

The Jews of Germany

By Devorah Kirsch

Part II: From Emancipation to War

Until the Renaissance, the history of the German Jews had largely been a bleak page. It was filled with religious persecution and social stigmatism (the isolation of the Jews from society). Beginning with the 18th century, however, their political and economic situation changed for the better. The intellectual current that swept through Europe brought freedom and equality for the German Jews. During the next two centuries, they actively sought new opportunities, and in doing so enriched German life. In history, science, literature, art, and politics, the Jews of Germany made a dazzling impression.

Unfortunately, as the ghetto walls began to crumble, so, too, did ethnic and religious identity. During the 18th and 19th centuries, as the German Jews won the battle for civil rights, they ended up standing on the crossroads of assimilation and tradition.

The scientific and intellectual revolution that was fomenting within the general world began as early as the 17th century. As the standard of living increased, so did tolerance of the Jews. They were welcomed back into the smaller cities of Germany. By the end of the 17th century, a number of Jewish families had settled in Berlin, the Prussian capital. However, they were still subject to special laws.

The end of the Renaissance saw the emergence of the *Hofjude* ("Court Jew"). Basically a go-between, he interacted on behalf of the rulers, providing them with materials and services from the neighboring towns. Just as in medieval times, the Jews supplied foodstuffs for the army, and silver for minting coins. In the mid-18th century, a reduction of silver in the coins was blamed neither on Prussian King Friedrich's wars nor on the silver shortage, but rather on "Jewish cheating."

Often, the Court Jew served as community representative (called *shadlan* in Hebrew), and used his influence to

repeal anti-Jewish decrees. When the Court Jew settled in a certain area, he brought along his family, employees, and other agents. Hence, Jewish communities continued to grow in Germany and elsewhere, spreading commerce among the towns of Europe.

The Jews became distributors and merchants, traveling to different towns to finance major deals and sponsor trade shows. Jewish financiers were a primary force in the emergence of capitalism. Along with commerce came greater cosmopolitanism (worldliness) and the exchange of ideas.

By the 18th century, a growing intellectual curiosity was taking place in Europe. This period of history would be called the "Enlightenment," because European society was becoming "enlightened" with the growth of secular information and discovery (the *haskalah* movement in Hebrew). The center of the Enlightenment was France, where thinkers, philosophers, and aristocrats held "salons" (meetings in the drawing rooms of private homes) and discussed the latest ideas.

The philosophers believed that the world was governed through reason, not faith. Through intellectual refinement and scientific progress, a person — any person — could perfect himself. Basically, the Enlightenment put an end to the medieval idea of a person's fixed place in the world. Under the new ideas, all people were

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, z"l

In spite of rampant assimilation, there remained German Jews who clung to the faith and who opposed attempts at modernization. Yet they, too, experienced conflicts: How was it possible to adhere to tradition and yet enter the mainstream? In an age of scientific and secular progress, how could one remain a good Jew and yet be involved in the outside world?

Enter Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, who effectively resolved these conflicts. Writer, preacher, and organizer, his name is synonymous with German Orthodoxy, which under his guidance emerged and crystallized.

Rav Hirsch was born in Hamburg in 1808, the son of a prominent rabbi (actually, Rav Hirsch's father was named Raphael). Along with his father, Rav Hirsch studied with rabbis Jacob Ettlinger



and Isaac Bernays, who were "enlightened" in secular education, but who staunchly upheld the Torah. Rav Bernays, in particular, influenced Rav Hirsch greatly, by opposing "modernized" Judaism, yet supporting secular studies.

Rav Hirsch himself had a well-rounded upbringing. He attended the University of Bonn, where he studied classical languages, history, and philosophy. He wrote beautifully in German, and began a Jewish society which attracted alienated Jewish students to their religion.

In 1830, he became the rabbi of Oldenberg. It was there that he wrote for young people his *Nineteen Letters*, a series of exchanges between two youths — "Benjamin," an intellectual Jew, and "Naftali," who represents traditional Judaism. Questions are answered concerning the relationship of Judaism to world culture.

In 1841, Rav Hirsch became the rabbi of Hanover. He went to Nikolsburg, a city in Moravia (now Czechoslovakia), for the years 1846-51. There, he worked on behalf of Jewish emancipation, and formed a committee for the civil and

inherently equal, with undeniable equal rights.

Many wealthy or enterprising Jews applauded the Enlightenment because of the "universal brotherhood" that it promised. In turn, a number of the day's leading philosophers welcomed their "Jewish brethren," though patronizingly. "A Jew is a human being even before he is a Jew," wrote one.

Their attitude toward the Jews was ambiguous. Hostile to religion in general, the philosophers considered the Jews a relic of a superstitious past (the Middle Ages). Therefore, their attempts to strip the Jews of Judaism took on a new disguise. Instead of trying to convert the Jews to Christianity, the philosophers preached "moral and social betterment" of the Jews through secular education. The Jews' image changed: instead of "demonic" and devious, they were now "backward" and ignorant, victims of low breeding and lack of culture. Unfortunately, many Jews, under modern influence, accepted this self-image and tried to rid themselves of their Jewishness.

The center of the German enlightenment (called *Aufklaerung*) was Berlin. There poets and writers met, under the patronage of Frederick the Great, the philosopher-king who wrote poetry and who modeled his court, "Sans Souci," after the enlightened French royal court. (Interestingly, his "enlightened" mind didn't prevent him from levying special taxes on his Jews.) By the end of his reign, Prussia had become a major European power, and Berlin was the focal point of Germany, both in general and for Jews in particular.

Berlin became the up-and-coming town for wealthy, newly successful Jews. Eager to fraternize with the enlightened breed of gentile, they began turning their backs on the synagogues for the false glitter that beckoned from the salons. A few Jewish women opened salons of their own. Devoid of Jewish learning, they plunged wholesale into glamor. Whereas before it was a sign of distinction, Jewish practice now interfered in the pursuit of worldly pleasure. As economic barriers broke down, wealthy Jews tried to penetrate the social ones as well.

One way — the traditional — was conversion. By the end of the 19th century, most "enlightened" Jews of Berlin had embraced Christianity in order to get ahead. "A baptismal certificate," wrote Heinrich (Chaim) Heine, a converted Jew turned famous poet, "is a passport into society." Many Jews scrambled for this passport.

Another way to gain acceptance was to "modify" Jewish identity. One man, Moses Mendelssohn, frequented Berlin's prominent circle of thinkers and tried to combine their ideas with Judaism. Through his attempts to "modernize" the religion, he sought to aid Jewish entry into the gentile world. Mendelssohn was observant, and translated the Chumash into German. However, his experiment failed, as those who followed him did away with Torah Judaism. Societies were initiated — "The Culture And Science of Judaism," and "Germans of Mosaic Faith" — where Jews considered themselves Germans first, Jews second. Their Jewishness was a mere condition of birth; through a new, pure kind of faith (they

In the mid-18th century, a reduction of silver in the coins was blamed neither on Prussian King Friedrich's wars nor on the silver shortage, but rather on "Jewish cheating."

political rights of Jews in that region. In addition, he strived to create a constitution for central religious authority within the country.

He then moved to Frankfurt to serve the Orthodox congregation Adas Yeshurun — a post he held for 37 years, until his death in 1888. There he found a group of individuals who supported his ideas.

Basing his philosophy on **Pirkei Avos**, Ethics of the Fathers (2:2), which states, "The study of Torah is excellent together with **derech eretz**" (which may be translated as "worldly occupation," or as "secular knowledge"), Rav Hirsch felt that a Jew could possess Torah knowledge and secular knowledge as well. In fact, he coined the phrase **Jissroelmensch** ("Israel-man") to describe "an enlightened Jew who observes the precepts."

His slogan **Torah Im derech eretz** (Torah with worldly knowledge) was adopted by other religious communities, who patterned their style after Frankfurt's. The professional Orthodox Jew emerged — cultured, sophisticated, literate in German and patriotic to boot, yet observant of G-d's commandments, and unremitting in his commitment to the Jewish people.

Rav Hirsch established a primary, secondary, and high school for girls, where secular subjects (German, math, natural sciences) were taught along with Jewish subjects. Through his school, Rav Hirsch hoped to compete against the "progressive," irreligious one.

hoped), a new relationship with Christians could be created.

The removal of noticeable differences between Jews and Christians now enabled the former to abandon Judaism altogether. Most of Mendelssohn's own children converted, as did the fashionable Jewish women and much of Berlin society. In all, some 250,000 German Jews were lost to Christianity. Pockets of Orthodoxy remained, chiefly in Frankfurt; however, they were fragmented and isolated.

The French Revolution, in 1789, brought the culmination of the Enlightenment's ideas. "Equality, liberty, fraternity," was the rallying cry of the populace, as the aristocracy was uprooted and the "Rights of Man" were implemented.

Theoretically, the year 1789 marked the end of the Middle Ages for the Jews. No longer a separate group within a closed society, they became part of the general population, equal under the law.

Napoleon Bonaparte, brilliant general and later emperor of France, helped to spread the ideas of the Enlightenment throughout Europe. Wherever his army went, the Jews were granted equal rights. Left of the Rhine, the Jews became Frenchmen; in Baden, they were declared "free citizens of the state for all times." A "Supreme Israelite Council" was established for the purpose of governmental representation. In 1812, Prussian Jews were granted full equality, and their taxes were abolished.

Many of the Jews saw their rights revoked by hostile Germans after the French defeat, in 1815. The loss of

emancipation made them desire it even more. During the 19th century, a number of Jews surrendered their religious identity in the pursuit of civil rights. Thrusting themselves into the leadership of political movements, they tried to make Germany's destiny part of theirs. Only through a free and democratic society, they believed, would Jews finally be accepted.

In the Revolution of 1848, when the forces of European nationalism collided, German Jews took active part. In the National Assembly, which met in Frankfurt, Jewish strongly endorsed the liberal faction, which promised emancipation. After the failure of the Revolution, however, the Jews saw a backlash of anti-Semitism.

Nevertheless, throughout the 19th century they slowly and successfully branched into economic circles. Many left the small towns for the center of commerce — most notably Berlin, home to one-third of German Jewry.

The Industrial Revolution increased their wealth and prominence. In banking, the Jews attained great economic importance. Descendants of the "court Jews" established national banks, which financed projects and public works. (The Rothschild family achieved fame this way.) In railways, the Jewish bankers made one of their biggest contributions, both in Germany and in the rest of Europe. The Prussian railroads were constructed largely thanks to Jewish backing. In the 1830's and '40's, the Jews contributed to the copper and oil industries.

German unification solidified Jewish equality. In 1862, Otto von Bismarck, a

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gifted and iron-willed diplomat, became prime minister of Prussia. Within a decade, this man managed to annex and unite portions of Germany, thus creating a single powerful nation. In 1870, the Second German Reich was established, with Wilhelm I as *Kaiser* (*Caesar*, or emperor). Bismarck became chancellor of Germany.

Under Bismarck, Jews attained full civil and political equality. Every sphere of German life became open to them — almost. They still suffered mild forms of discrimination; nevertheless, they made fantastic inroads into German life and culture. Literature, science, technology, theater, journalism — everywhere the German Jews penetrated, and left impressive results. In the early 20th century, a number of German Jews won Nobel prizes. All of these Jews were highly assimilated, and in their own eyes more German than Jewish.

In a way, the German Jews had become victims of their own success. By the end of the 19th century, their community was eroding because of assimilation. The typical Jew spoke and prayed (if at all) in German, not Hebrew; he frequented Germany's excellent universities more than he did the synagogues. In 1876, Prussia passed an *Austrittsgesetz* — a "Law of Withdrawal from the Jewish Community." Jews were now permitted to dissociate themselves from their community, yet continue to be recognized as Jews. In other words, they neither had to belong to a community to be Jews nor convert in order to interact with non-Jews.

A lower birth rate, conversion, and intermarriage further contributed to the

decrease in their population. Only the influx of immigrants from eastern Europe (called *Ostjuden* — "East Jews") maintained the German Jewish community's numerical strength. These new Jews irritated both the Germans, who resented their economic integration, and the German Jews, who considered the newcomers vulgar and conspicuous.

Nevertheless, the *Ostjuden* provided the spiritual lifeblood of the community at this time. They even inspired German Jewish soldiers, who in World War I fought in East Europe, and who found wholesome their East European brethren's way of life.

In spite of its internal problems, German Jewish life remained well organized. Countless community services existed to upgrade institutions and to combat anti-Semitism. A number of rabbinic institutions flourished, as well as youth movements.

German Orthodoxy remained strong, though insulated. A number of its Jews became active leaders in the Agudas Israel after its founding in 1912. During World War I (1914-1918), Orthodox chaplains served in the army.

At the end of World War I, the German Jews were about to enter their highest level of cultural and intellectual achievement. After 1,000 years as pariahs, they had at last attained their goal of acceptance in the modern German world.

Or so they thought. Little did they know that within two decades their dreams, as well as their lives, would go up in flames.

(Next: 1919—The Present)

Although Rav Hirsch tried to maintain good relations with the modernizers, he was inevitably forced to challenge them. The problem was Jewish observance, which the Reform Jews felt should be abandoned in favor of social acceptance. They held that only by looking and acting like everyone else could a few gain refinement. They did not believe that the Torah was the word of G-d, and did away with many of the *mitzvos*.

Rav Hirsch attacked the Reform element. It was the Jews, and not Judaism, that needed reform. Modern life had to be adjusted to fit the Torah, not vice-versa. This led to a great debate with Rabbi Ezzriel Hildesheimer and Selig Ber Bamberger, other leaders of German Orthodox Jewry. These rabbis, while believing in Orthodoxy as much as did Rav Hirsch, held that cooperation in communal organizations with other groups was necessary. Rav Hirsch opposed such cooperation.

In spite of his opposition to modernity, Rav Hirsch did make a few innovations — a choir with a professional music director, the congregation's participation in singing, and sermons in German. Nevertheless, Rav Hirsch maintained that Hebrew was the language of prayer and study.

The Hirschian philosophy is a matter of debate within the Jewish community. Some maintain that Rav Hirsch was only reacting to the situation which existed in Germany. At the time, one was either completely

150 Years of Hatred

Those who wonder how an advanced, sophisticated nation could deliberately murder six million Jews have only to look at the past 150 years of German history. During the 19th century, German anti-Semitism developed and reshaped itself. It became more fanatical and emerged by the 20th century as an active political force.

Modern German anti-Semitism began during the French Revolution (1789), in reaction to the Enlightenment. In the two decades that followed, the seeds of nationalism were planted, shaping German character.

Most Germans had never accepted the Enlightenment. To them, its stress on reason and equality seemed alien to the German spirit. Many of them clung to their folk customs, and longed for a return to the feudal society of the Middle Ages.

Their lack of national unity made their misery worse. In 1806, as Napoleon's army overran the Holy Roman Empire — the ancient, dying confederation of German territories — the general reorganized the lands, secularized the states, and reapportioned the cities. The Germans, without unity or strength, hated the French invasion and yearned for self-esteem.

Nostalgically they turned to a vague, mythic past, full of war heroes and ancient traditions. From these emotions a new movement emerged, called **Romanticism**. Its followers glorified natural man — the simple way of life — uncontaminated by modern civilization — which the city-dwelling, enterprising Jews represented. Because the Jews had been emancipated by Napoleon, they were equated with the French — and were therefore even more hated.

After the defeat of Napoleon, in 1815, the Germans violently rejected his ideals and identified themselves in terms of anything opposite of French. The German fatherland, wrote Ernst Moritz Arndt, poet and pamphleteer, was "where every Frenchman is called foe, and every German is called friend."

A disciple of his, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, carried the idea of German nationalism even further, through his concept of **Volk** (people): a group united by

common traditions, cultural heritage, language, territory, values, and morals. Because of their rootlessness, Jews could never be included in the state, which existed to preserve the simplicity and integrity of the **Volk**. Jews were disloyal by very nature of their separateness; only by renouncing their religion could they be accepted.

Another philosopher, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, admonished his people to "have character and be German." This man is considered the father of modern German anti-Semitism.

The Germans sought revenge against the French and anything connected to them — especially the Jews. Jewish rights were revoked in many towns, and in some the ghetto was reestablished, or Jews were expelled altogether. Even the Congress of Vienna, which met in 1815 to discuss the future of Europe, failed to guarantee the Jews their rights.

A string of pogroms broke out all over Germany. Jewish involvement in the Industrial Revolution earned them additional attack. German farmers, craftsmen, and merchants, threatened by rapid industrialization, blamed it on the Jews. The Jew was the "international financier," not unlike the medieval money-lender who ruthlessly exploited honest Germans and destroyed their economy. In 1894, an Agrarian League formed, which declared that "Agriculture and Jewry must fight to the death, until one or the other lies lifeless — or at least powerless — on the ground."

The left-wing political movements were equally hostile. The founder of Communism, Karl Marx (himself a Jew), called the Jewish people the prime example of capitalism — parasites and bankers. And in his book **Die Judenfrage** ("The Jewish Question"), Bruno Bauer stated that the true Jewish religion was **Schacher** (swindling). Ironically, many of these left-wing groups attracted young, secular Jews, eager for political acceptance.

During the Revolution of 1848, the Jews heavily supported the liberal faction — partly in their quest for civil rights. After the revolution failed, a conservative reaction set in. Peasants seized land,

Modern German anti-Semitism began during the French Revolution (1789), in reaction to the Enlightenment.

Because the Jews dominated the liberal parties, they aroused hatred from the conservatives. Usually the words "liberal" and "Jew" were uttered in the same breath, and not too kindly.

destroyed tax and tithe records, burned castles, and pogromized Jews. Propaganda called for, among other things, expulsion of the Jews from Germany. In Bavaria, petitions with 80,000 signatures were submitted to the Chamber of Reich Counselors, opposing Jewish emancipation.

In the 1850's, a deadlier anti-Semitism emerged. According to the Volkist leader, Paul de Lagarde, the Jews were simply too corrupt an influence to live with Germans. He compared the Jews to worms and bacteria:

With trichinae and bacilli one does not negotiate, nor are trichinae and bacilli to be educated; they are exterminated as quickly and thoroughly as possible.

Elsewhere, the false science of race developed. Christian Lassen, a professor of ancient civilizations, wrote that the two principal groups among the Caucasians were the Semites (which include Jews) and the Aryans (which include Germans). Describing the Semites as "selfish and exclusive," Lassen declared them inferior to the Aryans.

In 1879, an agitator named Wilhelm Marr coined the word **anti-Semitism** to describe the theories against Jews.

The unification of Germany by Bismarck, in 1870, which brought emancipation to the Jews, also ushered in increasing antagonism. Bismarck, though himself not an anti-Semite, became a roaring conservative. He stressed a nation of "blood and iron," free to use physical and military force if necessary to gain power. Because the Jews dominated the liberal parties, they aroused hatred from the conservatives. Usually the words "liberal" and "Jew" were uttered in the same breath, and not too kindly.

Beginning in 1888 and continuing until World War I, prejudice against the Jews intensified. **Die Juden sind unser Unglück!** — "The Jews are our misfortune," went a popular cry. University students circulated pamphlets calling for the elimination of this alien culture. An "Anti-Semites" petition with 225,000 signatures, mostly from Prussia and Bavaria, was brought to Bismarck.

Scores of fringe groups blamed the Jews for polluting Germany and bringing about the nation's deterioration. Publishing houses devoted themselves to printing hate material. In 1890, the Anti-Semitic People's Party was formed, under the leadership of Otto Bockel, who delivered his fiery slogan to the peasants: "Liberate yourselves from the Jewish middlemen!" Believing that the Jews were a racial rather than a religious group, he argued for the repeal of Jewish emancipation. In a popular book, Jews were depicted as an octopus, with claws in every sphere of German life. By the end of the century, libraries and bookstores were filled with thousands of pieces of anti-Semitic literature.

At the beginning of World War I, hostility against the Jews declined. However, at the end of the war they were blamed for the German defeat, despite the fact that some 100,000 Jews served in the army and that 12,000 fell in battle. The Jews, it was argued, had spent their time behind the front, either being lazy or profiteering.

"... In the year 1916-17, nearly the whole production was under the control of Jewish finance. . . . The spider was slowly beginning to suck the blood out of the people's pores." The writer of the above was none other than Adolf Hitler. Though Austrian, he, like many of his countrymen, identified strongly with Germany. A number of Austrians pressed for unity with their neighbor (called **pan-Germanism**).

In Austria, political anti-Semitism had developed. In Vienna just as in Berlin, Jewish influence was felt and resented.

Anti-Semitism was automatically integrated into a party's platform just to give the party attention. "The removal of Jewish influence from all sections of public life is indispensable for carrying out the reforms aimed at," said Georg von Schonerer, who headed the doctrine of pan-Germanism. Another Austrian, Karl Lueger, made anti-Semitism politically viable, as his party gained many electoral votes.

The Nazi Party, then, should come as no surprise. Over a century and a half, a hallowed German tradition had been refined, secularized, made part of a philosophy, and popularized. In the 20th century, Adolf Hitler, its inheritor, would carry it out to a hideous climax.

involved in Jewish pursuits or totally immersed in the secular world. In order to allow Jews who desired to participate in the outside world to feel that they could remain grounded in Judaism as well, Rav Hirsch developed a system which gave legitimacy to both worlds. He would not, however, say that there is a real purpose in studying secular subjects.

Others are of the opinion that Rav Hirsch did not see his system as restricted to Germany in the mid-1800's. Rather, he believed that true Judaism called for the understanding of the

sciences and philosophy, as these are also part of Hashem's world.

Rav Hirsch made a number of important contributions to Jewish scholarship. Besides founding and editing the periodical **Jeschurun**, he formed, in 1885, the Free Society for the Advancement of the Interest of Orthodox Judaism. He translated the Torah into German, and wrote a commentary on it that is regarded as very significant. He also translated Tehillim and the prayer book.

Rav Hirsch's main

contribution to Jewish life, however, was not in education, but in organization. He pursued the concept of the **kehillah**, the well-bonded community. This unit would have its own school system, its own **shul**, and its own **shochtm** (ritual slaughterers). The idea of the Jewish community as an entity unto itself was brought over the Atlantic by Rav Hirsch's descendants and followers. They founded the Breuer Kehillah in New York, in the Washington Heights section.

Though Rav Hirsch did much for Orthodoxy, it

remained a separate body from the German-Jewish community. Nevertheless, it remained active within the general framework; Orthodox Jews mingled with people from all walks of society, and provided some of society's most productive citizens. Probably his biggest achievement was symbolic. By proving that one could effectively be an observant Jew in an overwhelmingly secular world, Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch not only preserved, but strengthened, his people's identity.

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All correct entries will be placed in a drawing

for a **\$50** prize.

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Good luck!

See page 32 for questions

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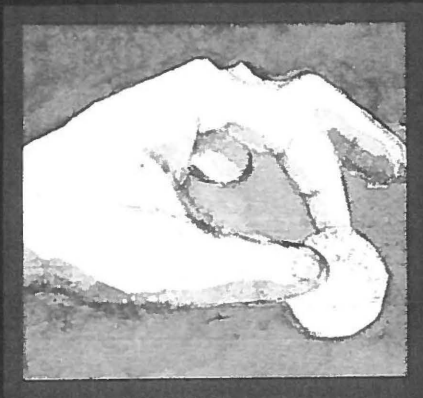
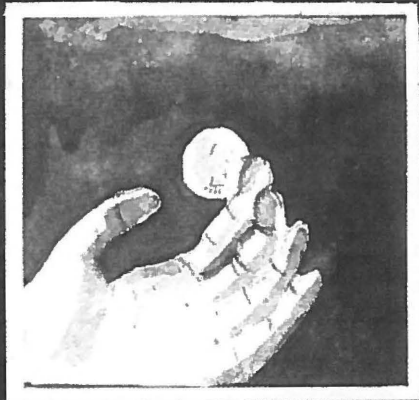
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“Open your hand
generously
to your
poor brother.”

TO OUR READERS

It's Purim time, and many of us are getting out those costumes and other paraphernalia. But we must not forget that at Purim we are commanded to remember our less fortunate brethren by giving **matanos l'evyonim**, alms to the very poor. There are organizations that collect money for the specific purpose of distributing it on Purim (among them is Od Yosef Chai). If you contact them, they will be more than happy to help you fulfill this wonderful **mitzvah**.

While many of us tend to stress **mishlo'ach manos** — the sending of gift packages — at the expense of **matanos l'evyonim**, we are taught that the opposite should actually be the case. Giving to the poor so that they may enjoy the Purim holiday along with their fellow citizens helps unite the Jewish people. "Torah Highlights" discusses this aspect of Purim.

Of course, the concept of **tzeddakah**, charity, applies all year long, but at Purim it comes to the fore. And so, with tongues practically pinned to our cheeks, we present "Cast Your Bread," which, in humorous fashion, makes the point that charity eventually brings a reward.

"The Summer of Unity" is the first winning essay in our Writing Contest. Bracha Etengoff succeeds in getting across the point that all Jews are brothers (and sisters).

"The Jews of Germany" continues the saga of that ill-fated community. In a sidebar, the remarkable life of Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch is detailed.

Have a happy Purim!

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MAIL ROOM

The Shevat Issue

Dear Editor,

The cover art on your Shevat issue was beautiful! The colors were excellent. Keep up the good work.

Baruch Greenberg
Lakewood, NJ

□ □ □

The Hidden Secret

Dear Editor,

I thoroughly enjoyed your story "The Hidden Secret." Just one thing: why did you have to choose a typeface that looked like a cattle brand? It was really hard on the eyes. Please! Something more readable next time, O.K.?

Shlomo Glazer
Miami, FL

Sorry. We'll try not to do it again.

□ □ □

Rav Yosef Caro

Dear Editor,

I have been reading and enjoying "The Story of Yosef Caro." There are a lot of things that you have written that I did not know — in fact, just about everything in the article is new to me.

I think it would be really nice if our schools taught us more about the lives

of our *gedolim*. It's not enough to know which *sefarim* were written by which *gedolim*. It is also important for us to learn about the backgrounds of these great men, so that we can learn how to live our own lives.

I do have one criticism concerning this series. Why do you call Rav Yosef Caro "Yosef," without the title "Rav"? I think it would be more respectful to use the title.

Sara Cohen
Chicago, IL

We are glad you are enjoying the biography. The reason we use the name "Yosef" is because throughout much of the story the subject was a boy or young man. It would obviously not make sense to call a ten-year old "Rav Yosef." He is getting older now, and, as you will notice in the current installment, he is referred to as Rav Yosef on several occasions. But we feel it would be somewhat disruptive to the story to begin calling him Rav Yosef every time his name is mentioned. You will notice, however, that in the biography of Shimshon Raphael Hirsch the subject is always referred to with his title.

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