Meir Shmuel Lamm,
 and upon the loss of their mother, Pearl Lamm.
 Rabbi Melech Schachter and Rabbi Hershel Schachter upon the loss of their beloved wife and mother.
 Rabbi Metzger upon the very recent loss of his father.

Reflections on Russian Jewry: A Woman's Perspective

by Gila Iskovitz

Contemporary Jewish women in America confront issues our grandmothers would never have believed possible. Intensive Jewish education has fostered within us a thirst for what was once deemed forbidden, or at best superfluous, knowledge. Aiming to increase our religious participation and gain footing on the communal level, Jewish women of our generation form prayer groups, steadily fill key leadership positions in Jewish communities, and produce increasingly outstanding scholarly contributions in all areas of Jewish thought. I watch these advances with mixed feelings of pride and uncertainty as they constantly challenge me to re-evaluate my own values vis-a-vis the woman's role in the Orthodox Jewish world.

This past summer, Chani Rutner and I represented Stern College on a Y.U. sponsored mission to the Soviet Union. During our visit, I witnessed a revolution in four Jewish communities which, having remained dormant for decades, finally bloom with Jewish activity. Lvov's Jews are experiencing a cultural reawakening as the community prepares to make *aliya*. In Tbilisi, for the first time in generations, Hebrew and other religious instruction is available to all. In Skukhumi, the young people form Zionist groups. Full of eager young students, the Steinsaltz Yeshiva in Moscow hosts over 65 people on a typical *Shabbat*. Everywhere in the Soviet Union Jews are becoming aware of their Jewish heritage and are seeking to explore it further.

Notwithstanding these great strides, my trip to the USSR was, for me, a journey back in time. The position of the Jewish woman in Russian society has remained static, and resembles that which I imagine existed in the United States 100

years ago. Encountering attitudes which I had previously confronted only in history books made me appreciate the tremendous advances of Orthodox women in the States — progress that we usually take for granted.

In the shul in Lvov (formerly part of the Polish Ukraine), an elderly man asked me, "You pray every day?" Surprised by his incredulous tone, I answered, "Yes." His wondering expression turned to amazement as he told me, "In Poland women don't come to synagogue." Throughout *shacharit* he glanced curiously over the *mechitza*. Chani and I clearly left this man mystified. Not only did we attend *minyan*, we also knew what to do. For some time immediately following this exchange, I could barely concentrate on my prayers. I mused: this old man was referring not only to women in present Communist Lvov, but also to women in the flourishing Jewish communities of pre-war Poland. When over 30 synagogues graced Lvov, women did not come to pray. Regular daily prayer for women was never a priority, nor was it ever particularly valued. Today, on the other hand, young Orthodox women daven *shacharit* and *mincha*, and many daven *ma'ariv* as well. What observant woman does not make an effort to attend shul at least on *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*? The one woman who attended services in Lvov sat in the back of the shul with her hands folded throughout the entire service. If women never participate in communal religious observances and receive no education in their homes, from whence would their education come?

Before our departure for Russia, my group was commended for including two women. I did not appreciate the significance of the praise until we reached Tbilisi. Prior to our visit, the Jewish communities of Russia had primarily received rabbis who had instructed only men, and

the women had felt excluded. In Tbilisi, we were fortunate to attend classes on Hebrew and religion where I delightedly observed both men and women participating. When we were each asked to speak during a "Basic Judaism" class, I decided to address the four women in the group (a total of 12 people attended). Drawing examples from Sarah, Chana and Devora, I briefly mentioned some of the unique qualities of Jewish women. Describing their respective wisdom, courage and leadership, I ensured the women that they had inherited these qualities. I encouraged them to emulate the matriarchs and instill Jewish values within themselves, their families, and communities. Toward the end of the speech (it lasted barely 15 minutes) I noticed one woman wiping her eyes. A man in the back raised his hand and asked quite seriously, "Would you consider remaining here to teach the women?" I was at a loss for words, stunned by the impact of what I considered a short, simple message. These women did not have a role model; they had no concept of their unique roles as Jewish women. Indeed, they did not even know that Judaism promotes a positive view of women. I left Tbilisi regretting that I could not do more for these women.

In Moscow there was also a palpable lack of female role models to educate the women. At first, I was thrilled to find three women learning full-time at the Steinsaltz Yeshiva. As *Shabbat* continued, however, I became increasingly amazed that there were any women learning there at all. Friday night, the women (approximately 15 guests, their ages ranging from 20 to 35) davened in a second room from which the *chazan* was barely audible. Not knowing how to follow in the siddur, they spent a large portion of the time chatting. After *ma'ariv*, the men fervently danced and sang; the women watched for a while

until they got bored, at which point Chani and I took their hands and engaged them in equally vigorous dancing. During the meal as well, the women refrained from singing.

I believe that, in the two days we spent at the yeshiva, Chani and I exposed the women in Moscow to a different type of experience — an experience in which one's entire spirit participates in the joy of being a Jew.

It is truly remarkable that, despite these handicaps, a few individuals whom we met here, through their *mesirat nefesh* for Torah ideals, reached esteemed levels of *tziduk*. They have joined the ranks of exceptional Jewish women who, throughout the ages, have remained steadfast in their faith even when up against tremendous odds. Disturbed by my own complacency, I left Moscow wondering whether, under similar circumstances, I would find Judaism sufficiently attractive to cause me to abandon my entire lifestyle and jeopardize my familial ties. If undereducated, would I scoff at the age-old traditions of my grandmothers, or would I resolutely seek out their meaning?

My experiences with the women in Russia impressed an indelible mark upon me. I returned to America with a tremendous sense of responsibility. We women who have been born into established Orthodox communities must never take the extent of our involvement for granted, nor may we become complacent. Fortunately, our

society values education for both men and women. As beneficiaries of these educational opportunities, our obligation is to perpetuate Torah, for ourselves and for our fellow Jews.

[Author's note: I have recently heard that at the end of the summer a *Bais Ya'akov* was established in Moscow.]

Notes From The Underground

Alex Morgulis with
Shmuel Landesman

Today, together with all the other students at Yeshiva, I enjoy the freedom to openly practice Judaism and study Torah. I can truly appreciate what a privilege this freedom is, for I have not always had it. You see, it was not long ago, back in Mother Russia, when such activities were risky and strictly prohibited. Nevertheless, the constant danger could not deter me or my friends from joining Kiev's Jewish Underground.

My family had always maintained a strong connection to Jewish tradition. We have lived in the Ukraine for many generations; I descend from *Skverer Chassidim*, the largest chassidic group in the Ukraine.

My grandfather, who passed away in Kiev in 1982, was always religious. I vividly recall an incident that took place in his home when I was ten years old, one year before he passed away. I was looking at the *sefarim* on his shelves (which I could not read) and suddenly had a premonition that one day I too would be able to read his Jewish books.

As I grew up, I saw many other symbols in my house that linked our family to Judaism. We always kept, under lock and key, *tefillin*, *siddurim*, *tallitot*, and *a megilla*. We hid our *mezuzot* inside the doorposts. Despite the dangers and difficulties, we always conducted a

seder, complete with *matzot* baked in Kiev. Nevertheless, by my generation, my family's ties to Yiddishkeit had weakened considerably. My parents had taught me some Yiddish, but I was not at all well versed in other aspects of my tradition.

On the first of Pesach, 1988, an event occurred which changed the course of my life. In shul that day, I saw a young Russian Jew pray with a devotion, fervor, and intense concentration I had never seen. Watching him daven imbued me with a desire to know the order and language of davening. I had always felt the spark of Judaism, but seeing this man's devotion kindled a fire of inspiration within me. I approached him; he told me his name was Alex Gogerman, and that he was organizing secret Hebrew classes for young people. Would I be interested?

Thus began the most exciting and meaningful period of my life: I joined the Jewish Underground of Kiev. The purpose of the Underground was to learn Hebrew, teach others, become knowledgeable and practiced in the observance of Torah Judaism, and to plan *aliya*. Alex taught us from the Hebrew primer "*Elef Milim*," of which we each received a xeroxed copy. Over the course of ten intensive lessons (supplemented with loads of homework), we became somewhat versed in the Hebrew language. We then began to teach our own groups. The class I

entered after Pesach numbered fifteen young people. By the time I left Russia after Chanukah (1988) almost two hundred young people participated in our various activities. A miracle was taking place before our very eyes.

Every Friday night we enjoyed a traditional *shabbat* meal at our apartment. Earlier in the afternoon we would cook the food together. Later, the girls would light *Shabbat* candles, and then we would daven. Alex would recite *kiddush* and tell us *a d'var Torah*. Guests always slept over, and in the morning they would walk to the main shul in Kiev. Over the course of several *shabbatot*, we learned *netilat yadayim*, the *zemirot*, and *hirkat hamazon*. Every step we took opened our eyes to a new *mitzva*, and every *mitzva* we observed made us feel more like Jews.

We experienced the greatest event in our religious development in November, 1988, when we received our Jewish circumcisions — *Brit Milot*. A young *mohel* from Leningrad came to perform the ceremony, which was followed by a *seudah* and *hanachai tefillin*. Now we truly felt like a real part of the Jewish people.

By this time, we were quite fortunate to have received a number of Jewish articles from abroad. We obtained *tefillin*, *tallitot*, *teitziot*, *kippot*, and many Jewish texts in Hebrew, English and Russian. We now prayed with Chabad *siddurim* that contained a Russian translation. We also had tapes of Hebrew instruction, Shlomo

Carlebach, Mordechai ben David, Avraham Fried, and Israeli pop stars.

I did not enter the Underground without considerable risk. If caught, my friends and I would have been blacklisted for the rest of our lives. We would have been denied entrance to University and relegated to menial employment. In addition, our families would have met with recriminations. Alex would have been in the most trouble; Besides being our leader, he owned an illegal xerox machine, which he used to duplicate available Jewish texts.

The government suspected us, and the KGB carefully monitored our activities. Once, they attempted to bribe one of our members to spy on us. They also raided our meeting place (a rented apartment in downtown Kiev) several times. Just two weeks before reaching the United States, I arrived at our apartment a few minutes late, only to find the KGB parked outside. I hid on a different floor of the building while the agents took down everyone's name, address, and I.D. number. Had they caught me, the govern-

Glasnost and Geulah

by Hillel Novetsky

In the face of the rising wave of anti-Semitism, Soviet Jews have responded by strengthening themselves through Torah learning and religious fervor. We must support their courageous efforts by satisfying their increased demand for Torah education.

This past summer, I was fortunate enough to participate in a Yeshiva College-sponsored trip to Russia. Due to special circumstances I traveled alone during most of the two week trip. While this obviously made the conditions more difficult, it also made my experiences all the more poignant.

Throughout the two weeks which I spent in Odessa, Kishinev and Moscow, I had numerous opportunities to teach Torah, in various settings, to Jews of diverse ages and backgrounds. In Moscow, at a *seudat mitzvah* celebrating the *b'rit milah* of six Soviet Jews, I delivered an impromptu *devar Torah*. Only later did I realize that my *devar Torah* captured and conveyed the essence of my experience.

A striking *Mekhilta* (on *Parashat Bo*) relates that prior to taking the Jewish people out of Egypt, Hashem realized that they were not deserving of redemption. To remedy the situation, He immediately bestowed upon them the mitzvot of *b'rit milah* and *korban Pesach*. Through the merit of fulfilling these two mitzvot, the Jewish

people proved worthy of the subsequent *geulah*.

Why was it necessary to give them two mitzvot? What is the message of these specific mitzvot and the significance of their fulfillment?

The mitzvot of *b'rit milah* and *korban Pesach* represent two distinct and essential aspects of the redemption process. An individual's *b'rit milah* effects a personal spiritual redemption. This is especially pronounced when an adult chooses to have a *b'rit milah* as happened in Egypt and is occurring today in the Soviet Union. In contrast, the *korban Pesach* is a familial mitzvah, eaten by a family unit ("*seh la-bayit*"). Its fulfillment emphasizes spiritual redemption on the familial level. By first undergoing these two steps, individual and familial spiritual redemption, the Jewish people merited the national redemption from Egyptian bondage.

Today, Soviet Jewry is experiencing a national *geulah* accompanied by the same individual and familial redemptive stages. My experiences in Odessa and Kishinev illustrate this process.

When I arrived in Odessa, I contacted Aryeh B., who took me to Odessa's lone synagogue. Three mornings a week, twelve elderly men assemble in the Shul for *keriat ha-Torah*. Every afternoon, though, the Shul comes alive with thirty cheerful voices. Singing and laughing, a group of small children eagerly learn Torah in cheder. Aryeh is their teacher, yet he himself has been learning Torah for only the past two years.

Returning with Aryeh to my hotel after the cheder class, I asked him when he would get a visa and make *aliya*. He answered that obtaining a visa would not be difficult for him, but he could not leave Odessa. "Why not?" I queried. Aryeh replied without hesitation, "Hillel, if I left, who would remain to teach the cheder? What would happen to all the children who have just begun to learn Torah?"

Dumbstruck, I had to remind myself that walking beside me was a fifteen year old boy, barely a shade over five feet tall. A mere child had just taught me the real meaning of the words "*mesirut nefesh*." Aryeh's fortitude made him truly worthy of his name. Yet, could a little boy shoulder the burden of *K'lal Yisrael's* responsibility?

Clearly, I was faced with a moral dilemma. Did I have a responsibility to convince Aryeh to immigrate to *Eretz Yisrael*, where he could attend yeshiva and develop into a *talמיד chakham*? On the other hand, did I have the right to ignore the future of his young pupils, who thanks to Aryeh's warmth and dedication, had just recently been turned on to Torah and Yiddishkeit?

To me, Aryeh and the children at the cheder embodied the individual spiritual redemption symbolized by *b'rit milah*. Despite the absence of any semblance of Judaism in their homes, and little encouragement, if any, from their parents, these children felt an attraction to Torah and mitzvot. Leaving them behind was excruciatingly difficult, yet my itinerary left me no alternative but to travel on to Kishinev.

Walking around the city of Kishinev, wearing my *yarmulke*, gave me a tremendous sense of pride. It also made me easily identifiable to fellow Jews and afforded me several extra opportunities to meet some of them. On Friday, as I was coming from a Jewish children's performance at the Jewish Cultural Center, a middle aged man, David K., approached me on the street and asked me where I was from. After a short conversation, I accompanied him to his apartment where we spoke for a couple of hours about Torah, Israel and his memories of his father's *Shabbat* table. Like many other Soviet Jews, David was aware and proud of being Jewish, but had little idea of what that means.

I agreed to return on Sunday afternoon on the condition that he invite his family and Jewish

friends over. That Sunday, about ten family members and friends gathered at David's small apartment, to learn with me for almost five hours. I knew that this was probably their first exposure to Judaism and that it might be their last for a long time. How could I best utilize these precious few hours?

I decided to present a Torah highlight "film" which would give an overview of the narrative and halachic portions of Torah, focus on events of major significance in Jewish history, and describe various aspects of *Eretz Yisrael*. Throughout, I emphasized the many moral and practical lessons which could be learned from the presentation. We sang songs, viewed maps and pictures of Israel and looked at *sefarim* and other *chinukh* materials which I had brought along. We also discussed many of the differences between Judaism and other religions and I attempted to communicate the concern of world Jewry for their welfare.

I fervently hoped that these few hours would be the beginning of David's family's spiritual redemption. Yet, I knew that for this to take place, my small contribution would need to be supplemented by the efforts of many others.

Operation Exodus will, with Hashem's help, achieve the physical redemption of Soviet Jews on a national level. Yet, just as our exodus from Egypt was incomplete until we received the Torah on *Shavu'ot*, so too Operation Exodus's completion hinges on our providing for the spiritual redemption of Soviet Jewry.

Summer programs and brief visits by concerned individuals can no longer quench the spiritual thirst of Russian Jews who long to compensate for decades of religious and cultural deprivation. We must provide a continuous, coordinated, year round presence of Torah teachers, directing their efforts toward all ages of the population.

Making History: Summer Camp In Haifa

by Maury Kelman

"*Ani hamoreh*," I calmly stated to the eager teenagers. I was greeted with dumbfounded stares, so I tried again. "*Ani hamoreh*." I repeated, while energetically pointing at myself. The reaction was the same, but I was not discouraged. With precise enunciation I continued my efforts, this time much more slowly. "*Aaaniii haamoorrehh*," I intoned. The eight faces beamed with delight as their minds suddenly penetrated the linguistic mystery.

"Uhhh," they exclaimed while pointing at themselves, "*ani hamoreh*."

This incident, or variations thereof, occurred several times this past summer to me and, most likely, to many others in different locations throughout Israel. As part of a group of eleven college and post-college age young adults, I had the wonderful opportunity to teach Russian immigrants of all ages topics ranging from *alef-bet* to Torah. Planning for this program began in April, after a few group members were moved by the daily news of the massive influx of Russian *olim* into Israel. "How can we help?" we asked. In search of an answer, we hooked up with the ACHY organization, which did a great job with all the arrangements in Israel. In New York, word spread quickly of our evolving summer idea, and scores of people began to express great interest in joining. Only lack of money, and lack of beds in our Haifa base, limited the group to eleven dedicated and inventive

people - eight North Americans and three Israelis.

"Why Haifa?" we were constantly asked. A few minutes after arriving there amid sweltering heat and oppressive humidity, we too began to wonder why we had chosen Haifa. In reality, there were two reasons for selecting Haifa: through ACHY we had some good contacts, and Haifa was absorbing more *olim* than any other city in Israel. Thus, there were marvelous opportunities for our group to assist the immigrants in numerous ways, both formally and informally.

Our formal agenda placed each group member in a classroom teaching Hebrew and basic Judaism to a group of new Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, and American immigrants every morning. Our Israeli teaching counterparts were a little suspicious of our presence at first: "You mean, you would pay \$500.00 to travel all the way from New York to teach kids Hebrew?" Nevertheless, our Israeli co-workers, touched by our motivation and creativity, came to respect us greatly, as evidenced by their parting gifts to us, at the end of the summer.

The informal part of our program consisted of many different facets. We were each assigned various families to visit on a regular basis. Many of us forged very close ties with our "*mishpachot*," despite the language barrier. Some of us became honorary members of these families, treating us almost as one of their own. In fact, one of the families was so diligent in their "*shadchanut*" attempts, that one of our group

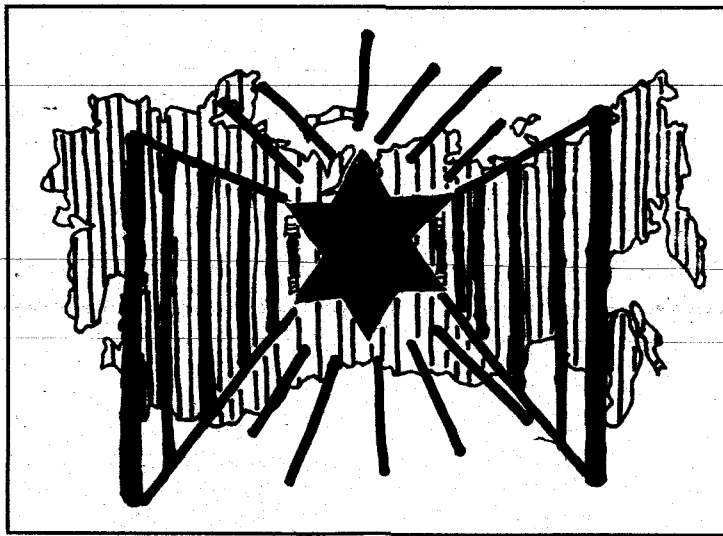
members finally agreed to be set up on a *shidduch* date.

In addition, we ran a variety of programs at the largest *alpan* in Haifa. These ranged from the educational to the recreational, with evenings of skits, followed by singing and, especially popular, dancing. At these programs, there was a great feeling of camaraderie among all of us; we realized the powerful link that bound us together physically on the dance floor bound us emotionally on the religious floor as well.

"Why," some might still ask, "would a group of bright, college educated, summer job candidates pay \$500.00 to teach Russian newcomers from eight to eighty the *alef-bet*?" Why would mature, dignified young adults parade in bathrobes, funny hats and cotton beards to the delight of scores of Russian teenagers and adults? Why, more importantly, would the mature, dignified Russian adults be delighted by our rather strange antics?

All eleven participants shared a great desire to participate in a meaningful way in this historic *aliya*. That meant that, at times, someone fluent in Ramban's commentary on tractate *Shevuot* was teaching an eleven year old girl what a *patach* was. On another occasion, a college graduate pretended to be a tree in order to portray the third day of creation. At other times, a usually sedate young man transformed into an excited teacher, standing on a desk attempting to

Continued on page 11.



Knocking On Heaven's Door

(Genesis 11:1-9) Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them hard." Brick served them as stone, and bitumen served them as mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build a city, and a tower with its top in the sky, to make a name for ourselves; else we shall be scattered all over the world." The Lord came down to look at the city and tower that man had built, and the Lord said, "If, as one people with one language for all, this is how they have begun to act, then nothing that they may propose to do will be out of their reach. Let us, then, go down and confound their speech there, so that they shall not understand one another's speech." Thus the Lord scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel, because there the Lord confounded (bala) the speech of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Sammy Levine

The episode of the Tower of Babel, though a familiar one, occupies only nine verses in the Torah. The Midrash contrasts the story with that of the Flood, noting that "the events of the *Dor haMabul* are explicit; the events of the *Dor haHaflaga* are not explicit" (Ber. Rabba 38). This problem has led exegetes throughout the ages in an attempt to discover the sin of the *Dor haHaflaga*, if one was, indeed, committed.

Citing further from the above Midrash, Rashi suggests that the builders of the tower wished to "rise up to the heavens [and] wage war against it." Many commentators, however, object to such a reading. While the builders did propose a "tower with its top in the sky" (Gen. 11:4), Rashbam points out that such an ambition need not reflect sinful motives. In fact, Moses uses the same words as a simple description of high towers (Deut. 1:28), without any connotation of a rebellion. Ibn Ezra objects to the suggestion that the builders would attempt to fight against God; since they would not have acted so foolishly, particularly with Noah and his sons amongst them.

Instead, these commentators base their interpretation on the builders' own pronounced goal: "a city" to prevent them from being "scattered over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4). The tower would serve both as a signpost for everyone to know the location of the city, and "to make a name for ourselves" (ibid) which will last as long as the tower. Such an attitude opposes God's command to "be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it" (ibid 1:28). Ralbag concurs, adding a rationale for this commandment: if all of mankind live in one location, a subsequent disaster will leave no survivors. If men are dispersed, however, a calamity in one place will not affect those who live elsewhere. Therefore, "the Lord scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth" (ibid v. 8) in order to save them from the possibility of annihilation.

Ibn Ezra alone moves one step further away from the Midrashic opinion, suggesting that the builders did not sin, for "they did not know" of God's commandment to fill the earth. Radak disputes such a contention. Using Ibn Ezra's own logic, he insists that Noah and his sons knew of God's commandment. Furthermore, the wise men of the time, among them the forty-five year old Abraham, certainly considered illogical the belief that mankind could forever live within a small space of earth. While they obviously disapproved of the builders' plans, they could not prevent the majority from sinning against their will.

Still, the view that they wished to violate their obligation of settling the earth leaves itself open to other criticisms, which may necessitate other interpretations. Ramban rejects Radak's opinion because he feels that everybody, not only the wise men, must have recognized the impossibility of settling the world's population in one area. Though Rabbeinu Bachya agrees with Radak "according to the *peshat*," he prefers an explanation which he can better reconcile with the Midrashic statement that the builders waged war against God. Thus, he says that the *Dor haHaflaga* knew of the Flood and feared a similar

destruction: one through fire, though, rather than water. They tried to defend themselves by building the tower, thereby waging war on God and His ways.

Ran devotes much effort to the issue of *Migdal Bavel* in his commentary on the Torah as well as in his *Derashot*. Before stating his own opinion, he argues with both Radak and Rashi. While admitting that Radak's interpretation conforms to the *peshat*, it is unacceptable because it "conflicts completely with the words of Chazal." Yet, Rashi's citation of the Midrash also errs, since a denial of God's power would have warranted a harsher punishment than the one inflicted. Rashi does address this objection, quoting the Midrash to contrast the sin and punishment of the *Dor haMabul* with those of the *Dor haHaflaga*. Although the *Dor haHaflaga* committed a graver sin, rebelling not only against fellow man, but against God himself, its members escaped utter destruction through "practicing love and kinship." Though he recognizes the importance — and power — of peace among men, Ran nevertheless feels that the builders' peaceful conduct cannot reduce their punishment so drastically.

Furthermore, if Radak's ideas conflict with the Midrash, Rashi's citation of Chazal strays too far from *peshat*. Ran points to the language of the Torah, as God explicitly decrees, "this is how they have begun to act," and asks rhetorically if "now, will they not be stopped from that which they have planned to do?" (ibid, v. 6). According to Rashi, the builders already committed the sin of denying God's power; according to the Torah, Ran infers, the punishment does not respond to what they have already done, but is "due to the danger of what could possibly erupt."

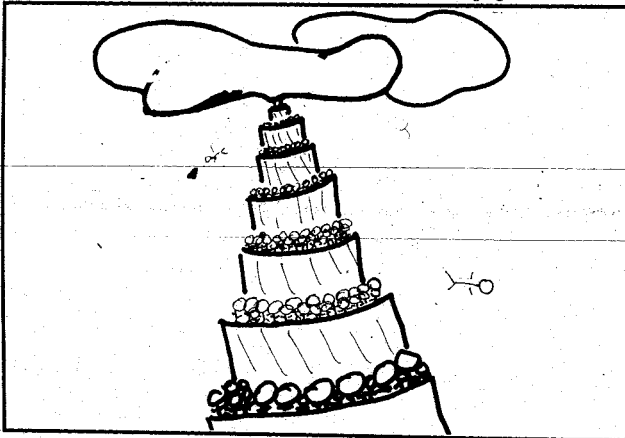
Therefore, Ran himself explains that the builders wanted to appoint a single leader to rule over them in order to keep all of mankind united. The tower then serves as a signal of the leader's power and sovereignty. Such a goal, Ran writes, is admirable when promoting unity among righteous individuals, who would produce positive results. Most of the world, however, consisted of idol worshippers whose leader would enforce their beliefs and be intolerant of those who fear God. Hence, the Midrashic statement describing a rebellion against God

refers to the potential danger that mankind would be unified in the pursuit of *Avoda Zara*, thereby ultimately obliterating *Avodat Hashem*.

As a result of his careful reading of verse 6, Ran agrees with Ibn Ezra that "they did not sin, either in thought or in practice," though Ibn Ezra simply accuses them of ignorance, while Ran says that their actions would clearly have led to sin. Similar to Ralbag, but on a smaller scale, Ran explains that by dispersing mankind, God protected His servants, who, if threatened by one nation, could find refuge in another.

Perhaps the most unique interpretation is that of Abravanel. Like Ran, he takes issue with earlier commentaries before advancing his own thoughts. Abravanel prefaces his remarks with a respectful rejection of the Midrashim which "are not satisfactory according to *peshat*," but instead "undoubtedly contain intentions and allusions other than the *peshat*." He disregards the notion that the builders wanted to remain in one place on earth, because — as Ramban expects ordinary people to realize — God certainly knew that they would not attain their goal; therefore, He did not need to disperse them, as they would ultimately settle the earth by their own will.

Abravanel calls Ran's explanation "further away than all the others," because the Torah makes no mention of the builders' wanting a leader to rule over them. Furthermore, he finds the concerns Ran submits unjustified, since God has the power to save His servants from even a single tyrant, as He did from Belshazzar. Finally, even if such a fear were valid, dispersing the people through different languages would not serve as a remedy. Achanasherov represents but one example of a king who ruled over many nations with varied languages.



Instead, Abravanel explains that the *Dor haHaflaga* had a wealth of all the natural benefits necessary for their survival. God relieved them from any work or toil, leaving them free to engage in the pursuit of improving their souls. Yet, like Adam and Cain before them, they were not satisfied with that which God had prepared for them, but instead decided to build a city, with the tower as its center. In place of the natural idyllic lives of tent dwellers, they chose an artificial, urban society: As *Akeidat Yitzchak* explains, when they looked at the heavens, which function as a unified entity, they concluded that they, too, should be unified. Abravanel asserts, however, that this unity generates many vices, including materialism, theft, and even murder. When men lived separately in tents, these faults could not arise; the city, however, symbolized by the bricks (v. 3) — the building blocks of an artificial society — prevents man from his natural role of fulfilling his spirituality.

Although such a society is improper, God did not forbid it subsequently, since man developed an ingrained desire for it, but instead He

mandated the *mitzvot* through which such a society could function righteously. When the Jews wandered through the desert, since God supplied them with their needs, they did not require such a lifestyle.

Abravanel brings Midrashic statements to support his view, including even the one stating that the builders rebelled against God. According to his own explanation, Abravanel interprets the Midrash to describe their wish to live through artificial actions and societies, thereby rebelling against the natural system that God had provided. He then claims that the Torah does not mention the nature of the sin because the building of a city, though artificial and originally against God's preference, has lost its forbidden quality.

Acharonim throughout the ages have offered alternate explanations of the builders' sin, many of them novel and creative. Regardless of the true nature of the sin, the Torah has clearly left room for us to pursue its secrets and seek out its mysteries.

Holy Hand Grenades

Continued from page 4.

undesirable, but illegal in almost all circumstances. Since this condemnation of war, a general desire for defensive order has replaced the widespread military belligerence prevalent in Ramban's day and age. U.N. military operations consist of "police actions," such as the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq. In light of this stated purpose, the sale of arms takes on new dimensions. Supplying a "police force" is different than supplying a "military force." Ramban, in forbidding the sale of arms to hostile individuals, may only include *military* forces; *police* forces, however, may fall within the legitimate confines of self defense.

Where can we draw the line between aggressive military forces and defense police forces? Is an insurgency movement a freedom fighting force intending solely to defend the rights of its people, or is it a terrorist organization? Halakha, for obvious reasons, cannot objectively ascertain the goals of such a movement. Rabbi Chaim David Halevi, author of the responsa *Asseh Lecha Rav*, confidently trusts the government to make this decision. He therefore resolves that we can rely on the Israeli government to engage in arms sales "on the basis of security considerations and the benefit which will arise from them."

Assuming the exemption from the prohibition in the case of foreign nations which protect Jews (*Avoda Zara* 15b and Rambam, *Hilkhot Avoda Zara* 12:14), we can conclude that nations in a security pact or alliance with Israel constitute nations to which Halakha would permit the sale of arms. Since the essence of such agreements aims to defend Israel, any means which lead to the fulfillment of such agreements seems justified.

Most, if not all, halakhic journals justify Israel's sale of arms for reasons of economic necessity, defense and alliances. However, few have examined, from a halakhic perspective, the need for the gross numbers of arms sales, the determination of which nations should receive arms, or the specific analysis of any individual transaction.

Rabbi HaLevi's decision to trust the government impresses Rabbi Meich as an overly apologetic one, and there is reason to suspect that the government is not as particular in its selection of business partners as it should be. Each case contains ambiguities which call for halakhic analysis to determine the permissibility of the transaction. Undoubtedly, many such sales are necessary and should, perhaps, receive sanction from the halakhic world.

Ideally, the process of ascertaining what Halakha mandates should be Israel's only concern. Once a halakhic verdict is reached, no dilemma should remain between halakha and national security, for halakha will have already taken national security into account. Israel's decisions regarding arms sales seem, thus far, to reflect these considerations.

Running On A Treadmill: Jonah's Escape From God

Aharon Haber

Jonah's attempt to evade prophesy challenges the commentators with an interesting dilemma: how does one explain the awkward reality of a prophet running from God? While both Moshe and Yirmiyahu also originally opposed their personal callings to prophesy, the *Da'at-Mikra* (Introduction to *Sefer Yonah*, p.5) notes that they were motivated by feelings of inadequacy rather than disagreement with the calling, as is implied in *Sefer Yonah*. The following question now arises: If Jonah was justified in his flight from God, is it possible to suggest (*chas v'challila*) that God erred in asking him to go? If not, can one say that Jonah's, a *Navi Hashem*—blatantly rebelled against God's word? *Sefer Yonah* implies the latter scenario. Jonah fled because he knew that the all-merciful God would forgive Nineveh and he did not believe that they had the right to repentance. In the end, God attempts to demonstrate the attribute of mercy to Jonah through the enigmatic parable of the *kikayon* plant, and the story ends abruptly, leaving doubt as to whether Jonah accepted this lesson or not.

The apparent paradox of "the sinning *tzaddik*," the implications in the text that Jonah originally contends with God's allowance for *teshuvah* for the people of Nineveh, and the fact that *Sefer Yonah* gives few insights into Jonah's motivation all provide a unique opportunity to examine Chazal's approaches to a theologically difficult text. Their views are significant both on a theological level (i.e. regarding the problem of Jonah's apparent sin and the question of *teshuvah* for non-Jews or *reshaim*) and on a methodological level (i.e. how they deal with the absence of clear indications in the text of Jonah's motivations).

The two investigations of Chazal into *Sefer Yonah* deal with Jonah's attempt to escape God's word. The actual event is the first mention of this apparent rebellion. The *Sefer* opens with Hashem's command to Jonah, after which he runs from God's word without apparent reason: "And Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from before God; he descended to Jaffa, found a ship sailing to Tarshish and paid his fare to board the boat to sail to Tarshish from before God" (1:3).

These first three verses cover the incident with startling abruptness. The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Sanhedrin* 11:5) fills in the gap: "Jonah said: I know that the gentiles are ones who repent and now I go and prophesy to them and they will repent and the Lord will pay back the enemies of Israel - what am I to do - to flee." This *peshat* is echoed in the *Mekhilta D'Rebbi Yishmael* in the beginning of *Parshat Bo*. The *Mekhilta* says that Jonah appealed for the honor of the son (*B'nei Yisrael*), not the honor of the Father (God, who told him to go to Nineveh). Further, the *Mekhilta* adds that Jonah would rather drown himself at sea to avoid causing *B'nei Yisrael* to be punished. In short, Jonah fled from God's word because he feared that *B'nei Yisrael* might be punished due to Nineveh's outstanding example of *teshuvah*.

The *Yalkut Shim'oni* first quotes a source similar to the wording of the *Yerushalmi* but then adds a different motivation:

"...Is it not enough that Israel calls me a false prophet, but do the idol worshippers have to call me such as well? Hereby I will flee to a place where his glory is not found."

What problems did the *Yalkut* have with the explanation of the *Yerushalmi*? And why add a *peshat* which lends Jonah this personal motivation of not wanting to be called a false prophet (again) by a city of idol worshippers?

Ibn Ezra rejects this second possibility precisely for its personal nature (as well as for other reasons). Radal on *Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer*

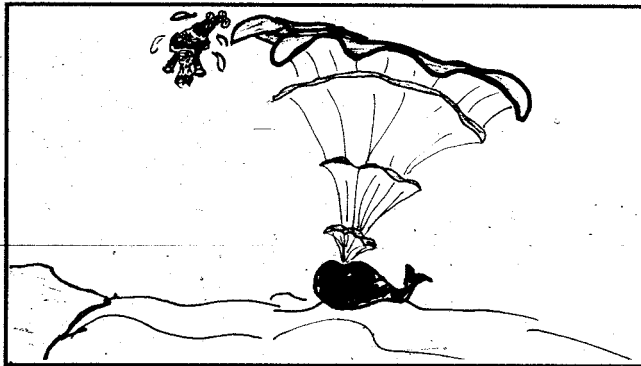
(PDRE), who also quotes this explanation, explains that Jonah certainly did not disobey God out of personal concerns. He was troubled about the *chillul Hashem* which would take place after his prophesy would be proven false. Notwithstanding Radal's *peshat*, this midrash is puzzling. Why did the *Yalkut* see fit to add to the first explanation it and the *Yerushalmi* gave?

The answer to this question may lie in the second reference in *Sefer Yonah* to his flight from God: "And Jonah prayed to God saying: Are these not my words while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled beforehand to Tarshish. For I know that You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, renouncing punishment" (4:2). Here, Jonah offers deeper insight into his actions. He ran away because he knew Hashem would have compassion on Nineveh.

Both the reason the *Yerushalmi* gives and the second reason in the *Yalkut* and PDRE develop this idea. Each *peshat* assumes that Jonah instinctively felt that Nineveh would repent, even

understanding of the *Yalkut* PDRE outcome (like Ibn Ezra as opposed to Radal), that Jonah was personally motivated. In his commentary on the first chapter, R. Bar Hiyya explains Jonah's motivation: "...his intent was that he should not serve as a messenger for the wicked." According to this, Jonah did not want to prophesy to Nineveh because he did not want to be a messenger to the wicked (not "goyim" but "wicked"). Jonah's motivation, therefore, was not only personal but also partially theological.

This suggestion, however, seems difficult to understand in the fourth chapter. In verses (4:1-2), Jonah says he is angry because he knew God would forgive Nineveh. But according to the reason in the first chapter, Jonah did not want to be a prophet for Nineveh—regardless of whether or not they would do *teshuvah*. R. Bar Hiyya is forced to add here that Jonah also fled because he knew Hashem would forgive Nineveh. Combining R. Bar Hiyya's commentary in the first chapter with his commentary in the fourth, Jonah fled because not only would he be a



before he left *Eretz Yisrael*. These *peshatim*, though, differ greatly in how they expand on the verse. The *Yalkut*, which speaks of Jonah's concern for being called a false prophet, contributes minimally to the text, introducing only Jonah's personal fear. In contrast, the *Yerushalmi* adds a great deal. According to the *Yerushalmi*, Jonah says he knew that Nineveh would repent and Hashem would take out his anger on *B'nei Yisrael*; therefore, he fled. This *peshat* seems problematic, for *B'nei Yisrael* are not mentioned at all in *Sefer Yonah*. What is the justification for this addition? Whereas the *Yalkut* PDRE explanation concerns itself with *peshat*, the *Yerushalmi* attempts to resolve a theological difficulty. In the words of Rav Yehoshua Ibn Shuaib (*Derashot R. Yehoshua Ibn Shuaib: Derasha L'Yom Kippurim*): "This prophesy is written for the embarrassment of Israel, for [otherwise] it would not have been fit for inclusion among the prophets, because in it is no prophesy for Israel, and there is not found like this in any of the other prophesies..."

According to this explanation of the *Yerushalmi* (also brought down in the *Milbim* (1:2) and, in slightly varied form, in Radak's introduction to the *sefer*), a Jewish *navi* could not have conceivably been sent exclusively to Non-Jews to show them the error of their ways; this is a right reserved for *B'nei Yisrael*. Thus, Jonah knew the truth: Hashem sent him to Nineveh so that the people there could ultimately serve as a contrasting example to *B'nei Yisrael's* slothfulness and general insincerity about *teshuvah*. Fearing this outcome, he ran away from Hashem.

Rav Avraham Bar Hiyya's *Hegyon HaNefesh Ha'atzuvah* (*Ha'amud Hashlishi*) harmonizes the *Yerushalmi's* outcome — that Jonah was purely motivated — with the simple

sheliach lireshaim - a messenger for wicked people, but also because that *sheliach* would result in God forgiving their wickedness.

R. Bar Hiyya further tries to explain Jonah's death wish in 4:3: "Because You forgave the evil You said You would bring on the wicked Nineveh whose repentance was only for their own good...and You decreed on me to go to them and to consequently be seen by them as a liar - because of this I see my death better than life."

R. Bar Hiyya is obviously working within the *navi sheker peshat* of the PDRE, yet instead of using it to explain the original rebellion, he adds it to explain what bothered Jonah so much that caused him to want to die. When all elements are taken into account, R. Bar Hiyya presents a clear, insightful picture into Jonah's psychological condition. Jonah realized that Hashem forgave the Ninevites even though their *teshuvah* was only for personal gain and they remained wicked. Thus, Jonah from now on would be considered a liar in Nineveh's eyes. After all the trouble he went through on this farcical trip, Jonah could only see the negative outcomes. He felt if his mark on the world as a prophet was only bad then his life was meaningless. Therefore, he asked God to take his life.

R. Bar Hiyya was searching for a *peshat* that fit textually, but perhaps he could not accept the *Yalkut* PDRE attempt because it disregarded Jonah's status as *navi* of Hashem. He ended up with a *peshat* that adds to the text what the *Yalkut* adds (apprehension of being called *navi Sheker*) without causing the problems inherent in the *Yalkut's peshat*.

Rav Eliezer of Beugency attempts a closer reading of the text. According to his commentary on the first chapter, Jonah, an old and weak man, knew that while in all probability all the

inhabitants of a city the size of Nineveh would never repent, he also suspected that Hashem would never destroy such a large city. Thus, the tiring trip would be for naught. He explains verse (4:2) in a similar manner: "I knew you were compassionate and would not destroy such a large city and therefore I troubled myself and pained my body to travel here for naught, because I thought that you would forgive them even without their *teshuvah*." How can we justify a *peshat* that makes Jonah out to be a lazy, selfish person who rebels against Hashem only because he considered Hashem's mission a waste of time? Rav Eliezer goes even further to explain that Jonah asked Hashem to take his life because he knew he would have a rough trip back to *Eretz Yisrael*.

The key to this understanding lies in verse (4:2). There are two oddities in this verse. First, even if Jonah knew that Hashem is all-merciful, did he truly think a city which was totally wicked had any chance of doing *teshuvah*? In addition, why does the verse say that he knew Hashem would forgive Nineveh's wickedness? If they really *did teshuvah* then they deserved to be forgiven. Rav Eliezer illustrates that Jonah did not really think that Nineveh would do *teshuvah*, but he thought that Hashem would forgive them anyway, in which case his mission would be totally pointless. In the fourth chapter, when Jonah prays to Hashem, he is still under the assumption that Nineveh did not do *teshuvah* (according to Rav Eliezer, he left before the city repented), yet Hashem says in the last verse of chapter three that he would forgive the city anyway. Thus R. Eliezer, like R. Hiyya, sets up a realistic situation in which Jonah is almost forced to ask for death. Although Jonah knew his mission would have no meaning, God forces him to carry out His command, and the final outcome is that Jonah had been right all along.

R' Eliezer's *peshat*, though radical, has many advantages. He is not forced into adding new facts into the text, he answers two considerable difficulties in (4:2), and he gives us a picture of a *navi* who, although motivated to flee from God for personal reasons, does not want to refuse *reshaim* the right to do genuine *teshuvah*.

These four different commentaries have explored a text that raises both theological and methodological difficulties. Possible motivations have been suggested for each proposal. This essay is meant neither to be exhaustive in explaining *Sefer Yonah* in general, nor even in explaining the commentaries quoted specifically. In summary, the *navi sheker peshat* appears in three out of the four explanations, yet the difficulty of ascribing to Jonah such a motive is obvious. The *Yerushalmi* does not have the question on the *navi sheker peshat*, and it also answers why a Jewish prophet was sent to non-Jews. In addition, it adds the most to the text. R. Bar Hiyya uses the *navi sheker peshat* to answer a separate question, where personal motivation makes a great deal of sense. Finally, R' Eliezer's *peshat* adds nothing to the text, but perhaps leaves Jonah with much less than holy motivations. All of these interpretations answer significant portions of the overall question. The important thing is to realize that the problems in the text exist, and they must not be ignored.

Book Announcement

The Michael Scharf Publication Trust of Yeshiva University Press announces the appearance of the first volume of *Maimonidean Studies*, edited by Prof. Arthur Hyman. As an international, interdisciplinary annual, the new publication devotes itself to all aspects of Maimonidean research: halakha, philosophy, history, medicine, bibliography, etc. As a courtesy to Yeshiva faculty and students, the volume is available at the special price of \$15 (list price: \$25) at the BRGS office, 108 Furst Hall.

INTERVIEW

Continued from page 3.
 so. There are very few who are Conservative - very few reverends and very few temples in the State of Israel. But the communication (media) uses them to [incite] hate [against] *shomrei Torah u'mitzvot*....So what will we do?...I hope that *Mashiach* will come before.

Hamevaser: Why doesn't the present *Rabbanut Harashit* extend itself more to the *Chilonim* - to have better ties? For example, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook *z"l* used to visit the irreligious settlements. I know, in Rehovot, the Rav makes an effort to embrace the non-religious. It seems that the present attitude of the *Rabbanut Harashit* in Israel is that they (the *chilonim*) should come to us. Is this a true assessment and do present attitudes need to change?

R. Kook: Of course...it is very important to come to them. Today, if a Rabbi waits for them to come to him, he will not attract any non-religious Jews....I believe we have to try to make it (ties) stronger and to repeat the *Masa Teshuva* that Harav Kook with Harav Sonnenfeld together used to make....I visited some of the settlements that Rav Kook and Rav Sonnenfeld visited, and I met some very old people who...remember the influence of those visits; they remember exactly what Rav Kook said. It's unbelievable....But I want to be *melamed sechus* because it has become much more difficult [to conduct a *Masa Teshuva*] because of the terrible communications (media)...the *mechitza* between the *Dati* and the non-*Dati*. We don't want there to be a division at all, [but] the current situation has created one, so it has become much more difficult to break the walls between the non-religious *kibbutz* and the rabbis.

Hamevaser: One can see the expansiveness of the Rav's vision for *Klal Yisrael* in his involvement in a Torah based rehabilitation program for prisoners. Can the Rav tell us about this program?

R. Kook: Two years ago the head of one of the jails told me that he wants to open a *Yeshiva* in the jail. I told him that he already has a very large *Yeshiva* - since everyone is sitting there. I asked him, "Why do you need a *Yeshiva* in a *Yeshiva*?" He told me not to joke because its very important to start a *Yeshiva* there. So we started a *Yeshiva* with five prisoners, and now, after two years, we have sixty people learning. These prisoners have special housing. Now, ten of the original students leave the jail every morning at 8:00, by themselves, to go to Yerushalayim and learn all day in Yerushalayim in *Yeshiva*. It only happened once that one of the inmates couldn't help himself and returned home to kiss his son; he returned to jail a little late. All over the world people are trying to find a way to rehabilitate prisoners so that they will not return to a life of crime. Today statistics show that 80% of prisoners return to jail. But of those who have passed through the *Yeshivot* in jail, 95% have not returned to jail. I believe that the reason for this is that we are not condescending to these prisoners; we talk to them as fellow Jews.

Hamevaser: The general consensus is that without a radical change in the public school system - that is, to include *Chinuch Dati* within the public school system - relations between the *Chilonim* and the *Datiyim* won't get any better. What realistic changes does the Rav propose - either to introduce *Chinuch Dati* into the public school system or to increase *Chinuch* in some other way?

R. Kook: It has become much more difficult...to invite a rabbi or somebody who is really a *shomer Torah u'mitzvot* to the schools. I asked somebody from the head of the Education Department of the State of Israel: If one of the principals of a high school in the State of Israel will get a telephone call from the Sheikh of Taibbeh, for instance...and would say "Look, I am the Sheikh of this city - I want to come over to speak to the children." What would be the answer? Of course it would be very nice! Every principal would be very happy to have a lecturer like that. Now, if a principal will get a telephone call from a rabbi in his own city that the rabbi wants to come to talk about Judaism...what will the principal answer? And he was quiet - he didn't answer me. How can we

change this situation? I don't know. It's possible that the Minister of Education, Zevulun Hammer, and the general director of this ministry, Zevulun Oreg, can try to start something - but if they try there may be a *tzaka gedola u'mara* from the parents, who fear that [their children] will become *Ba'alei Teshuva*.

I took part in a convention of teachers in Israel, and I mentioned in my *derasha*...that I want to explain *tefillat sheva esrei*. They stopped me, and told me they never heard of *tefillat sheva esrei*. It should be *shemona esrei*, and its alright to say it became *tisha esrei*, because of *velamalshinin al tehi tikva*, but they never heard of *tefillat sheva esrei*. I told them, "because we are sitting here together with non-frum teachers, and I know that I am not allowed to talk about *teshuvah*, I have to erase [the blessing of] *harotseh biteshuvah*, so I have *sheva esrei*. I cannot talk about *shemona*

"Ani yesheina velibi er" refers to this generation of Soviet Jews

esrei." I repeat: we have to do everything that is possible. How [should we] do it? It is not easy.

Hamevaser: With the rising number of *yeshivot hesder*, which are also producing *dayanim* and *rabbanim* who will enter the *Rabbanut*, does the Rav think this will affect the authority of the *dayanim* system, both from the side of the *Charedim* and the *Chilonim*? Will the *Chilonim* react more positively towards *dayanim* from *yeshivot hesder*? Will the *charedim* react more negatively towards the *dayanim*?

R. Kook: I don't believe that it would be such a tremendous difference for either side, since, until now, there are very few *dayanim* who come from *yeshivot hesder*. Even though the *yeshivot hesder* are over thirty years old, there are very few *dayanim* - maybe two or three, not out of about a hundred *dayanim* in the State of Israel. Possibly, there will be more in the future. But *Dayanim* are not exactly those who are doing outreach. To be a *dayan* means they have to pass in the Halakha, and there is no difference if a person learned in a *yeshivat hesder*, or in *Yeshivat Ponevez*, everybody knows exactly the same Halakha, and *paskens* clearly according to the Halakha. It is not an issue of *hashkafa*. *Beis din* is not a place to say what your *hashkafa* is. If a woman has to be divorced or not, or if the husband has to pay such and such price to keep his family and support the children, there is no difference whether he (the *dayan*) came from a *yeshivat hesder* or *Yeshivat Chevron*; it is exactly the same.

Hamevaser: The Rav doesn't think that the *Chilonim* would prefer to go to someone who is known, let's say, to have a *tzioni hashkafa*, over someone who does not have the most *zionistic* views?

R. Kook: Of course, [but] not in *beit din*. It is possible that there will be a change in terms of *rabbanut*. *Rabbanut* is more involved in the public life in any city, in any area, any quarter, even though it is not a problem today. There are many rabbis who never studied in *yeshivot hesder*, and they are accepted by the entire community, and you can also find the exact opposite. So, this is not the problem with the *Rabbanut* of Israel as I believe it to be today, because most rabbis are accepted by everyone. For instance, the late Rav Kook...he came from the Volozhiner *Yeshiva*...and he was accepted by everybody, [although] not during the whole period that he was the rabbi. There were times that he had troubles from many groups, and everybody knows it - not from the *Charedim*; I am talking about the non-frum groups in *Klal Yisrael*. It was a terrible period for Rav Kook in those times. Now they remember only the good things. But now, I think that if someone has love, and responsibility, and wants to work hard, and wants to be a *shamash*

for *Klal Yisrael*, he will be accepted by most people. And if not, it does not matter whether he studied in *yeshivat hesder* or in another *yeshiva*.

Hamevaser: In Rehovot, the Rav serves as the chief rabbi for both *Askenazim* and *Sephardim*. Everyone accepts the rulings and decisions of the Rav. In other places, we see that there is one *rav* for the *Askenazim*, and one *rav* for the *Sephardim*. Does the Rav think that having a separate *Askenazi* and *Sephardi* rabbi in each city increases tensions between *Askenazim* and *Sephardim*? Does the Rav believe that having two chief rabbis detracts from the authority of the *Rabbanut Harashit* in general?

R. Kook: I only want to answer part of the question. I don't want to talk about the State of Israel, only about Rehovot. In Rehovot, the current situation - that there is only one chief rabbi - started before I became rabbi. I have been in Rehovot twenty years, and I thank God that he gave me this wonderful, very important position, even though it is very hard and very difficult, and I have no time for the private life that everyone wants, and I haven't even enough time to learn as much as I would like....It is not right to say there is only one *rav* in the city - I am talking about myself - I work hand-in-hand with the *Sephardic rabbanim*, who have a *rav Temani*. We have a *rav Sephardi* also. Any problem that has to do with the public life of the city we solve together. It is not really true that I am alone. I make no changes in the city without sitting together with the other rabbis.

Hamevaser: Does the Rav think that having *Askenazi rabbis* and *Sephardi rabbis* work together and cooperate is the best system?

R. Kook: I think that for Rehovot it is good. What to do for the other cities, ask the chief rabbis. They know better than I. I am the rabbi of a small city.

Hamevaser: Does the *Rabbanut Harashit* play an important role in the political process, and pursue the *rabbanim* voice their opinions and pursue an active role in politics?

R. Kook: We have to understand that what many people call political problems are really halakhic problems. Because they are halakhic problems, the rabbis have to say the *de'a* clearly. So, what will be with *Eretz Yisrael*? That is a halakhic problem. They are allowed to say what they *pasken* in this halacha. And if somebody will cry - why are they involved in politics - the answer is that it is not politics, it is halakha....I believe it is the biggest sin for a rabbi to be involved in politics. In *Igrot HaRe'iah*, he [Rav A.L. Kook] declares that a rabbi is not allowed to be connected with any group, even though he is allowed to have his own *hashkafa*, and it is possible that his *hashkafa* is closer to one of the other groups...because then all other groups will not believe him any more.

Hamevaser: To move on to a different topic - the *intifada* seems to be getting worse and worse. Does the Rav think that there is a viable, realistic solution to the *intifada*?

R. Kook: First of all, what was the history of the *intifada*? There was a time that we had prisoners, and captives...and there was a *masa u'mattan* between the state of Israel and the PLO and the other terrorists groups. The result was that they gave us back our captives and we sent away hundreds of terrorists. It's difficult to say, but it was a tremendous mistake. According to the halakha, we don't redeem captives for more than they are worth. And that was the beginning of the big fire of the *intifada*. They saw that we were so weak. And they got such tremendous encouragement. The second mistake came later. They (the Israeli government) came to the decision that

if someone is throwing stones it is not so terrible; let him throw stones. I visit many cities all over the world, and I never saw one country...except Yerushalayim, *ir hakodesh*, Yehuda, Shomron, and Azza...[that has] police cars with nets on the windows. The [Israeli] police and even the army have nets on the windows of their cars....I spoke to a Druzi officer and he told me that we are very foolish: "You don't know that stones can kill!" I asked, "What do you mean?" And he answered, "You are a Rabbi. Don't you know that Goliath was killed by David with one stone?" One stone is enough to kill. And from the beginning of the *intifada* until today, many Jews have been killed by stones. Some of them have been killed by the stones themselves, others when they drive cars and crash [because the stones have caused them to lose control of their car]...There is a law of *rodef* - if one arises to kill you, go kill him first. Those who say that the morality of Judaism is not to allow them to save their own life, NO! The morality of Judaism is the opposite, that you *must* save your life. We desecrate the *Shabbat* to save lives. We eat on *Yom Kippur* to save lives....It (the law of *rodef*) is a simple law for which we don't have to bring proofs....I believe that today, if according to the law, every person that would be attacked by stones could save his life by shooting those who are throwing stones, it would be the end of the *intifada*. And it is unbearable to see how soldiers are being stoned from all sides and are not doing anything. When in danger, they shoot with plastic bullets. We never saw this in any country! Armies shooting with plastic? What would be if this happened in Washington, in New York? The policemen would shoot everyone who was throwing stones. What happened at the *Kotel HaMa'aravi*? 25,000 people came together and the Arabs threw stones. The *Shechina* has not moved from the *Kotel HaMa'aravi*. It was a tremendous miracle that only forty people were hurt. I was there; I saw thousands of stones.

I have one of the stones here with me. I will show you...It has been sharpened. I want to protect this stone - you know why? It is written in *Kohélet*, "A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones." *Chazal* teach us a wonderful idea. "A time for throwing stones" refers to the time that the *Ribono Shel Olam* took the stones of the *Beis HaMikdash* and he threw them away - he destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*. To what refers "A time for gathering stones?" There will come a time to take the stones of the *Beis HaMikdash* together and to build the *Beis HaMikdash* *HaShelishi*. I am saving this stone for the future *Beis Hamikdash*, with God's help. They cry "Let's throw stones," but I observe this stone to be "a time for gathering stones." Until then it will be built into the *Yeshiva* in Rehovot...the gemara says that since the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* God has no place in this world save the four cubits of halakha. So now I'm putting [the stone] into the small *beis hamikdash* - the *Yeshiva*. God willing, we believe that the *Beis HaMikdash* will be rebuilt, and then I will take the stone from the small *beis hamikdash* to the big *Beis HaMikdash*. May it come speedily in our days, Amen.

Shalom is the name of the *Ribono Shel Olam*...What we need more than anything else is to pray three times a day for *shalom* in *Eretz Yisrael*, for security in *Eretz Yisrael*, and that there be *Torah* in *Eretz Yisrael*....And if someone is learning in *Yeshiva* *Yisrael* this year, next year he will come to *Eretz Yisrael*, so he must begin to pray for *Eretz Yisrael* and make it part of his or her dream.

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary proudly presents
Iyyunim baHalakha
 The first lecture, dealing with
 "Developmental and Learning Disabled Students,"
 will be given by HaRav Rabbi Aaron Soloveitchik
 on Tuesday, December 4th.
 Future topics will include:
 Attitudes Toward Inter-marriage; Issues in *Kibbud Av vaEm*,
 and Parameters of *Lashon Hara*.
 New and Complete Tape Catalog Tape Library,
 Room F419 - The Torah Tape Center

"לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כי אם לשמע את דברי ה'"

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN RUSSIA

Determining the Religious Destiny of Soviet Jewry

Operation Exodus is bringing more Jews out of Russia than ever imagined. Yet, while we are winning the battle for Soviet Jewry's physical survival, we are losing the war for its spiritual survival. Arriving in Israel without a religious foundation, Soviet immigrants are being engulfed by an overwhelmingly secular society. Previous spiritual yearnings dissipate in the face of preoccupation with searching for a home, job and school, and adjusting to a new language, culture and society. Ninety percent of Soviet *olim*'s children receive no form of religious education. *We must not wait for Soviet Jews to arrive in Israel; we must initiate religious education programs in Russia.*

In August, 1990, several students coordinated a Jewish camp for three weeks in Tallinn, Estonia. Inspired by the experience, Tallinn's Jewish Cultural Society established a Jewish school in which 300 children are presently enrolled. The school, however, has *no* Jewish teachers, leaving its future in serious doubt.

WE CAN PROVIDE THOSE TEACHERS!

Pairs of RIETS students will teach in Tallinn, as well as in other Soviet cities, for one month shifts. Our teams of teachers will institute and maintain the following programs:

- Formal classes, as part of the school curriculum, in Torah, Hebrew language, Jewish history, and study of Israel.
- Informal sessions on the same subjects for the broader Jewish community of Tallinn (including both adults and children) on individual, familial and communal levels.
- Special Shabbat and Yom Tov programs which will elucidate and bring to life the themes and mitzvot of the Jewish calendar.
- Jewish cultural workshops, concerts, and social gatherings to unify and inspire the Jewish community of Tallinn.

Our program in Tallinn is tentatively scheduled to begin in January, 1991. Assuming its success, a similar program will be established in a second city in June, 1991.

The spiritual salvation of Soviet Jewry requires the efficient utilization of all our available resources. RIETS students have already committed themselves to comprising the educational component of this program. We appeal to the broader Yeshiva community to furnish the financial support essential for this endeavor. All those who wish to assist us should please contact the Program Coordinator, Hillel Novetsky, at (212) 740-5956.

Making History Summer Camp in Haifa

Continued from page 7.

explain the word "at." Our students, both young and old, appreciated our drive, and responded with great emotion.

Finding such enthusiasm among so many helped motivate us throughout the summer. We had set a number of goals we wanted to achieve over the course of the six week program. Our prime desire was to show the Russians (and ourselves) that Jews form one large family which transcends all borders of the world. In addition, we wished to demonstrate in a variety of ways the iron link between our religion and our land. Finally, we wanted to show our brethren that Orthodox Judaism can and should be a viable way of life.

In this last area, our greatest Jewish success occurred, ironically, at the Leo Baeck Ulpán, the bastion of Reform Judaism in Israel's north. Since we weren't sure how the school would react to our "kiruv" work, we were cautious at first. The daily skits we performed for different classes concentrated more on Jewish history than on religion, but, as time progressed, we realized that we could expand our agenda to include more formal religious instruction. The teenagers looked forward to our skits and discussions (as did the teachers, who left early when we performed our theatrics), and laughed and sang with

us, all the while learning of a whole new world called Judaism.

As their enthusiasm increased, we became more excited, but at times we had difficulty keeping pace with the spirited teenagers. After a long day of studies, many of the students remained in school in order to study Torah with us. Some were prepared to stay as long as we would teach them. (We usually raised the white flag first.) This Torah study group formed the nucleus of a larger group which began studying for bar- and bat-mitzva. With cooperation from the Leo Baeck Ulpán, we took nearly forty teenagers, plus many parents and grandparents, to Jerusalem to celebrate this auspicious event, albeit a few years late for most of the teenagers. It was a day filled with great joy, something none of us will forget for a very long time.

In general, what we found in Haifa on the streets, at the ulpáns, and at the university dormitory where we slept was a tremendous sense of thanksgiving and happiness, tempered somewhat by the uncertainty of the future. We found people, who while in Russia had never heard of Shabbat, eager to light candles. We found people who had never seen *tefillin* in Russia begging us to put *tefillin* on them first. We found people who had been subjected to slanderous Russian tales

of a terrible Israel now proclaiming their whole-hearted love for the land.

There are many other highlights I have neglected to portray, and many extraordinary individuals I have failed to mention. These stories could fill the chapters of a lengthy book. Now, a couple of months after our remarkable summer, I realize that I have enjoyed a great privilege in being part of such a wonderful experience. While this certainly does not make me an expert on Russian immigrants, there are certain thoughts that I would like to share.

A number of people had told me that for many Russians, Israel was a second, third or even fourth choice. "They'll come to Israel," I was told, "take all the benefits, and then leave in a few months. They're just using Israel." While this may be true of a small minority, my experience showed me that the vast majority of immigrants are genuinely happy to be in Israel, and thankful for the opportunity. A lot of them have realized, after experiencing the growing anti-semitism in the Soviet Union, that Israel is truly the only place for a Jew. I recall a talented, young, unemployed violinist describing his feelings about being in Israel to me. He was prepared to work in any field, and was astonished to think that people would not want to live in

Israel. A middle-aged woman summed up this feeling best when she joyfully remarked to me after one of our evenings of song: "Now I know what it means to have our own country."

Of course, even the greatest optimist will admit that if there are no jobs for the masses of immigrants, all these patriotic statements will be traded in for one way tickets to Brighton Beach. Nevertheless, we are obligated to do what we can to make the immigrants' initial period in Israel comfortable and meaningful. In this regard, we Orthodox Jews have a special charge: we must ensure there is no repetition of the unfortunate Sephardic immigration of the fifties, in which many Sephardim were forcibly cut off from their beliefs. The *olim* we encountered this summer were sincerely interested in Judaism. If the religious community responds effectively to this enormous challenge, we can overturn the disastrous effects of seventy years of Communist rule, and ultimately carve out a new Israeli and Jewish order.

We are truly living in historic times, with the potential for this *aliya* to be great. As we study here in New York, we must realize that we do not have to stand on the sidelines of this momentous show. Instead of watching history, we can make it.

Insights From The Archives

Shulamit Berger

The Archives on the sixth floor of the Mendel Gottesman Library house a veritable treasure of Jewish experience, tempting the inquisitive to come discover its wealth. One such cache lies in the file labeled: "Requests for Teachers and Rabbis for High Holidays, 1924-1928" in the administrative records of Samuel L. Sar. This dry title, though quite accurate, offers no indication of the rich material to be found within.

In 1920, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary students eagerly sought pulpits for the High Holidays. Samuel L. Sar, Registrar of the Yeshiva and Dr. Revel's right-hand man, served as the primary intermediary in the negotiations between the congregations and the rabbinical students. Mr. Sar's correspondence to communities across the United States and Canada rewards its present day readers with precious insights into the religious attitudes and aspirations of both the Yeshiva and the Jewish congregations of 1920's North America.

For example, it is interesting to note the variety of terms congregations employed to describe themselves during this era: Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, strictly Orthodox, and even "our Congregation is Orthodox but Conservative" (letter of A. Greenberg, Pres. of Beth Israel Cong., Bradford, PA to Sar, 9/10/27). Sar recognized the ambiguity inherent in these designations, and generally asked the congregations to define their terms. A telegram sent to Omaha, Nebraska, on August 20, 1928 is typical: "Please advise by wire what you mean by Modern Orthodox congregation. Our graduates while American born, modern in the fullest sense of the word are however strictly orthodox. Do you intend [to] have family pews in your synagogue?"

Mr. Sar apparently considered the *mechitza* the line of demarcation between Orthodoxy and the other camps. In case after case, he inquired, "Are men separated from women at services?" One reply Sar received to this question, from Congregation Sons of Israel in South Bend, Indiana, dated September 3, 1928, states: "Our congregation is strictly [sic] Orthodox. Men and women are separated. They are not separated at Friday night services or publick [sic] speeches which are conducted mostly in English. We want [a] man modern strictly [sic] Orthodox first clas[s] speaker English and Yidd[ish] also have Smicho. Will prefer with experience if possible..." Another enlightening response to the question came from a congregation in Richmond, Virginia (March 29, 1926): "Our congregation is strictly Orthodox with the exception that the

men and women are seated together on two days at New Years and Yom Kippur, the rest of the time they are separated. [Ed. note: Dr. J. Gurock points out that for the High Holidays, congregants invited their secularized children to pray with them, thus leading to mixed, family pews.] I am sure that the right man can easily change this custom with the assistance of the membership which the majority desire."

[Ed. note: Dr. Revel insisted that Yeshiva's rabbinical graduates only occupy pulpits in synagogues with separate pews. Revel, however, permitted graduates to be interviewed by congregations with mixed pews if the congregation agreed to install a *mechitza*. On occasion, he also allowed such interviews if he felt that an able, diplomatic man could bring the congregants back to the fold. In such cases, the rabbi ministering to the *mechitza*-less synagogue had to correspond with Revel to inform him of his progress. If the rabbi did not succeed within a year, Revel insisted that he leave the congregation. Once, when a Yeshiva graduate refused Revel's request to leave a position which had both mixed pews and a mixed choir, the graduate's ordination was publicly revoked. (Rothkoff-Rakeffet, Bernard Revel, p.163-166)]

In his search for a rabbi, the president of Congregation B'nai David of Miami, Mr. J. L. Sho., entered into a lengthy correspondence with Mr. Sar. Mr. Sho. responded to Sar's questioning of the congregation's Orthodoxy with a three page missive typed in Yiddish (June 28, 1928). In it, Mr. Sho. expresses his objection to the standard "separate seating" definition of Orthodoxy used by RIETS. In his reply addressed to Dr. Revel, Mr. Sho. also provides insights into the layman's perception of Orthodoxy, and the responsibilities of rabbinical leaders trying to maintain religious observance in America during the 1920's. Portions of Mr. Sho.'s letter are translated here from the Yiddish: "...We...wrote to you about a rav for our congregation, a rav, or a rabbi, who can deal with people, a man who's learned but a true Englishman, so he'll be able to win the youth to Orthodoxy and to the Torah....This in itself, worthy rav and doctor, should convince you that our congregation is not reform...otherwise we wouldn't have turned to you but to the representatives of the other seminaries - but you wanted to know what kind of congregation we are, if we're Orthodox..."

"When the question of Orthodoxy arises it's difficult to answer. It's highly probable that even the strictest American Orthodoxy would not have been called "Orthodox" either by my great-grandfather, author of the *sefer Apiryon David*,

or by your grandfather. The majority of the Orthodox rabbis who are now in America and are members in one of the three rabbinical organizations would not have been recognized in the old country, not by the rabbis, nor by other Jews, as reliable rabbis...And you ask us, simple people, whether our congregation is Orthodox! And we plain *balepätim*, in a faraway place like Florida yet - are supposed to be *poskim* as to whether or not our congregation is Orthodox.

"We daven from the *siddur* prepared by the *Anshe Knesset haGedolah*. We haven't thrown anything out of it, many of us even remember to say the *shesh zekhirot* but if you want us to tell you that everyone in the congregation is a truly observant Jew like my grandfather or yours, the answer is absolutely not...It's true men and women pray together, but that depends on the rabbi, who must persuade the members to change it...For example, on the High Holidays men and women pray together but for those...who want to *daven* separately there is a special *minyán* in the *beis hamedrash*. Aside from that, the weekday *davening* is strictly Orthodox, three times a day. Sabbath morning is strictly Orthodox, we even have *shnoders* [(promises to give donations)] at the aliyahs."

Mr. Sho. blamed the Orthodox rabbis of New York for contributing to the weak state of "out of town" Jewry. "The rabbis and Jewish leaders in the large Jewish cities, especially in New York, unfortunately have made, and continue to make, the mistake of thinking that there are no Jews anywhere else. They never worried, and still don't worry, about the provinces in the South or the West of our country. And you must understand, that when the Orthodox rabbis and leaders don't do anything, and the left tries to do a great deal to win Jews over to their side, and the Jew doesn't know anything else, it becomes the right way to him...and his children are educated along this distant path, and in the end they will be completely estranged. However, if the Orthodox rabbis and leaders would be concerned about these Jews from the South and West, and would see to it that these congregations are educated and led in true traditional Judaism, the southern and western Jews would be truly Orthodox and the left would gradually go into decline."

Mr. Sho. then goes on to describe the qualifications that the congregation seeks in a rabbi, and concludes his request with an admonition: "...However, if you think that our congregation is not good enough for a student of your yeshiva, and it's better that the congregation be lost to Orthodoxy, then we'll have to leave it to chance, and we can say 'our

hands didn't spill this blood' because 'our eyes didn't see' - our eyes, the eyes of the community, i.e. the rabbis didn't see and consider properly...Now you know our position and you can handle the matter as you see fit."

Mr. Sar replied to Mr. J. L. Sho.'s request (July 5, 1928), explaining to him that Dr. Revel was in mourning and could not answer. Mr. Sar promised to find a suitable candidate, and concluded with the following: "The Yeshiva aims to have the congregations, wherever its graduates accept their pulpits, to be Orthodox and we hope that you will cooperate with the rabbi to make it Orthodox enough, which will be satisfactory to your father, to yourself and to all people who consider themselves Orthodox."

Apparently Mr. Sar was successful in his search, since Israel H. Weisfeld, the new rabbi of the congregation, wrote to Mr. Sar on October 16, 1928 and asked him to help find a teacher for Congregation Beth David. Rabbi Weisfeld described the ideal candidate for the position, and noted: "Now I know that this sounds more like an ad of a 'shadchen' than that of a school wishing to engage a teacher, but you of all people should know how careful we of the *hinterland* must be, especially in a city so distant from New York as Miami."

Samuel L. Sar's correspondence attests to his success in matching congregations with suitable rabbis and teachers for the *Yamim Nora'im* as well as all year round. Individual communities and thus American Jewish Orthodoxy as a whole benefited from Mr. Sar's talents as a *shadchan*. The letters in Mr. Sar's files paint a vivid portrait of this period in American Jewish history with wisdom, pathos, and humor.

Background information on American Judaism in the 1920's and Yeshiva's policies and standards may be found in Gilbert Klaperman's *The Story of Yeshiva University*, New York: Macmillan, 1969; Aaron Rothkoff's *Bernard Revel: Builder of American Jewish Orthodoxy*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972; and Jeffery S. Gurock's *The Men and Women of Yeshiva*, New York: Columbia, 1988. For a description of other collections housed in the Archives, please consult the inventories to the various archival collections. The collections are especially rich in the area of Holocaust studies. Guides to the collections are listed in the card catalog under "Yeshiva University Archives." Students are welcome to use archival materials as primary source material for term papers.

Rabbi Lamm

will give his second
"Talk on Jewish
Thought" to RIETS
students and Stern and
Belkin Scholars on
Monday, November 19, in
Furst 501 at 8 p.m. The
third lecture will be
Tuesday, December 18,
at 8 p.m.

HAMEVASER

Rabbi Isaac Elhanan
Theological Seminary
2540 Amsterdam Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10033

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
New York, N.Y.
Permit NO. 4729