

# HAMEVASER

Student Publication of The Religious Divisions  
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK CITY.

MAY 1966, VOL. IV, NO. 1

IYAR 5726

## Hamevaser - Direction, Duty, and the challenge of positivity Emotions Are Aroused, Memories Awakened As Rav Aaron Prepares To Depart In June

From the Editors Desk

When two students decide to accept the editorship of what has been (if we may indulge in the fine art of understatement) more or less a dormant voice on the Yeshiva campus they owe both their fellow students and the school administration an explanation as to both their motivation and their expectations.

The history of HAMEVASER has been one of spurts of great promise quickly fading out as both manpower and financial problems have swamped the brave one or two who had launched the project for that year. The one great factor however, that has been missing has been purpose—just what were the ends and goals of the "Official Publication of the Religious Divisions". With this in mind we preempt space in the first page of the first issue to explain just what HAMEVASER hopes to be for the coming year.

We feel that the tone of student publications has been one bordering on the negative; too much fiddle playing has been going on as Rome has been burning.

The problems of World Jewry today do not all lie within the confines of the Student Council meetings, nor within the borders of the Yeshiva College campus. However, the leadership and training needed to solve those very problems do exist here in our University.

Far from using our pages to give the critics of Orthodoxy a chance

to dare call Yeshiva College a "second rate" school, we dedicate this publication (and it is our hope that with your help it will be a monthly publication) to a study and analysis of the issues and decisions that face Jewry today both those at our college and university and those in the world outside the *daleat amot* of Danciger Campus.

### Propriety of Purpose

The students of Yeshiva College are the heirs of a unique tradition, the tradition of Torah U'Madaah upon which our institution has been built. It was Rabbi Revel's, zt"l, dream that our Yeshiva would produce the calibre of ben Torah that could cope with and solve the challenges of an era that even in his day was growing more complex. It is high time that such goals were echoed in the pages of a student publication.

With this in mind HAMEVASER clearly does not plan to compete with the COMMENTATOR in the coverage of student news. Our purpose is to be a publication emphasizing feature articles, discussions, and analysis of the news items that have become current topic due to their appearance on the pages of the COMMENTATOR or any other regular newspaper.

We feel that this new editorial policy is well reflected in this first issue put together by next year's governing board—but we must emphasize that we are open to suggestions and help from the students. (Continued on page 5 column 3)

By Morton Bernstein

"And Jacob went out of B'er Sheva and he went to Haran." Rashi comments, "It was only necessary for the Torah to inform us of Jacob's destination—why does the Torah specify his place of departure as well? The Torah does this to teach us that when a *tzadik* leaves a certain place, his departure leaves its mark."

No other statement more aptly describes the eve of Rav Aaron's departure from our Yeshiva.

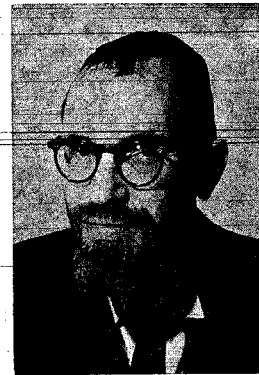
"Is Rav Aaron really leaving?" All of us have either asked or heard this question dozens of times this year. The answer was usually an addition to the long list of vague speculations about his plans for the forthcoming year. I can remember my Rebbi's remark that the *talmidim* seemed to know more than he about the future. The reason for this constant awareness and sometimes annoying curiosity is not difficult to understand.

### Nachalat Avot

We have learned in San. 21b: "Rabbah said, even if a person's forefathers have left him an inheritance of a *Sefer Torah*, nonetheless, it is incumbent upon him to write one of his own."

Aside from the obvious halachic obligation of writing a *Sefer Torah*, there is, I believe, a deeper meaning herein contained. Often, not only in the scholarly world, but in society generally, we find certain individuals with a wealth of personal

heritage which, in some cases goes to waste because, owing to the person's lack of character and depth, stagnation interrupts the process of creativity. The halacha tells us that a person's Torah-heritage must not



Rav Aaron Soloveitchik

serve and suffice him, but he must accept this heritage in order to grapple with his own intellectual and moral strength.

### Family of Gedolim

It can be truly said of Rav Aaron: "*Henicho lo avosov Vadami Sefer Torah*." Rav Aaron's entire family has given the world Gaonim and Gedolim whose words have illuminated the mind and heart of Torah Jewry. They blazed a new path in their unceasing efforts to more deeply understand the intricacies of the halacha.

But, as the *ma'amar Chazal* continues: *mitzvah lichtoy meshelo*. To this goal Rav Aaron has dedicated his life. His *talmidim*, here as well as in other Yeshivos, feel deeply honored to be a portion in the *Sefer Torah* on which he has labored so diligently. Rav Aaron has given us far more than we realize or can hope to appreciate. His *bashkafa* lectures have enabled us to catch a glimpse, every Thursday morning, even for a short while, of

the depth and completeness of his own personality. The *izelem E'lokim* in each one of us which must be individually realized, as he has told us so many times, will bloom and bear fruit because of his example.

### Dedication to talmidim

Rav Aaron's brilliant *balachab* lectures have helped us appreciate the strivings of a *Gadol* with all his intellectual faculties towards *amita shel Torah*—a man totally enraptured and involved in learning. Above all, he has shown sincere loyalty and devotion to his *talmidim*, taking a personal interest in their welfare, whether directly or indirectly connected with Yeshiva. These are a few of the many things which make it extremely difficult for us to part with him, but at the same time cause us to express these humble sentiments of *hacarat tov*.

In conclusion, we are reminded of one particular *shur* in which Rav Aaron disagreed with his grandfather, Reb Chaim, of blessed memory, on a certain point of *balachab*. He immediately advised us that disagreement with Reb Chaim is not synonymous with disrespect, but, on the contrary, a very high regard for his *chidushei Torah*. He cited a similar case in which *Tosefot Ri'D* had disagreed with Rashi, and, upon receiving bitter criticism because of it, the *Tosefot Ri'D* explained that he had the utmost respect for Rashi, and that precisely because Rashi was such a giant, if one climbed upon his shoulders, one could perhaps even see a bit higher. In the same way, he explained, one should not put Reb Chaim in one's pocket but should benefit from Reb Chaim by standing upon his shoulders. We know that the world will one day recognize and appreciate Rav Aaron as a Torah giant in the true sense of the completeness that the title *Gadol* connotes. We wish and hope for his *batzlacha* in every endeavor and in every effort he will undertake in his new capacity. We here at Yeshiva University can only be thankful that we have had the opportunity, if even for a short while, to be close to him. We hope and pray that some day we will be worthy to climb upon his shoulders and to warm others with the flame of *kedusha* and *tebana* which Rav Aaron has kindled within our hearts.

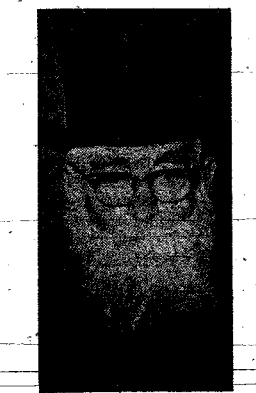
## His Eminence, the Rav HaRoshei, Discusses Torah U'Mada, the Religious Situation in Israel, and the Future of the Galut

The following is the substance of the first interview granted by Rav Isser Yehuda Unterman *shlitah* on his current visit to the United States. The editors of Hamevaser are proud to present this exclusive interview, which was granted to Chaim Feller and Jeffrey Silver at the Chief Rabbi's hotel suite on Friday, April 22.

Q. How does the Rav HaRoshei feel about a higher education which combines a Torah and secular education?

A. For one who has spent many years in learning, it would be acceptable, should he then wish to study the natural sciences to pursue this course of study at some institution of higher education. First, however, one should devote his time to learning Torah exclusively. Secular studies on the college level, in my opinion, however, are best not combined with a Yeshiva. If one has gone to an American college and has his B.A., I would strongly advise him to go to Eretz Yisroel and devote three years to Torah study. We would

be happy to help place him in an Israeli Yeshiva. After this he can study for an advanced degree at one of your colleges. The opportunities for a secular education



Chief Rabbi Unterman

in the Holy Land are several. We have the Bar Ilan University (which is not a Yeshiva but has a strong religious element), a new university in Tel Aviv, and the Hebrew Uni-

versity in Jerusalem. There is, however, no higher secular education in our Yeshivot. Among our many institutions we have one Kollel in Tel Aviv and are opening another in Jerusalem, but here the students must participate in a full time program of studying *Shas* and *Poskim*. However, if one wishes to undertake the additional burden of secular studies, in exceptional cases he may be permitted to do so on his own time. But no Kollel will offer facilities for such a program.

Q. Is there a place for YU *musmachim* in Israeli *chinuch* and *rabanut*?

A. Yes. We can certainly use them in the educational fields and the Rabbinate, but first it is imperative that they come to Israel and spend three years in the exclusive study of Torah at one of our Yeshivot.

Q. Does the Rav HaRoshei believe that in the foreseeable future there will be a religious government in the State of Israel?

A. During the past election, an effort was made to form a *chazit datit* (a plan by which the religious

parties would present a single slate of candidates). This was intended to serve only as a temporary solution to be in effect through the elections. The rabbinical opinion in Israel backed this project completely, but unfortunately it failed. I think that a religious government is improbable under the present situation. The Gemora says "*Ein Eliyahu ba'ela... lekafev rechokim*." The prophet Elijah will come only for the purpose of bringing near those far astray. It seems that only Eliyahu can bring about the unity of the various groups needed for a religious majority. I'm afraid that the first religious state in the Holy Land will be brought about by the Mashiach.

Q. To what extent is the Shulchan Aruch used by Israel courts today?

A. Secular law is used in the secular courts at the present time. However, the *batei dinim* of the Chief Rabbinate are run completely in accordance with the Shulchan Aruch. While government law gives out (Continued on page 6 column 1)

HAMEVASSER

Student Publication of the Religious Divisions

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Printed by PERRY TYPESETTERS, N. Y. C., AL 5-9280

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Torah

The administration has assembled at Yeshiva some of the finest Roshai Yeshiva in the world, headed by the Rav, Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchick. For the past year they have been meeting on problems concerning the Yeshiva. We look to them for guidance and supervision, and for help in ending religious controversies at Yeshiva with their authoritative opinions. We also hope that the student-rebbi relationship will grow closer as a result of their increased involvement.

Avodah

It has been often said in articles, essays, and other sources that today's Jewish youth are devoid of Jewishness. They have disassociated themselves from our tradition and are barely identified with any form of Judaism. Their knowledge of Torah and Mitzvos is slight; their consciousness of G-d and G-dliness even less so; and their desire for Yiddishkeit nil. In short, Yiddishkeit has no significance whatsoever to these youths. We are told therefore, that there is no hope left for them within Judaism.

This thesis is unfortunately very true—many Jewish youths have severed their ties with Judaism. However, the prognosis is false. The desire to associate and be identified with their tradition is still present. This is markedly demonstrated by the overwhelming participation of Jewish youth in two recent worthy causes—Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry and the saving of seforim at the Seminary.

Though admittedly this is only a weak manifestation; yet it is a start, and we must cultivate it. We, as brei Torah, must assume the responsibility to lead the way to the eventual preeminence of Torah centered Judaism.

In coming editions of Hamevasser we shall present a series of symposiums on this vital issue.

And Gemilut Chasadim

The various customs and practices relating to the sefira period indicate a feeling of active involvement in an event of 2,000 years ago. That event was a plague that struck down the students of Rabbi Akiva, an occurrence viewed not merely as a sad event of the past, tragic in its scope, yet essentially remote from our present existence, but rather as one which has relevance to us today. While the plague is far in the past, the underlying cause of this catastrophe lives on and continues to darken our history, for the gemorah tells us that the students of Rabbi Akiva died because of sinat chinam, because of misunderstanding among themselves and distrust of one another.

Each year as we observe sefira, we should bear in mind the reason for our mourning, for sinat chinam is very much evident on the Jewish scene today. We at YU should especially feel the agony of this period, for we who should be most understanding are often guilty of misunderstanding. Our student body is composed of many different elements and is divided into three different religious divisions, each with its own unique function. Just as the students of Rabbi Akiva, a seemingly homogeneous group, were guilty of sinat chinam, so are we often guilty of misunderstanding each other, misunderstanding so deep that it borders on mistrust. Surely the sefira period is the time to resolve to do away with sinat chinam, and to replace it with a feeling of co-operation and a sense of common destiny among the students. May the sefira period remind us of our obligation to continue such joint efforts and thus to eliminate sinat chinam.

We Shall Not Forget

In our last issue, a well-documented report appeared on the status of the 19th Human Rights Genocide, Convention.

This treaty, recognizing genocide as a crime against all humanity has been ratified by 67 nations, but it remains sadly dormant as long as the United States refuses to agree to it.

The U.S. Senate has kept this bill in committee for 18 long years where southern democrats and midwestern conservatives have effectively pigeonholed it.

We cannot help wondering why, with so many clubs and groups available on the Yeshiva College campus, none has found the time or interest to make lobbying for this vital measure one of its goals.

Dr. Belkin's Eulogy of Dr. Revel; Charts Path and Purpose for YU

In commemoration of the 25th Yahrzeit of Dr. Revel, z'l, Hamevasser reprints a eulogy written by our Rosh Ha-Yeshiva Dr. Belkin (Eidenu-memorial Volume 1941) explicating the dream and ideology of Yeshiva College at its inception. This article remains the best expression of the present-day philosophy of Yeshiva University, and a beautiful tribute to the man who first conceived of our institution.



Dr. Belkin



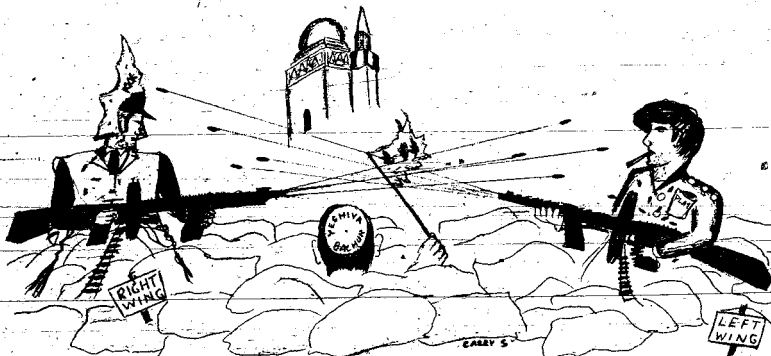
Dr. Revel

A year has passed since Doctor Revel, z'l, left us. We who worked with him and kept in daily contact with him would like to give a comprehensive appreciation of Doctor Revel, the man: I for one would fail in such an understanding and I doubt whether any one of us knew him as an individual who revealed his personal problems. If he was ever perplexed by such problems, we heard nothing of them. To us, Doctor Revel meant the Yeshiva. He was not only the Rosh Ha-Yeshiva, the President, but the indivisible part of his own creation—the unity of Yeshiva College. None of us ever thought of Doctor Revel as the man and the Yeshiva as the institution; they were one and the same. Upon this unity he poured out his whole soul and his entire intellectual and spiritual personality; the stamp of his personality and philosophy will always remain the symbol and essence of our great school of learning.

It was never Doctor Revel's ambition to 'secularize' the Yeshiva or to 'adjust' the Yeshiva to non-Yeshiva concepts; nor was it his ambition to put any strictures on the College. Doctor Revel looked upon the Yeshiva as the historical link in the golden chain of Jewish traditions. Only through this Yeshiva and Yeshivuth in general was there to be any hope left of perpetuating the sacred purpose of the Yeshiva; to produce both laymen who are imbued with the spirit of Torah and Rabbis who will serve not merely as ministers, but as Jewish scholars who will teach and preach in accordance with the authority of the Torah and our sacred traditions. The College, with its secular education, supplements and complements the man whose life is based upon, and guided by, the spiritual and moral values of the Torah. This is how I understand Doctor Revel's concept of the Yeshiva.

In 1935 Doctor Revel felt more and more the need of establishing a Graduate School for Jewish studies. Young men who graduated from the Yeshiva and Yeshiva College were often forced to take courses in Jewish history, Semitic languages and correlated fields in institutions whose approach to these subjects was not in harmony, and often contrary, to the teachings and religious philosophy which they received in the four walls of the Yeshiva. In 1936, I was singularly honored by Doctor Revel through his entrusting into my hands the task of organizing the graduate school with courses leading to the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Literature, along the lines he had conceived. Since the day of its founding, over fifty Rabbis have availed themselves of the courses given in historical fields from the Jewish point of view. This year the graduate school, which was recently named The Revel Graduate School, will confer, for the first time, the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Literature upon its graduates.

Hence, it was Doctor Revel's holy ambition that the Yeshiva should be the central point, as well as the guiding principal of the Yeshiva man, even long after he left the Yeshiva. We, into whose hands the destiny of the Yeshiva and Yeshiva College was entrusted, must be guided by the philosophy of its founder. We must be guided by the rabbinic maxim 'vadikim b'misdom kezayim ebatim'—not only as a tribute to the memory of our sainted leader, but also for the preservation of the greatest Jewish Center of Torah and culture in America. As long as Doctor Revel's ideology lives on, as long as the unity of the institution as an entirety continues to exist, so long can we hope to implant Torah in America with all its supplementary and complementary elements. To this proposition we dedicate ourselves!



"Shouldn't this count toward Viet Nam duty?"

## Literary Supplement

# JUDAISM IN THE POST CHRISTIAN ERA

**Editors Note:** The following article, by Dr. Eliezer Berkovits of the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago, first appeared in the winter issue of JUDAISM, the publication of the American Jewish Congress.

There was a phase in world history that may be called the Christian era. It designates that period in which Christianity, including Christian civilization and culture—all that goes under the name of the West—was the dominant and dominating force. We suggest that this phase is now at an end. We propose that Judaism ought to take adequate cognizance of this important change in the world situation and develop its attitude and its religious policies accordingly.

The Christian era did not start with the birth of Jesus. It dates from the first half of the fourth century, commencing when Constantine the Great established Christianity, including Christian civilization and culture—all that tianity, Christianity did not capture the Roman Empire by the power of a religious idea but by the sword of the emperor. *As soon as Christianity was established, Judaism was declared an odious heretic sect, and its propagation was forbidden under the penalty of death. All other religions were completely oppressed and actually exterminated. Christianity's conquer march over all of Europe began. It was a conquest in the true sense of the word; Europe was Christianized by the power of the imperial sword. The Saxons, the Franks and many of the aboriginal tribes were placed before the choice: baptism or death. Uncounted numbers chose death. *Cuius regio cuius religio*, the principle by which faith was determined in the religious wars that tore Europe apart after the Reformation, was also the principle by which, from the earliest days of the established church, Christianity was spread over the face of the earth. Even the vast missionary activities in Asia and Africa were possible only because the Western colonizing powers which opened up these new lands were Christian. The preachers of the gospel marched in the wake of the swift and terrible sword of Constantine.*

This era has come to an end in our days, before our own eyes. It has reached its conclusion because the sword of Constantine has been passed on to numerous other hands. The Soviets are holding it mightily in their grip; Red China has taken possession of it; the dark millions of Africa are acquiring it; hundreds of millions of Moslems, Buddhists and Hindus have learned to wield it. Christianity is no longer the decisive power or influence. From now on, world history will be determined by the interplay of many forces, many cultures and civilizations, most of them non-Christian, some of them anti-Christian.

This change in the world situation carries with it weighty consequences for Christianity, which the Church, especially the Roman Church, has not been slow to appreciate. *Nolens volens the age of Christian militancy is over: "baptism or death" is gone forever. The reason, as we noted, is that now so many non-Christians, too, have acquired the sword of Constantine. They can wield it no less effectively than the Christian powers did in the past; they are in the majority, and now they, in turn, have the power to be intolerant, to oppress and persecute no less crushingly than did Christianity through the long and dark centuries of the Christian era.*

The new revolutionary distribution of the balance of power in the *ecumene* is ultimately responsible for the new Christian ecumenism. An interesting illustration of this was provided by the discussion on human freedom which took place at the Vatican Council. It would seem that, notwithstanding the arguments in the Council about the theological niceties of the final formula, the Church now affirms the principle of freedom of religious worship and human conscience. Following the discussion, we could not help thinking of the old adage about the mills of God which, though they grind slowly, grind exceedingly fine. We recalled that the freedoms of religion and conscience existed in the Roman Empire at the beginning of the rule of Constantine the Great. In fact, they were affirmed anew in Constantine's own Edict of Tolerance. But that was before he converted to Christianity. When Christianity became the state religion of the empire, tolerance was abolished, freedom of religion proscribed, and freedom of conscience eradicated. This state of affairs continued through the dark centuries that followed in the form of oppression, persecution, auto-da-fés, religious wars and massacres. But now things are changing. After sixteen centuries of Christianity regnant in the world, the Church is ready to champion ideals which were realized by mankind in the heathen Roman Empire, not to speak of Judaism or the secularisms

of the last four centuries. What has brought about this *wolfe-face* of the Church? Nothing but the fact that Christianity is no longer supreme in the world. When the Church leaders speak of freedom of religion, they mean first of all freedom for Christians to adhere to their faith in Communist lands. When they affirm freedom of conscience, they mean primarily freedom for the Church to propagate Christianity in Asia and Africa among Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, and among the followers of all kinds of tribal cults. Christianity is now on the side of tolerance because this is the post-Christian age of world history, because in this post-Christian era the old policies of intolerance are no longer viable. Any policy of Christian intolerance would be self-defeating, for it would justify intolerance on the part of the non-Christian powers, civilizations and religions. It would ultimately boomerang onto the heads of hundreds of millions of Christians the world over. Ecumenism or no ecumenism, tolerance and a measure of official friendliness toward other religions and philosophies of life have today become matters of practical politics for the Church and for Christianity.

What should be the Jewish attitude, facing Christianity in the post-Christian era of world history?

We must, above all, understand history—that this is, in fact, the post-Christian era. We must understand the significance and the implications of this revolutionary change. From now on Christianity will have to rely for its propagation, as any decent religion should, on the methods of persuasion. All the friendlier statements about Jews and Judaism made in this new age by the Church and Christianity, must be comprehended in the light of the change imposed by external historic developments upon Christianity. This certainly applies to the Vatican Council's schema on the Jews. It was forced on the Church by the new historic constellation. There are, of course, many Christians who feel ashamed of the abominable crimes committed by Christendom against Judaism and the Jewish people. However, the uncharitable haggling in the Council about the final version of the schema in itself proved that the sense of shame in some Christian consciences alone would never have sufficed to produce even that extremely guarded and political declaration.

An understanding of the implications of the new situation itself ought to help those Jews, who are in contact with Church authorities and Christian leaders. Often they represent Judaism and the Jewish people without a mandate. At least let them speak with courage, self-assurance and with all the dignity to which sixteen centuries of Jewish martyrdom in Christian lands obligates them. For the first time since the early days of the fourth century, there may be a confrontation between Judaism and Christianity in freedom. Let it, indeed, take place in freedom!

Confrontation in freedom means that the scope of the confrontation must not be reduced to the provincial dimensions of Jewish-Christian understanding in the United States. Its significance must not be falsified for cheap considerations of public relations. Jewish-Christian confrontation in freedom is confrontation in the world-historic context of Israel's own Messianic history. In this new type of encounter with Christianity, our generation must stand for all the generations that ever lived and suffered in Christian lands. It must stand for all the innumerable generations that never beheld the light of day because those who were destined to be their progenitors perished before their time under the bloody yoke of Christian oppression. We must face Christianity as the children of the *am olam*, the eternal people, viewing historic developments *sub specie aeternitatis*. I have never sensed so acutely that we are indeed the *am olam* as in these days when we are able to survey the Christian performance from the beginning of the Christian era to its end. We have been there all the time; we alone know what it has meant.

It is our responsibility to sum up the meaning of that era, unimpressed by Christian claims, guided exclusively by our own experience. In terms of the Jewish experience in the lands of Christendom, the final result of that age is bankruptcy—the moral bankruptcy of Christian civilization and the spiritual bankruptcy of Christian religion. After nineteen centuries of Christianity, the extermination of six million Jews, among them one-and-a-half million children, carried out in cold blood in the very heart of Christian Europe, encouraged by the criminal silence of virtually all Christendom, including that of an infallible Holy Father in Rome, was the natural culmination of this bankruptcy. A straight line leads from the first act of oppres-

sion against the Jews and Judaism in the fourth century to the holocaust in the twentieth. In order to pacify the Christian conscience it is said that the Nazis were not Christians. But they were all the children of Christians. They were the fruit of nineteen centuries of Christianity—the logical fruit of violence and militancy, oppression and intolerance, hatred and persecution, which dominated European history for the sixteen centuries since Constantine the Great. Without the contempt and the hatred for the Jew planted by Christianity in the hearts of the multitude of its followers, Nazism's crime against the Jewish people could never have even been conceived, much less executed. What was started at the Council of Nicaea was duly completed in the concentration camps and the crematoria. This has been a moral and spiritual collapse the like of which the world has never witnessed before for contemptibility and inhumanity. Judged in the light of our own experience and under the aspects of the Messianic history of the *am olam*, we are confronting a morally and spiritually bankrupt civilization and religion. This knowledge should determine our attitude. In its light ought we define our position in relationship to the various issues which have arisen in the wake of this new Jewish-Christian encounter in freedom.

The schema on the Jews has now been officially promulgated by the Vatican Council. It has thought fit to declare solemnly before all the world that the Jews are not to be considered a people accursed by God; the Jews are not collectively guilty for the death of Jesus. We cannot help wondering whether in the opinion of the leaders of the Church these are still the Middle Ages or almost the Middle Ages. For many centuries it was they who have been doing the persecuting, they who perpetuated abominable acts of inhumanity against the Jewish people, but now they condescend to tell the world that we are perhaps not guilty nor to be considered accursed by God.

Underneath such lack of sensitivity to historic truth still lingers the barbarous concept that the fact that someone is persecuted and made to suffer by others is proof that something is wrong with him. For many centuries Christian clerics, theologians and historians have maintained that the fact that Jews had lost their homeland, were scattered over the face of the earth, everywhere persecuted and held in contempt, was in itself proof that they were an accursed people, punished for the crime of having killed Jesus. In 1947 this thesis could still be found in history books written for the enlightenment of Christian youth (see *The Foot of Pride*, Malcolm Hay, p. 22).

If it ever occurred to an isolated Christian that the "proof" was perhaps not altogether convincing, since it was man and not God who imposed all this suffering on the Jew—he could easily calm his conscience with the Christian logic of the Church Father, St. John Chrysostom, who showed that it was really God after all who was punishing the Jews. For, he argued, could man do all this to the Jews "unless it had been God's will?" By the same logic, not so long ago in Christian lands they would light the faggots under the poor creatures accused of witchcraft or cast them into deep water. If they burned or drowned, they were guilty of the crime of which they were accused. The Vatican Council's declaration about the Jews reveals how deeply rooted the logic of Chrysostom still is in the Christian psyche. Given the premises of Chrysostom's logic, it might seem Christian charity to declare that these Jews, though they suffered and were persecuted, are nevertheless not to be considered a people accursed by God.

This is, indeed, progress. A non-Christian, however, is not impressed. To such noble Christian sentiments he might prefer the teaching of the heathen Socrates who maintained that it was better to suffer than to inflict suffering, nobler to be martyred than to inflict martyrdom. Followers of Socrates will be inclined to say that those who make others suffer are more likely to be a people accursed by God than those who are made to suffer by them. In this respect Jews are much closer to the heathen Socratic tradition than to the Christian. Many centuries ago their Pharisaic teachers interpreted for them the words of Ecclesiastes, "God seeketh that which is pursued," to mean: "The wicked pursues the righteous—God seeketh the pursued; the righteous pursues the righteous—God seeketh the pursued; the wicked pursues the wicked—God seeketh the wicked."

(Continued on page 4)

## Literary Supplement

## JUDAISM IN THE POST CHRISTIAN ERA

(Continued from page 3)

the pursued; and even when the righteous pursues the wicked, God seeketh the pursued" (*Vayiera Raba*, 27:5, and *Talmuda, Eruv*, 9). Always God seeks the pursued. To be told after sixteen centuries of oppression and persecution in Christian lands by those responsible for these acts of inhumanity that the Jews are not a people accused by God is an offense not so much to Jews as to God.

At one point, when it seemed that the Vatican Council was about to exonerate the Jewish people completely of the guilt of deicide, there were some precipitate Reform rabbis who felt that the Jews ought to reciprocate such a noble gesture by acknowledging Jesus as a prophet. It would seem to us that if there were to be any reciprocating Jewish acknowledgement, it should be commensurate with the Christian pronouncement. It might be said, for example, that the appropriate reciprocating gesture on the part of Jewry could be a solemn declaration that the man who endured the crucifixion is not to be regarded as accused by God. Of course, Jews will never issue such a declaration, because they have never believed in Chrysostom's type of reasoning. Nor do they suffer from the illusion that they personally and humanly represent God on earth. They are, therefore, in no position to dispense God's curse or His blessing. They deem it more respectful toward God to leave such dispensations to Him.

Many Christians and Jews are these days advocating the idea of a Jewish-Christian dialogue. The schema on the Jews recommends such "fraternal dialogues," in order to foster "a mutual knowledge and respect." We ought to analyze this from several approaches — emotional, philosophical, theological, and practical.

We feel that, emotionally, we are not as yet ready to enter into a fraternal dialogue with the Church, a religion, that has been responsible for so much suffering, and which is ultimately responsible for the murder of our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters in the present generation. There are, of course, Jews who are only too eager to undertake such a dialogue. They are either Jews without memories or Jews for whom Judaism is exclusively a matter of public relations, or confused or spineless Jews unable to appreciate the meaning of confrontation in full freedom. For Jewry as a whole, an honest fraternal dialogue with Christianity is at this state emotionally impossible. The majority of the Jewish people still mourn in a very personal sense. In a hundred years, perhaps, depending on Christian deeds toward Jews, we may be emotionally ready for the dialogue.

On the level of philosophical thought, contact and interchange of ideas are certainly to be desired. Jews are familiar with Barth and Tillich, Marcain and Gabriel, no less than with Sartre or Radhakrishnan. This, however, is not a specific Jewish-Christian dialogue. It is the dialogue in the intellectual realm which Judaism has carried on with all cultures and religions at all times. There is no more reason or need for a Jewish-Christian dialogue than for a Jewish-Moslem, Jewish-Hindu, Jewish-existentialist, or Jewish-atheist dialogue. The realm of thought is universal.

As to a dialogue in the purely theological sense, nothing could be more fruitless and pointless. Judaism is Judaism because it rejects Christianity, and Christianity is Christianity because it rejects Judaism. What is usually referred to as the Judeo-Christian tradition exists only in Christian or secularist fantasy. As far as Jews are concerned, Judaism is fully sufficient. There is nothing in Christianity for them. Whatever in Christian teaching is acceptable to them is borrowed from Judaism. Jews do not have to turn to the New Testament for the "two laws"; Jesus was quoting them from the Hebrew Bible. And whatever is not Jewish in Christianity is not acceptable to the Jew.

There are many who believe that Jews and Christians have at least the "Old Testament" in common. This is a serious misunderstanding. The Jews have no "Old Testament." The very fact that for the Christians it is the "Old Testament" indicates that it is not identical with the Hebrew Bible. This is not a matter of mere semantics. The "Old Testament" asks for a New Testament; the Hebrew Bible is complete within itself. The Christian interpretation of Biblical Judaism is not the Judaism of the Hebrew Bible. The Christian, reading his "Old Testament," discerns history and teachings which are essentially different from what is contained in the Jewish Bible; from the Christian point of view Biblical Judaism, as found in the "Old Testament," is altogether prepara-

to evangelica — a preparation for the divine epiphany as the Christian finds it in the New Testament. From the Jewish point of view, the very essence of Biblical Judaism and the very core of Biblical teaching about God rule out divine self-revelation. From the Jewish point of view, the "Old Testament" is the Gentile's misinterpretation of the very gist of the message of the Hebrew Bible. When Christians use the term "Judeo-Christian," "Judeo" means something fundamentally different from what is Jewish for the Jew. Nor does Judaism have a common spiritual patrimony with Christianity in the Patriarchs and the Prophets; in Jewish understanding, the God of Abraham is not the triune deity of Christianity.

There is a noteworthy contradiction as regards this matter of the "fraternal dialogue" in the pronouncements of the Vatican Council. On the one hand, the Council encourages dialogues with other religions; on the other, it also affirms that the Roman Catholic Church is the only repository of all true religion. What then is the purpose of the dialogue for the Church? There is nothing that Christianity may gain by it. The schema on non-Christians concedes that other religions may contain some rays of divine light in their beliefs and teachings. Yet, it is to be understood that all these rays of light are comprehended in great purity and perfection in the Church. How then is dialogue possible? One does not enter into a dialogue in honesty when one is convinced from the beginning that one is in possession of all the truth and one's partner in the dialogue is in error. This is not dialogical encounter. It can have only one purpose—to spread the good tidings to the unfortunate ones who have not yet seen one's own light.

This, we have seen, is the post-Christian era. In former times Jews were commanded to appear before popes, bishops, and kings in order to defend their beliefs in religious disputations. These popes, bishops, and most Christian kings were also the judges. In these disputations the Jews could never be sure whether to win or lose was better for them. It also used to be customary to impose on Jewish communities the indignity of compelling them to admit missionary preachers into the synagogue so to listen to their sermons and boorish insults. These channels of "communication" with the Jewish people are no longer open. They are now to be replaced by "fraternal dialogue."

But there is no reason why Jews should be interested. Judaism does not have the ambition to save mankind, because it never maintained that mankind was lost without it. Judaism is the only possible way of life for Jews. Only Jews are lost without it. As to non-Jews, Judaism maintains that "the righteous of all the people have a share in the world to come." Judaism is free from missionary zeal. In turn, there is no reason on earth why it should make itself accessible to "fraternal dialogue" with a religion which, by its very premises, declares others to be in error and thus, from the outset, destroys the basis of a true dialogical situation.

But might not a Jewish-Christian dialogue have some beneficial, practical effects? Would it not further inter-religious understanding? The strange reality, however, is that whereas among Christians it is the clerics, theologians, and the more committed and knowledgeable Christians who propagate the idea of inter-religious understanding, the Jewish enthusiasts include the less committed Jews, the public-relations experts, and the secularists. From such a dialogue, that in its very premise lacks intellectual honesty and emotional sincerity, it would be most unwise to expect any genuine deepening of inter-religious understanding. The greater the hope one places in such a "dialogue," the greater the disappointment which must follow.

However, independent of all considerations of inter-religious politics, we reject the idea of inter-religious understanding on ethical grounds.

First of all, it represents a distortion of historic truth; it is a falsification of the true nature of the Judeo-Christian tragedy. It suggests a measure of mutuality in the responsibility for that tragedy; as if there had been friction and conflict because we did not know each other well enough; as if there had been struggle between Jews and Christians because they were not familiar with each other's noble religious traditions and beliefs. This is not the case. There were no conflicts or wars. There was only unilateral oppression and persecution. We reject the idea of inter-religious understanding as immoral because it is an attempt to whitewash a criminal past.

Further, the idea of inter-religious understanding is ethically objectionable because it makes respect for the other man dependent on whether I am able to appreciate his religion or his theology. In the official summary of the Vatican Council's schema on non-Christians, we read that "the Council wants to foster and recommend a mutual knowledge and respect which is the fruit, above all, of Biblical and theological studies, as well as of fraternal dialogues." We find the suggestion that mutual knowledge and respect among people should be the fruit of Biblical and theological studies, as well as of inter-religious dialogue, repugnant. It implies that if I am able to appreciate another man's religious beliefs, I ought to respect and love him; if not, my contempt for him is understandable and justifiable. This is still conceived in the old questionable tradition of religious persecution. It is not a matter of whether Christianity acknowledges fragmentary truths in Judaism. All we want of Christians is that they keep their hands off us and our children! Human beings ought to treat each other with respect and hold each other dear independently of theological dialogues, Biblical studies, and independently of what they believe about each other's religion. I am free to reject any religion as humbug if that is what I think of it; but I am duty-bound to respect the dignity of every human being no matter what I may think of his religion. It is not inter-religious understanding that mankind needs, but inter-human understanding—an understanding based on our common humanity and wholly independent of any need for common religious beliefs and theological principles.

There are some who believe that, in an age such as ours, when religion is being assailed on all sides by secularism, materialism, and atheism, Judaism and Christianity ought to form a common religious front in defense of religious values and ideals.

It will be found that the policy of a common front may be laid down as a general principle only in areas of inter-human endeavor and not in the specifically inter-religious realm. A common front is useful and necessary in the struggle for freedom of conscience and worship, for peace and social justice; our interests are identical in these fields of human striving. In the post-Christian era, however, these goals of freedom, peace, and social justice have universal validity. It would be extremely foolish to seek their realization by means of a narrow Jewish-Christian religious front. On the other hand, in the specifically religious realm, a common interest cannot be predicated as a general principle. There, Jewish and Christian interest may occasionally coincide in certain specific situations; in others, it may not. Under a condition of freedom, each group ought to decide on its course of action in accordance with its own insight and understanding.

The confrontation between religion and secularism occurs first in the intellectual realm, in the heart and mind of the believer himself. Here, Judaism must maintain its complete independence. In the intellectual confrontation with secularism, Judaism must not become a mere adjunct to Protestant or Roman Catholic theology. Any close association with Christian thought is ultimately bound to cause confusion within Jewish thinking. It may cripple our ability to articulate the relevance of the specific Jewish position in our times. It would also be detrimental to Judaism's effectiveness because of its fewer dogmas, Judaism is intellectually in a far better position to develop a philosophy or theology which can meet the intellectual onslaught of secularism. This is not easy, but it will be easier without the burden of a common religious front.

Even in the field of ethics and of the application of ethical principles to actual social or international conditions, one must be cautious about any joint Jewish-Christian endeavor. In many parts of Asia and Africa, Christianity has been compromised because of the close connection between colonial conquest and missionary activities. Closer to home, in the light of the Christian performance in the past and because of the practical requirements of Christian politics in the post-Christian era, it is not always easy to determine what is humanitarian-ethical deed and what is Christian propaganda. An example to ponder is Pope Paul VI's peace mission to the United Nations. The speech on behalf of world peace was a fine oration. It came, of course, rather late in history. In earlier periods, a pope's stand on universal peace and brotherhood could have stopped wars, expulsions, and massacres. Unfortunately, when it could have been most effective—in the Christian era—the papacy was unaware of its universal mission for peace. Today, peace is a popular slogan. What was once placed by Isaiah before the conscience of mankind as an ideal, has now be-