

Critiques of Modern Orthodoxy

The Jewish Observer

The Synagogue Council

WE ARE RELUCTANT—but we cannot shirk our responsibility—to write a postscript to the recent Synagogue Council dinner. This event and its attendant circumstances have left a fateful heritage of implications and consequences for the future of American Jewry—and, in particular, Torah Jewry—which must be faced. Though we foresaw some of them, and therefore raised our voice in advance of the event, we did not foresee how soon and to what extent we would reap its bitter harvest. It remains now for us to take stock of what has happened, praying that the necessary lessons will, after all, be drawn from it.

Nullification of Daas Hatorah

On October 24, 1966 a letter was issued by four outstanding *Roshei Yeshiva*, deploring the calamity represented by the “fatal partnership” of the “three seminaries of American Jewry” at the forthcoming Synagogue Council dinner. Actually *this statement should not have come as a surprise; it introduced nothing new*—it was a logical consequence of the *p’sak din* issued in 1956 by eleven *Roshei Yeshiva*, and concurred in by the late Brisker Rav—Rabbi Zev Soloveitchik, and Rabbi Pessach Tzvi Frank, as well as other *Gedolei Torah* in *Eretz Yisroel*. The letter of the *Roshei Yeshiva* was certainly not aimed to counteract any *heter* issued since 1956 by other sources, for the incontrovertible fact is that *at no time did any responsible rabbinic authority* (including the Halacha Commission of the Rabbinical Council of America or its chairman, Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik) *issue a heter on participation in the Synagogue Council or challenge the above mentioned p’sak din*.

Yet it is true that these *issurim* were disregarded by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations and the RCA, on the strength of the fact that the latter’s Halacha

Commission has had the matter under consideration for the past eleven years and had *not issued a decision*.*

The Cheshvan 10 (October 24) statement was therefore an unwelcome reminder, and there ensued a merciless campaign to counter its effect.

First, the *Day-Morning Journal* printed a news release, received from the public relations department of Yeshiva University, stating that a number of *Rabbonim* and *Roshei Yeshiva* formally called on Rabbi Belkin to urge him to attend the dinner. No names were given in the news release. We challenge the public relations office of YU to remedy this omission—information from the faculty indicates that such an incident *never* took place.

Next, word was spread that at least some of the signers of the letter never actually signed it. This was not only stated from at least one well-known pulpit but even appeared in print:

It must be noted that *Harav Hagaon Rav Moshe Feinstein Shlitah*, whose name appears on this *Kol Koreh* has, we are told, never seen its contents or agreed to the use of his name . . .” HAMEVASER (Official Student Publication of the Religious Divisions, Yeshiva University) Nov. 10, 1966.

Obviously, this fiction could not be maintained, in view of the availability of facsimile copies of the letter complete with four signatures, and, in consequence, an even more offensive fiction was disseminated: *that the letter did not represent the thinking of the signator, and was only signed under pressure*. It would follow consequently, that it could legitimately be disregarded

[In view of the incessant circulation of this falsehood—which the staff of THE JEWISH OBSERVER knew to be false—an expression of our

*In a letter to THE JEWISH OBSERVER, Rabbi Louis Bernstein, editor of the official publication of RCA, claims that “the position of the RCA was inaccurately and unfairly presented (by THE JEWISH OBSERVER) . . . The RCA was part of the SCA before the *issur* of the eleven *Roshei Yeshiva* was promulgated. It has no quarrel with those who issued the *issur* or those who adhere to it. Even a cursory glance will indicate that it is directed to the students of these *Roshei Yeshiva* who asked for their guidance. The RCA consists of 800 members . . . It is quite competent to arrive at its own decisions. It is no secret, however, that it accepts the guidance of . . . Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik. This well-known fact should clearly spell out

his position . . . I might suggest you survey his writings and in which areas he does participate for a clearer understanding of his position.” It is, of course, clear that the P’SAK DIN concerning the SCA was not only issued by the eleven *Roshei Yeshiva*, but by the greatest *Gedolei Torah* then alive; that was most certainly *not meant* only for their students, but as general PSAK DIN; that it is the greatest effrontery, in the face of this fact, to speak about the competence of the RCA members to make their own decisions; and that Rabbi Soloveitchik has never expressed one word in contradiction to the PSAK DIN of his uncle and the other *Gedolim* involved.
(See A STATEMENT BY HARAV MORDECAI GIFTER, on page 7

concern with the harm being caused by this rumor was communicated to Rabbi Feinstein. In a written reply dated Teves 16, Rabbi Feinstein stated that the rumors were "nonsensical, and even those who have said these things certainly know that they are absurd." He assured us that there was no reason for concern, since "it is clearly known that I signed" the statement.

It would by now be clear that to deny Reb Moshe's participation in the protest was a lie; to oppose it—a serious breach of *Emunas Chachamim*. For the Jew loyal to *Daas Torah* there is only one alternative—to accept the position of the *Roshei Yeshiva*, and to uphold it.]

There have been those who have argued that opposition to the SCA dinner involved disrespect to Dr. Belkin; and it has been argued, in reply, that the failure to accept the original PSAK DIN involves an even greater disrespect to the greatest rabbinic authorities of our time. But, far beyond the question of proper respect for Torah opinion, we see here emerging an even more serious problem: How will *Klall Yisroel* ever, in the future, be able to benefit from the guidance of *Gedolei Hatorah* if their statements can be nullified, with impunity, by rumor and insinuation on the part of anyone not willing to accept their views?

This, then, is the first point which must be made with all forcefulness: *Any efforts to discredit the statements of Gedolei Hatorah can only lead to total chaos in Jewish life.* If respect for the *Godol* does not forbid such efforts, simplest consideration of the consequences for the future does.

Distortion of Daas Hatorah

NATURALLY, the efforts to deny that the letter of the *Roshei Yeshiva* represented their actual views could not succeed in the long run. Great efforts have therefore been made to discredit their views, as those of men removed from the realities of the Jewish scene, not concerned with reaching the estranged masses, and in fact lacking in basic *Ahavas Yisroel*. A tragic effect of such statements can be seen in a moving editorial in the OBSERVER, student publication of Yeshiva University's Stern college, on December 20:

... it would seem that these *Roshei Yeshiva* are not being realistic. It would seem that they unwittingly ... have cut off those who need 'our help' from the very source of help ... I must reconcile this idea ... with my understanding of the 'hierarchy' in our religion. What is a *Godol*? To whom do I turn when I need advice on a Jewish matter of great importance? To whom do

I turn for inspiration? ... Where can I draw the line and say, until now I've considered him a *talmid chochom* and I've acted accordingly. From this point on—I will ignore his advice ... The *Godol* no longer agrees with me, so he's no longer a *Godol* to me.

In these lines we perceive the struggle between the *Emunas Chachomim* which has always been at the root of our religious tradition, and the influence of those who arrogate to themselves the right to sit in judgment on the wisdom of our *Gedolim*—all too often, as in this case, misunderstanding or misrepresenting their teachings.

We do not refer here to such incredible statements as Rabbi Joseph Lookstein's (*The New York Times*, Nov. 27) that speaks of "those who would smash the unity" of American Jewry and describes their motives as "institutional jealousies directed chiefly against Yeshiva University and its renowned rabbinic school, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, which trains more rabbis for the American Jewish community than all the other Orthodox seminaries combined." (It is remarkable that there was an outpouring of wrath against the Rabbinical Alliance for using *The New York Times*, in a paid advertisement, to disassociate itself from the SCA dinner—after *The New York Times* had been used for years to build up the myth of SCA "universality"—but none against Dr. Lookstein for his infinitely more damaging and slanderous statement to that newspaper.)

Rather, we are concerned with the effort to identify participation in the Synagogue Council ("after all, only for matters on which we are all united, before the outside world") with love for *Klall Yisroel* and interest in our estranged brethren. The fact is that none of these claims can stand up to scrutiny.

SCA participation is only for external and non-religious purposes? The Synagogue Council was officially represented by a delegation, headed by its executive vice-president, at the recent General Assembly of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in Miami. Many of its actions, even though ostensibly directed toward the outside world, deeply compromise the convictions of Torah Jewry. Above everything else, however, the very association of the "three trends" as equals in the SCA "cannot escape the logical inference that Conservative and Reform movements are recognized by the Orthodox members of the SAC as belonging within the fold of true Judaism, differing only in degree or in minor details ..." (Lubavitzer Rebbe's statement, Tammuz 15, 5719). This, as Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky pointed out in 1956, in supporting the *p'sak din* of the *Gedolim*, is particularly true because

it is not lay individuals or organizations that are associated in the SCA but specifically synagogues and rabbis.

The logical conclusions were drawn in an editorial of the *National Jewish Post* (Nov. 25, 1966) which declared that "Rabbi Belkin's courageous appearance" at the SCA banquet:

is not the beginning of the fight in the Orthodox camp to recognize that the Reform and the Conservative communities also are Jewish. It is rather the end. The fight is over in the United States . . . It is not over, however in Israel. But it is much advanced . . .

Can the Orthodox establishment in Israel, which has been refusing to acknowledge even Reform and Conservative marriage pretend that its case is ironclad with the same vehemence and imperiousness that has marked it heretofore? We doubt it. There will be a slow erosion of this stand and others, in Israel too . . .

The writer takes note of Rabbi Belkin's reservations stated at the dinner, but he is not too impressed. His conclusion is: "that wall will fall too."

AND AT THIS POINT WE MUST ASK: If halachically we were able to choose, which way do we do more to bring our estranged brethren closer to Torah—by lending an aura of acceptability to congregations and spiritual leaders whose every principle and practice is a denial of Torah—or by making it clear that, *close as we feel to them as Jews, and eager as we are to help them to a full realization of their Jewishness*, the words *Judaism, synagogue, rabbi*, can only have one legitimate meaning? The latter course is a difficult and painful one—everybody likes to be a 'good fellow'—but in setting up clear standards we provide a rallying point and the inspiration which a seeking youth needs. The other course—where are its fruits? We have pointed out some of the compromises which it has entailed; can we also point to the gains? Yes, Orthodoxy has become more acceptable in many circles; but perhaps this is also due to its having become a little too close to the other two 'trends.'

Seen in this light, it is obvious just how far the so-called separatist position of the *Roshei Yeshivah* is from *Sinas Yisroel* (G-d Forbid) or even from separatism. *The simple fact is that the greatest contributions to regaining American Jewish youth for Torah were made by men like Rabbi Shraga Faivel Mendlowitz of Torah Vodaas and Torah Umesorah fame and Rabbi Ahron Kotler, whose Beth Midrash Govoha, with its offshoots, has contributed so enormously to the proper appreciation and growth of Torah scholarship in America.* The lasting influence of these men, which through the Day Schools and Mesivtos, has spread across the

width of the country, was exercised not by linking up organizationally with other trends in American Jewry, *but by bringing the undiluted message of Torah directly to America's Jewish youngsters.*

What moved such men to give their very lives for the spreading of Torah was their profound love for every fellow-Jew. How offensive, how presumptuous, to identify *Ahavas Yisroel* with the readiness to join the SCA or kindred organizations! How much more offensive, and even dishonest, when the position of the 'separatists' is distorted to imply that they want to have nothing to do with the non-observant Jew! In the above-mentioned *New York Times* statement, Dr. Lookstein claims to have heard "the cry that it is contrary to Jewish law to associate with those who theologically and ideologically differ from traditional Judaism"; *Where has he heard this?* Or, as the outburst of the president of the RCA at the convention of UOJCA suggests, do the rules of sympathetic understanding and love for one's fellow-Jew apply only to the non-Orthodox, and not to the Orthodox?

Our Sages point out that he who is merciful when he should be stringent will turn out to be stringent where he should be merciful. *Ahavas Yisroel* certainly would dictate a different attitude toward *Gedolei Hatorah* and their followers than has been evidenced by some leaders of RCA—and the same *Ahavas Yisroel* also demands an *uncompromising* attitude toward institutions and organizations dedicated to the preservation of Torah Judaism. A *Pinchos*, an *Eliyohu*, a *Yirmiyoh*, were also accused of lacking loyalty to *Klal Yisroel*, because they stood up against the stream and ventured to break "national unity"—but it was they who kept alive the spirit which preserved and can alone truly unite the nation of the Torah. "He who spares the rod, hates his son—and he who loves him, castigates him every morning" (Proverbs 13, 24). It is by the easy tolerance of subversive trends and organizations, in actions if not in words, that we deliver innocent Jewish souls into their power and ultimately break the bonds of the nation.

THIS IS THE SECOND POINT that we seek here to emphasize: *the rationalizations offered in defense of SCA participation involve a distortion of the views of the Gedolei Hatorah and a dangerous misunderstanding of what Ahavas Yisroel and Kirov Rechokim mean.* If there is to be a continued misuse of these terms, it will erode even further the *Emunas Chachomim* of American Orthodoxy, and increase the influence of those who work against Torah.

Opening the Floodgates

THE BITTER FACT IS that the outburst of explanations and rationalizations in defense of the SCA dinner has created utter confusion in Orthodox ranks and has

opened the floodgates to further inroads of the three-equal-trends philosophy. The above-quoted editorial of the *National Jewish Post* is—unfortunately—likely to be prophetic on this point.

Recently the mail brought an announcement about the renewed publication of *The American Rabbi*, “a publication by and for Rabbis,” which boasts of a tripartite editorial board that includes Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Rabbis. On January 22, the annual dinner of *Hado'ar* (a Hebrew-language weekly frequently hostile to Orthodoxy), according to a statement by the dinner chairman, will honor representatives of the “three branches of Judaism”; Rabbi Norman Lamm will be the representative of Orthodoxy. Can anybody still maintain that the “three branches” concept is only accepted by its Orthodox proponents for representation before the outside world?

The extraordinary impact of the dinner itself was foreshadowed by the president of SCA when he hailed it as paving the way for the “long overdue unification of these three branches of Judaism.” Small wonder that shortly after the dinner the Orthodox rabbi of a Virginia community was called by the local Conservative rabbi with the request that, *finally*, he join the local

rabbinical organization. When the request was once again refused, the Conservative rabbi rather angrily declared: “Now that Dr. Belkin went through with the SCA dinner, I won't accept it that your refusal is a matter of principle.” Such pressures, in different forms, will be manifest in many places; on many occasions.

There have been those who have expressed a feeling that the *Gedolei Hatorah* acted hastily and without proper study of all angles in forbidding membership in the SCA and similar groups. Quite apart from the fact that *Gedolim* do not pass on problems in such fashion, it should by now be obvious that, as always, they have evidenced the clearest insight into the problem and the likely consequences for the future Torah Jewry. Of course they have had the advantage of historical halachic and ideological precedents.

There is, then, the simple fact that *the disastrous confusion of the minds resulting from this SCA dinner and its accompanying manifestations, and the danger of ever further involvement in ‘tripartite Judaism,’ must be met by a sustained effort for public enlightenment.* We must make sure that the historic cry, “He who is for the Lord, to me!” will find a resounding response in the hearts of American Jews. □

A Dissident Speaks Out

A Statement by Harav Mordecai Gifter

I AM ONE OF A GROUP in Jewish life who have derisively been called fundamentalists and dissidents. One young man in the American rabbinate has recently declared that the fundamental which obsesses us has become “a dull obsessive litany.” Yet this “dull obsession,” we are told, threatens to split American Orthodoxy. We are urged to avoid this tragic consequence and to become “acquainted with the facts of life.” One young man in the rabbinate even preaches to us on the halachic principle involved.

What is this fundamental which has become so obnoxious to so many within American Orthodoxy? It is the fundamental affirmation of the Jew of *Torah* and *Emunoh* that there is no such monstrosity as ‘one tree of Judaism with three branches,’ or ‘one bird with three wings.’

Jewish life is governed by *Torah*, and *Torah* dictates what Judaism is. Any understanding of Judaism contrary to *Torah* is not a branch or wing within Judaism; it is *non-Judaism*.

One of the basic tenets of *Torah* and *Emunoh* is the principle of *Torah Min Hashomayim*, which means that

every word, letter, jot and tittle from *B'reishis* to *L'einei kol Yisroel* was spoken by *Hashem Yisborach* to Moshe Rabbenu together with the exhortation that it is to be committed into writing—*Torah Shebiksav*—and that together with this, Moshe Rabbenu received *Mipi Hagvura*, the *Mitzvah*—the explanation of *Torah Shebiksav*, the *Mishna*—*Torah Shebealpeh*. (MISHNAH SANHEDRIN XI, 1; SANHEDRIN 99a; B'ROCHOS 5a; RAMBAM: PEIRUSH HAMISHNAH (SANHEDRIN, *ibid*, and: Introduction to PEIRUSH HAMISHNAH). Any deviation in the slightest form from this tenet of EMUNOH denies one his portion—*Cheilek*—in *Olom Haboh*. *This should be taken very seriously and not dismissed as something trivial.* The Mishnah states: *Kol Yisroel yeish lohem cheilek Lo'olom Taboh*—“All members of Israel do have a portion of *Olom Haboh*.” Those to whom this portion is denied have in this Mishnah been placed in a separate category as Jews. In this sense they are in the category of the apostate. (RAMBAM: *T'shuva* III, 6.)

NOW, IF THIS IS CLEAR, as it should be to those professing to be Torah Jews, there can be no recognition as

Judaism accorded to any movement deviating in any way from this tenet. We are not dealing here with the vast majority of those Jews affiliated with congregations and synagogues throughout the country outside of Orthodoxy. Most of them are disinterested, or unaware of the philosophies of their respective spiritual leaders, just as the same holds true, in great measure, for the vast majority of Orthodox affiliations. We deal here with the *movements* as such and their respective spiritual leadership. A *movement* which denies or seeks to distort the very fundament upon which Judaism is built and from which it draws its eternal strength is in essence non-Judaism.

We must clearly differentiate between 'religious movements *within* Judaism' and 'religious movements *among* Jews'. A religious movement which does not subscribe to the basic precepts of Torah is not a movement *within* Judaism. It is a movement among Jews. To lump together, in one breath, the differences of opinion, such as *Bais Shamai* and *Bais Hillel*, *Chassidim* and *Misnagdim*, and (lehavdil) *Z'dukim* and *Prushim* displays a basic lack of understanding of the very essence of Judaism. Recognition of movements among Jews as movements within Judaism is detrimental and dangerous for the continued purity of *Torah* and *Emunoh*. It brings confusion and havoc for it does not involve differences but rather separateness. Light and darkness are not different entities. They are separate entities for they are contrary to each other. So also are Torah and non-Torah separate entities for they are contrary to each other.

Working With All Jews Nothing New

THE POSSIBILITY of acting together with Jews of all beliefs and creeds in matters of common interest to all Jews has always been a fact, and is not something new born of the facts of American life. There have been differences of opinion as to the form and manner of such common cooperation. Kehilla life in Eastern Europe saw the Aguda and Mizrachi at one table with the Bund. In other communities, where Torah-loyal Jewry had its own autonomous Kehilla, there were avenues of rapport and cooperation in matters affecting the two separate organized bodies within the community.

There was, however, never any question on the part of Torah Jewry to ascribe to non-Torah Jewry recognition as a voice of religion within Judaism. Cooperation in communal bodies never involved religious commitment and the members composing those bodies were not there as representatives of religious views and ideologies. The religiously committed members, the Torah Jews in communal bodies sought to guarantee the needs and rights of communal nature specific to the life of the Torah Jew.

The Synagogue Council of America is an organization composed of religious groupings in American Jew-

ish life. Participation by Torah Jewry in this organization is recognition of non-Torah views as being *within* Judaism, part of the religious concept of the Jew. The decisions of this organization are presented as those of the Synagogue—a religious center in Jewish life. Participation implies recognition of the ideological leaders of these non-Torah religious movements as being religious leaders within Judaism. *When the non-Torah president of the Council speaks, he is then the voice of religion for Orthodoxy participating in the Council.* Thus was participation viewed by those *Roshei Hayeshivos* who, a number of years ago, delivered their *p'sak din* against participation of Orthodoxy in the Synagogue Council and in similar organizations.

Those who favored and practiced participation, and to whom the *Roshei Hayeshivos* became merely "dissidents," unaware of the facts of life in American Jewry, defended their participation on the basis of comparison to the European Kehilla pattern. They denied that SCA was the representative of the voice of religion in American Jewry, absurd as this may seem.

"Not A Matter of Substance"

I have been told by leaders in American Orthodoxy* that "it is not a matter of substance, but of degree which is at issue. The Jewish community must frequently marshal all its resources. We have found the Synagogue Council to be a good agency for doing so. Why do you feel that having a secular organization speak to the non-Jewish world for Jewry is preferable to an organization like Synagogue Council." (April 10, 1959).

Another leader of the participants writes: "Due to circumstances it [participation in SCA] became a question of accepting the position of our own *Moroh D'as-roh*, namely Rabbi Soloveitchik and our Halacha committee and following the position of the RCA or stepping out. . . . I believe that there is much to be said for continuing the SCA. In fact, I am convinced that if there were no such agency, we should devise ways and means to form one. . . . I still believe that a re-assessment should be made and a way found whereby our sensibilities should be protected and an agency that can stand on guard to protect the day-to-day interests of the American Jewish community should exist." (April 10, 1959).

"The practical problem, however, is whether we can afford a complete separation or whether we must pay some kind of a price for a semblance of a united front on the American scene." (March 22, 1959)

"I hope I can make you understand that the SCA is not an individual membership organization but a coordinating agency for all those groups representing the Jewish community, finding it necessary to function in areas *Klapei Chutz*, vis a vis government and other non-

*All quotations are from personal correspondence. M. G.

Jewish religious groups, to watch over and protect the rights of every Jew in America, and to represent him when his common interests are involved." (March 27, 1959).

The above quotations from correspondence of various leaders in American Orthodoxy indicates clearly that the participants themselves felt that they were paying a price but that the *semblance* of a united voice in American Jewry was worth the price, since the SCA was merely a Kehilla vehicle for American Jewry. *I have never understood, even according to their viewpoint, where there is one united voice in the common interests of all Jews when, besides SCA, there are so many other agencies each speaking in the name of American Jewry: American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, Bnai Brith, to mention just a few.* The reasons why there cannot be one united Kehilla agency for all of American Jewry are too numerous to discuss here.

This defense of participation on the basis of comparison to a non-religious communal body has now disappeared. In his remarks at the SCA dinner, Dr. Belkin stated that he was there as head of a great yeshiva, not merely as president of a university, making it clear that he was participating in his capacity as a Torah personality of great stature and as a representative of the Yeshiva-world which heretofore had never been involved in SCA. In the course of his remarks he stated that since he was not a separatist he saw a vital need for SCA as the united voice of *religious Jewry* in America. Finally, the truth was spoken. SCA was not a Kehilla vehicle, but rather the voice of religious Jewry. *And participation was urged upon this basis.*

It is important to remember that even if the dissidents were but a few—and this is untrue—even participation by the majority does not determine the validity of such participation. *What is right or wrong in Jewish life is not determined in such fashion.*

THE CHRISTIAN WRITER on religion in *The New York Times*, John Cogley, seems to have sensed the purpose of this dinner in its true perspective. He wrote on Sunday, September 11: "In an era when ecumenism is in the air throughout the Christian world, it is not surprising that Jewish leaders are thinking more about unity in Judaism." He saw in the dinner an expression of a new movement in the air, a neo-Orthodoxy which speaks in ambiguous terms about basic tenets in *Emunoh* in order to make them palatable to non-Torah Jews. It is a movement which seeks to teach that the Halachic scholar proceed and change or modernize the Halacha by first applying the principle: "What are the ends of the Law which G-d or nature ordained and how can we be guided by these ideal ends in developing the Law." *This is the language of Reform.* The leaders of this neo-Orthodoxy are obsessed with "the area of freedom preserved for the Jew in his religious

commitment." This makes it most difficult for them to recognize and accept the *Daas Torah* of *Gedolei Torah* and "they have grappled through many a sleepless night with the problem of authority in Judaism and the measure of freedom that it does permit." The discussion revolves about the question of what makes one the *Godol Hador*, and what is the area in which there can be "freedom of expression and even freedom to act in a non-juridic capacity." Because of this lack of understanding and acceptance of the basic concept of *Emunas Chahomim*, it is possible for them to say of a world renowned *Godol Batorah* that "he may have more consistency, and even more integrity, but these two virtues may be his together with naivete," whereas another personality "articulates his position so that I myself can evaluate it and I must, therefore, prefer his opinion." Acceptance of Torah authority, they say, is based upon yet another premise: "By the same token that our forebears studied astronomy, even the astronomy of non-Jews, in order that they might arrive at correct calendar computations, so our *Gedolim* must thoroughly comprehend every philosophical school, for example, before they articulate what is even a definitive doctrine of the Jewish creed." By such token they summarily dismiss the opinions not merely of the *Gedolim* of our age but of many past generations also. None of them, we are told, could articulate a definitive doctrine in *Torah* and *Emunoh*.

Now, then, are we to wonder that such men in the Orthodox Rabbinate talk about 'expanding and developing' the Halacha. And these are the leaders who determine the validity of participation in SCA and make of non-participants 'dissidents,' far-right 'fundamentalists' and 'separatists.' It is from these leaders that we are bid to accept the facts of American life. We are supposed to be naive and removed from the mainstream of American Jewish living and they in their involvement recognize life for what it is worth.

We shall not be naive enough to be overwhelmed with the danger of a split in Orthodox Jewry. It is our holy responsibility to proceed forward in forging the chain of Torah tradition from Sinai to our present day and age, to be governed in our lives by an unbending subservience to *Torah* and *Emunoh*, fostered and nurtured by the study of Torah unadulterated by a desire to synthesize it with non-Torah ideas and culture.

The present state of affairs in problems of *Emunoh* is part of a process of gradual crystalization of the position of pure *Emunoh* as our forebears handed it down to us. It is the confusion of the generation and period of *ikveso dimeshicho*. G-d grant us, hastily, the fulfillment of the words of the prophet: *And the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters do cover the ocean.* It is our fervent hope that our brothers who now speak of us in derision and contempt will then see Torah in its true light. □

Past and Present in the Teaching of Jewish History

*Remember the days of the world,
consider the years of each generation.*

(DEVORIM 32,7)

*'And you shall teach them to your son'—
the words of the Torah should be
spoken clearly.*

(KIDDUSHIN 30A)

Judaism has been called the "religion of history." The loyalty of the Jew to his faith, and his certainty about its truth, are neither drawn from blind emotional gropings, nor from abstract philosophical reasoning, but from the historical experiences of the Jewish people. The survival of the Jew from the dawn of human history to our days, has made him—by his very existence—the witness to G-d's rule over the world, and to the teachings of the Torah; those who would want to challenge Judaism have been forced to invent the legend of Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, or the modern-day myth that the Jew is a "fossil."

The basic lessons of our past are, of course, embodied in the great events that marked the early history of our people; the Torah—through its account of these events as well as through the mitzvos that commemorate them—conveys these lessons to us. But the later history of the Jew can help most significantly toward a proper understanding of our sacred heritage and of our duty here and now. Through it we can convey to our youth the principles which underline and emerge from our past, and their application to the problems and issues of our time. Let it be well understood however: *we must see the present in the light of the past and not, reversely, project the passing ideas of the day, its confusions and uncertainties, into the past.*

What are some of the guiding principles that emerge

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from a study of our past? The awareness of G-d as the Master of human destinies, purposefully guiding them from behind the scenes or, when He so chooses, openly through miracles. The conviction that not man's capabilities and practical endeavors but his obedience to G-d's will determine his fate. The realization that the Jewish people was chosen to demonstrate these facts, through its birth and survival contrary to all rules of nature, united into a nation solely by its common loyalty to G-d's will. The acceptance of the Torah as the divine revelation of this will, given *in toto*—written and oral, "ethical" and "ceremonial" parts—at Sinai (except where the Torah itself allowed and provided for later elaboration). The view of the Prophets and Rabbis as the teachers of the Torah, appointed to lead the Jewish people on the right path. The conviction, finally, that the destruction of the two Jewish commonwealths was the result of our shortcomings as the "people of the Torah," and that our redemption will be marked by our living up to this sacred role.

TO THE TORAH JEW these concepts represent obvious and fundamental truths. And yet—without exception—they have come under violent attack by modern secularism which conceives of man as functioning in a world moved by the mechanistic forces of nature, and seeks to explain away whatever does not fit in with its approach. Moreover, the Torah principles lead to conclusions that are not easy for us to accept; they dictate a reaction to the problems of life, individual and communal, which is as demanding as it is unpopular. As a result, there has emerged, even in the ranks of Jews loyal to Torah, a tendency to separate past and present, to see in the past one set of principles and to follow in practice a different set. Even more dangerous for us—occasionally the past is misinterpreted to fit our current ideas. Since this is usually not a conscious process, it is particularly important to draw attention to it.

As an example of these tendencies at work in the writing and teaching of Jewish history, let us examine a textbook series designed for our children, carrying a warm endorsement by Dr. Samuel Belkin, and widely

used in Orthodox schools: *The Story of the Jewish People*, by Gilbert and Lillian Klaperman (4 volumes, published 1956-1961 by Behrman House, New York). This is the only work on Jewish history for school use, covering the whole of our past, which seeks to give the Torah perspective—the sincere desire of the authors to succeed in this, comes across very clearly throughout the four volumes. Also, they have endeavored to meet all the manifold requirements of a well-designed textbook: a style appropriate to each age level; time charts, maps, and drawings; even fictional episodes in the first volume to make the events described more concrete; and review-questions and projects to stimulate the pupils. One would like to give enthusiastic approval to this work; unfortunately, it is most unsatisfactory.

There are a large number of mistakes in the four volumes.* But they could easily be remedied; the real shortcomings of this work lie in the basic approach of the authors—an inner inconsistency besetting it. The authors in many places clearly spell out the basic principles underlying Jewish history which I enumerated above; it would therefore be logical to expect them to evaluate *all* the events and personalities of the Jewish past and present in the light of Torah principles—*positively*, if they measure up by Torah standards, and *negatively* if they do not. This, however, the authors do not seem able to do, for they are also committed to some other criteria in modern Jewish life. Torah is, in effect, joined by concepts of Jewish nationalism and language; humanism and social democracy are normative values—all leading to the confusion of thought pointed out many years ago by Rabbi Amiel, when he criticized Mizrahi education for being “built on the principle that we have a people *and* that

* Some are merely the result of an obvious effort to be concise (thus the statement, vol. I, p. 175, that Gedalya was king); others due to poor editing (thus, contradictions on who the Samaritans were, I, 184, and II, 20; or who presided over the Sanhedrin in the time of the Procurators, II, 101 and 107). There are obvious historical errors (e.g. that it was Alexander Jannai who converted the Idumeans, II, 82; that Abaye and Rave continued Rav Ashi's work, II, 186; or that the Nuremberg Laws provided for the wearing of the Yellow Badge, IV, 199). Others are due to unfamiliarity with talmudic sources (e.g. the statement that Saul was anointed from a horn, I, 103; the view, which had originated with the Bible Critics, that the scroll found in Josiah's days was only *Devorim*, I, 170; or that Alexander Jannai *carelessly* violated a holy law and was stoned with *esrogim* and *lulovim*, II, 82). Some mistakes show a lack of perception (e.g. when the authors explain that the Kabbalists of Safed were pleased with the Shulchan Aruch because “they no longer needed to study the long and difficult pages of the Talmud to find a law . . . Moreover, it gave them extra time” for the study of Kabbalah, III, 137); and some, a strange educational ineptness (thus, when the authors speak of “the Siddur that you use every Sabbath,” II, 178, or ask in connection with Sabbatai Tzvi: “Do you think anyone could announce himself as Messiah today and be received by the Jews of the world? Give reasons for your answer.” III, 185)

we have a Torah; but he who thinks this way has not really understood our fundamental belief: ‘*Our people is a people only through the Torah*’” (Hatzofeh, June 16, 1944). Caught in a dualism of values, the authors waver between Torah traditionalism and modern rationalist secularism in their evaluation of some of the major aspects of the Jewish present—and project it ever so often into the past. In discussing matters of the spirit they stress the role of Torah; but when it comes to the realm of practical application, time and again a rationalist note is struck.

1. The authors unequivocally detail the great miracles that marked the beginning of our history and proclaimed that the Jews' fate depended upon G-d. What, then, prompted them to write: “As they wandered through the wilderness, the Israelites stopped wherever there was a patch of green grass or a trickle of fresh water to rest and refresh themselves” (I, 57)? Is this a correct description of the desert pilgrimage, or should not our children be told that the Jews existed in the desert by daily miracles only?*

Rationalizing the workings of Jewish history leads all too easily to a philosophy of “my strength and the power of my hands.” The reader may merely find it an odd comment when the authors complain in connection with the crossing of the Red Sea: “They had been slaves for so long, they could not think as free men. They did not even think of fighting for their freedom,” I, 41; our Sages actually mention that one faction among the Jews wanted to fight. However, at a later point, as we shall see, they make quite explicit their impatience with those who pray for redemption rather than helping themselves.

The fictional episode describing the blessings accruing to the Jewish people from King David's rule (I, 117-8) lists all the political, social and military advantages obtained (“Now we are like the other peoples, with a king and a government and a capital city.”); there is no mention at all of the unique Jewish character of his kingship, so eloquently described by our Sages.

* Some other examples of the author's rationalizations: “Moses realized (through the episode of the spies) that the people still did not have the complete faith that G-d could help them . . . Because of this, the Jews had to continue their wanderings” (I, 57-8) — was this really Moses' decision? Or, is it correct, in the same vein, to say that “from that time on, Samuel knew that Saul would not obey G-d's will . . . Samuel realized that because of this Saul could not found a dynasty. . . . And so the prophet began to search for another king . . .” (I, 106)? Why not spell out G-d's direct instructions?

Sometimes the ambiguity becomes absurd: “It is said in Israel that there never was nor would there ever be a prophet as great as Moses to whom the Lord spoke face to face. The Rabbis tell us that G-d caused Moses' burial place to be hidden forever . . .” (I, 60). Again, the specific statement of the Torah is repeated thus (I, 141): “From his day on, he was regarded as the greatest prophet in the history of Israel.”

By dividing spiritual concerns and practical attainments, the authors are able to find some kind words for the Sadducees ("helped make the nation of Judea wealthy and prosperous," II, 81) and for the Hasmonean dynasty ("had helped make Judea an established and secure kingdom," II, 84)—without spelling out that the rejection of the Torah by the former, and the power-seeking of the latter ultimately destroyed kingdom and Temple!

On the other hand, the authors are most critical, at a later point in Jewish history, of the "many [who] simply hoped for a miracle to take place. They waited for G-d to bring them to the Promised Land. They were so broken in spirit and impoverished in physical possessions that they could not even imagine that they themselves could help this dream come true" (III, 241).

In contrast, the authors describe what they consider the correct solution: "The Jews began to realize that . . . having their own country was not only a practical answer to the problem of having a secure place to go to. It was a question of self-respect and world-respect as well." And they continue with evident approval: "The Maskilim taught a simple lesson: 'A people which does not possess a national home does not deserve to be called a people!'" (III, 241). For a solution of the misery and insecurity of Jewish life, "they turned to the teachings of the Torah for their answer, to the Promised Land . . . Together with religious Jews who had prayed for a return to Zion from the earliest days they prepared the way for the blessed idea of Zionism" (III, 238).

2. It is at this point that the inner contradiction in the authors' approach fully emerges. They state, quite unambiguously, that "one was not a Jew because he lived in the land of the Jews, or had a specific type of Jewish literature, or wore the uniform of a Jewish army. He was a Jew because he practiced the Jewish religion" (IV, 91); and they emphasize that "the Jewish religion could keep Judaism alive. This was the only way Jews would survive . . . Judaism could exist even without the Temple if the people maintained their religion and historic culture" (II, 143). Yet, *when the authors deal with the ancient dream of return to the Promised Land, and its realization today, we find a thoroughly secularized approach; there is not one mention of the specific prophetic vision of a nation gathered around, and governed by, Torah.* How can the authors square their original premises about the origin and nature of Jewish nationhood with their approval of modern secularist trends? The answer lies in a remarkable "broadening" or "reinterpretation" of Torah:

"Under the pressure of hate and discrimination was hammered out a stronger commitment to Torah and the Jewish heritage. This first took the form in an intensive flowering of Halacha and religious practice. Later it expressed itself in the growth of the Haskalah

and the nationalism that culminated in Zionism and in the rebuilding of the Jewish homeland" (III, preface).

The Nationalist Emphasis

The nationalist emphasis is formed quite early in the work: "Passover was Akiba's favorite holiday, because Passover is the holiday of freedom. He would spend all night of Passover sitting with his pupils . . ." (II, 157). Quite logically, the authors link the martyrdom of Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiba (II, 163), stating that on Lag B'Omer "in Israel large bonfires are lit in memory of Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiba" (II, 164). In place of the traditional explanation, that refers to secret Torah study, they declare that "children play [on Lag B'Omer] with bows and arrows as a remembrance of the time when the Jews practiced archery in preparation for their revolt against the Romans" (II, 164).

In the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry the authors point out "the beginnings of Zionism, the desire for a homeland once again . . . Judah Halevi may be called the first Zionist" (III, 37-8). There is no indication, here, of the distinctive religious basis of Yehudah Halevi's longing for the Holy Land—note the authors' pale description of "his dream of a return to the homeland, to Palestine, where his people could once again live together as a people, in dignity and respect, without suffering and pain" (III, 34). Not surprisingly, we find the authors compartmentalizing Halevi's mind: "Just as he was moved by a love for G-d and a love for the land of Israel, Halevi was also (*sic!*) deeply devoted to the religion and practices of Judaism" (III, 35).

The secularization of Jewish nationhood is paralleled by the authors' high valuation of the emergence of secular Jewish culture—for instance in Spanish Jewry's Golden Age which "saw the start of a new type of Jewish literature . . . Now, for the first time, Jews began to write personal poetry on both religious and secular themes . . . about nature, about love and pretty maidens, about life in general" (III, 37).

BUT THE AUTHORS' OUTLOOK emerges most clearly when they reach the modern era. "Despite the fact that the Maskilim used Hebrew to try to change Judaism, they did manage to bring about a good result as well. They caused a strong revival of the Hebrew language . . . A new Hebrew literature flourished, the like of which had not been since the Golden Age of Spain. An entire new study, called 'Jewish science,' also came into being . . ." (III, 210). The authors, to be sure, criticize the assimilationist motives of the German Maskilim; but "fortunately, the Haskalah in Russia did not bring about a wholesale movement away from Judaism . . . Instead, the Russian Haskalah brought forth great new poets, profound historians, thinkers and philosophers. And furthermore, for the first time in Jewish history,

real novels appeared" (III, 233). "Maskilim wrote books and articles, poems and essays on . . . life as it was seen throughout the world. Soon this idea took hold of the people. They were ready to be 'enlightened!' They sought the Haskalah and its leaders . . . The literature of the Haskalah not only awakened the Jews to the other cultures around them, it became itself a rich, warm literature, describing the lives of the Jews, telling it with love and understanding" (III, 234). "From the Haskalah a new dignity came to both the Yiddish and the Hebrew languages" (III, 236). Such blindness to the real meaning and impact of the Haskalah explains the authors' regret at the passing of the American Yiddish theatre (IV, 149), or their unqualified admiration for Judah Leib Gordon (III, 236).

They close their discussion of Jewish emancipation by asking the students: "The Russian Haskalah differed from the German Haskalah in many ways. Which, in your opinion, represents the true answer to the way Jews should live in modern society? Why?" They seem to have no doubt that one *was* the right answer; the only problem apparently remaining they pose in the next question: "Write the diary of a *Yeshiva bochur* who has turned to the Haskalah. Will he keep his beliefs secret? Will his Rabbi agree with him?" (III, 238-9).

The great goal of the Russian Maskilim was "a land governed by Jews, where each man would be free and able to live his life" (III, 288). This "dream has become a reality . . . the promise made to our forefather Abraham has been fulfilled once again. Our people are now in the Holy Land, tilling its soil, building its cities, and reestablishing it as a nation among nations" (IV, 217). This idea is reiterated time and again—"the 2,000 year old hope had at last come true. The United Nations had authorized the establishment of a Jewish state" (IV, 240)—and there is not even a hint that the realities of the Jewish state leave anything to be desired or changed, as far as the Torah ideal of a Jewish commonwealth is concerned.

"The . . . Sabras are proud and unafraid. They have shown what Jews can be who are not brought up in the shadow of fear . . . With its great institutions of secular learning, with its widespread yeshivoth for the study of Torah, Israel is becoming the center of Jewish study and thinking" (IV, 280). The Hebrew University, the Weizman Institute and the Technion are "at the summit of a growing network of schools . . . every aspect of national culture was developing at an amazing rate" (IV, 219). "Israel is the only country in the world whose presidents have been intellectuals and scholars . . . They, in their lives, have upheld the Jewish tradition for learning and knowledge" (IV, 264). " REGARD for brotherhood, for the principles of righteousness . . . has been the attribute of the Jewish people throughout the ages. In Israel, it is reaching its full expression" (IV, 267).

The only reference to the place of Torah in the Jew-

ish state is an expression of satisfaction at the attainments of the religious parties in this respect; an example given is that "most city buses do not operate on the Sabbath" (IV, 278). Problems still to be resolved? There is a remarkable reference to the fact that "Israel is also unhappy about the splitting of Jerusalem. The old city, where the Temple stood and through which passes the road to the famous Hadassah Hospital and the Hebrew University, is in the hands of Jordan" (IV, 249). The erosion of feeling evident in this passage, and the failure to see the problem of a secular Jewish state, leads of course to a complete inability to understand—and present—the real reasons for any opposition by Torah Jews to Zionism (III, 241, IV, 182, 253).

3. It is important to note that the authors' linking of Torah and modern Jewish nationalism is paralleled by their association of Torah with modern social democracy.

From the teeming background of Eastern European Jewish life there rose (in the USA) organizers of labor and welfare workers, masters of finance and industry . . . There were liberal idealists, who led the Socialist movement, and religious idealists, who led the Zionist movement. There were athletes and entertainers, poets and dramatists . . . Devoted to the ideals of freedom and democracy, and imbued with the spirit of G-d and of Torah, they would make an invaluable contribution to American Jewish life (IV, 130; see also 146).

In fact, starting with the premise that "we believe that . . . every man is entitled to his beliefs and way of life, provided he leads a decent and humanitarian existence" (II, 123)—a premise that certainly does not come to grips with the Torah's demands upon a Jew, or even a non-Jew, the authors readily conclude that the writers of the Talmud believed in democracy (II, 194). "Both Israel and America have been guided by the principles of human liberty, equality, and justice . . . The two countries share in their great dedication to human rights and democracy . . . We have also seen the common influence of the Biblical heritage on the American and Israeli forms of government. All these ties have their roots in G-d and in the Torah" (IV, 267).

It is significant, in this context that the authors severely criticize "Geiger [who] emphasized the ethical side of religion. He taught that the ideals of the prophets, the ethical ideas were most important," in contrast to "the mitzvoth of the Torah" (III, 213). They point out, very correctly, that all Torah laws must be equally accepted. Yet, surprisingly, we find them juxtapose, time and again, "the laws of Moses and the teachings of the prophets" (II, 20); "the Torah gave [the Jews] laws to live by . . . and the prophets gave them lofty principles and high ideals, inspired by the word of

G-d" (I, 143). The Jews "not only had a moral code of laws which taught them how to behave towards each other, but they had other mitzvot, law, which taught them how to behave towards G-d. The Sabbath and the Sholosh Regolim, for example, were mitzvot of behavior towards G-d. The moral laws were taught by the prophets . . ." (II, 15). Somehow, the idea, so very much cultivated by the Reform movement, that the prophetic teachings represent a later and higher ethical ideal than the mitzvot of the Pentateuch, seems to be echoed here—with the implication that to live by the Torah means to accept and live by the *ethical* teachings of our heritage. "The Jews were the first to believe in the Bible. In later centuries, many other nations also accepted its teachings . . . People who live by the Bible are guided by the greatest and highest rules—they are good, kind, generous, honest, freedom-loving, peaceful and happy" (II, 39-40). "We Jews believe that as the 'chosen people' of G-d we are to bring the message of brotherhood, love, and goodness, to teach the Ten Commandments and the Torah" (II, 123). The Ten Commandments, "the most important" of G-d's laws given to the Jews (*an emphasis utterly in conflict with Jewish tradition*) "have been accepted as a code of living by many people all over the world . . . One of the greatest teachings of the Ten Commandments is the idea of a Sabbath day . . . a day of rest when man can interrupt his busy schedule to think about G-d . . ." (I, 56). "The Ten Commandments have raised a standard of behavior for the world. The Ten Commandments finally must guide all nations in their relations with each other just as they guide individual people" (II, 39). Meanwhile, "the teachings of the prophets calling for righteousness and honesty are gradually being fulfilled in America today" (IV, 13).

4. A consequence of the authors' approach is their attitude toward Jewish leaders, movements and institutions, which reveals a strangely uncritical approach to those not committed to Torah, in the true sense, and an equally strange blindness toward those that are committed. Even men whose scholarly teachings we consider utterly wrong are held up as "a great scholar" (Geiger, III, 213) or "a great scholar and writer" (Dr. Louis Finkelstein, IV, 286). Herzl, whose completely secular concept of Zionism is nowhere criticized, is described, in Nordau's words, as one of the greatest Jews of all times because he showed Jews the path to take (IV, 184). As for Ben Gurion, he "is one of the most remarkable men on the Jewish scene, a great orator and profound thinker and philosopher . . . Even though he is far from a religious man, Ben Gurion responded (to the question of how to defend Jerusalem): 'I believe in miracles'" (IV, 256).

The authors warmly praise the work of organizations clearly not committed to Torah standards, such as the Hillel Foundation, the Jewish Welfare Board, or the Jewish Education Committee, without even a word

of qualification. They laud the Jewish Publication Society, with its very mixed book list and much criticized Bible translation (they incidentally, also send the pupil frequently for reference to the Jewish Encyclopedia). The phrase, "people of the book," which has always referred to the Torah, has—according to the authors—gained an added meaning by the publishing of so many books by such companies as Bloch, Behrman, and the Jewish Publication Society (IV, 291). One would at least have wanted to see a reference to the great resurgence in the publishing of Talmudic and Rabbinic literature in this country!

The World of Torah

There is, however, an extraordinary paucity of information about the world of Torah in the last 150 years. To be sure, the Vilner Gaon is discussed ("his mind sought religious and secular learning," III, 198) and, at a later point, Rabbi S. R. Hirsch—he "believed that no teaching of philosophy or science was in conflict with Judaism," in the authors' view, and started an Orthodox trend "which embraced a belief in Jewish science and all sciences as well as in religion," III, 215-6—a complete misunderstanding of Hirsch's position. But none of the other giants of modern European Torah Jewry—men like the Chasam Sofer, Reb Yisroel Salanter, or the Chofetz Chayim—are mentioned; nor are the development of the modern Yeshivah, Mussar, or the Beth Jacob movement mentioned at all.

This could perhaps be ascribed to the unproportionate space and emphasis the authors have given to American and Eretz Yisroel history. But we find the same inadequacy there. The Chief Rabbis of Israel are mentioned, and so is Chief Chaplain Goren ("one of the greatest Talmudic scholars in Israel," IV, 274), but neither the Chazon Ish nor any of the outstanding Torah personalities of this or the previous generation. Bar Ilan University is referred to by name, but none of the yeshivos, such as Ponivesh, which have had such an impact.

On the American scene, the rise and role of Yeshiva University ("one of the leading universities in the country, IV, 287) are given a number of pages; the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago is allotted one paragraph; and a few other yeshivos are named—Lakewood and Ner Israel in Baltimore, do not appear at all. The question, "Who are the leaders of Orthodoxy?" is answered solely by reference to Rabbi Belkin and Rabbi Soloveitchik (IV, 288). Dr. Revel is discussed at length, as "one of the most profound Talmudic scholars and thinkers in the Orthodox movement" (IV, 139). The role, on the American scene, of Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, or later, of Rabbi Aaron Kotler; the work of Torah Umesorah, or the growth of Kollelim—all these are passed over in silence. The "three arms of Orthodoxy in the U.S." (IV, 144),

The Torah historian is subject to an iron law which he can only disregard at his own peril . . . He must be quite clear about the fundamental principles, the Ikrei Emunoh, of the Torah, as they are taught to us by the awesome events of our earliest past and the towering personalities who were the guardians of our sacred heritage; and he must — without fear or favor — apply these principles to the evaluation of the world in which we live, the experiences we undergo, the ideas we encounter. If he reverses the process, if he permits his values and judgements to be subject to the influence of his age, he will arrive at a distorted picture of both the Torah world and the secular world — and he will even project these distortions into that past from which he could have learned the truth.

for the authors, are Y.U., the R.C.A., and the UOJCA ("speaks for Orthodoxy on the national scene, representing the wishes of orthodox Jews," IV, 142). In short, the vibrant vitality of a Torah Orthodoxy not associated with Haskalah in Europe, with religious Zionism in Eretz Yisroel, or with Yeshiva University in this country, is simply not given recognition by the authors (one exception: a reference to Lubavitch, as the only "strong and important movement" left in Hasidism, III, 196-7).

There are other aspects of this work which merit discussion.* But enough has been cited to establish the point we have tried to make: the Torah historian is subject to an iron law which he can only disregard at his own peril and at the peril of his readers—in this

case the pliable minds of children. He must be quite clear about the fundamental principles, the *Ikrei Emunoh*, of the Torah, as they are taught to us by the awesome events of our earliest past and the towering personalities who were the guardians of our sacred heritage; and he must—without fear or favor—apply these principles to the evaluation of the world in which we live, the experiences we undergo, the ideas we encounter. If he reverses the process, if he permits his values and judgements to be subject to the influence of his age, he will arrive at a distorted picture of both the Torah world and the secular world—and he will even project these distortions into that past from which he could have learned the truth.

It is not easy, then, to write, or to teach Jewish history—the pitfalls are considerable. But so are the rewards—for it is just by drawing upon the lessons of the past that we can explain to our children the meaning of the present. The challenge of modern Jewish nationalism and the State of Israel; assimilation and Jewish "sec-tarianism"; the emergence of a democratic and humanitarian West; the horror of Nazi murder and Communist tyranny; they all need sensitive and perceptive treatment that will give our children an understanding of these events—but only a treatment that is based *totally* upon the authentic teachings of the Torah will provide a *true* understanding. □

* Above all, there is the puzzling question why the authors rendered the thirteen principles of faith in such a free form as to rob some of them of their distinctive meaning (III, 43): they speak of the belief "that G-d revealed the Torah to Moses" (instead of: that the Torah which we have is the one revealed to Moses), or "that G-d rewards those who are good" (instead of: those who keep His mitzvos). There are a number of questions raised by the author's apparent implication that the concepts of Messiah and the Resurrection emerged only gradually. Their dating of Ezra, of the Purim story, of the emergence of Sanhedrin and courts, all deserve examination, as do some other details concerning the development of the Oral Law.

To impute to outstanding Torah scholars motives of "hatred, vengeance or grudge" is to carry on dissent in a most un-American manner, apart from the Jewish ethical considerations.

To declare that "as an Orthodox Jew I have no HATRED for any Jew whether he is observant or non-observant," introduces a word into the discussion which has not previously been used by any Orthodox group, regardless of the intensity of its commitment or its disapproval of the SCA.

I pray, Mr. Ambassador that your efforts for peace for all mankind will be blessed. I pray too, that the hearts of all Jews will be drawn closer together until we reach the closeness which bound us all together when we stood together at Sinai. Until that time, we need not compromise our love for all Jews, nor need we compromise the right to dissent.

Most respectfully yours,

YAAKOV JACOBS

Joseph Elias

Reflections on the Jewish Educational Scene

A Review of Some Recent Publications in the Field

I

A COLLECTION of essays on *Judaism and the Jewish School*, published by Bloch Publishing Company for the American Association for Jewish Education,¹ cannot but bring to mind George Bernard Shaw's barbed remark, "He who can, does; he who can't, teaches," and someone's even more cynical addition, "and he who can't teach, writes books on education." As a teacher, I cannot very well agree that these observations are *always* true; but the book before us shows that there is *some* validity to them.

The American Jewish educational scene, by and large, is a wasteland. Vast sums of money are spent by a number of national agencies with imposing names, by local welfare funds and a large variety of different educational institutions, and the results have been utterly disappointing even to their sponsors—a stream "a mile wide and an inch deep," in the words of a prominent member of the American Jewish establishment. The *National Study of Jewish Education*, sponsored by the American Association for Jewish Educa-

tion (AAJE), reported in 1959 that the "educational shallowness" of American Jewish schools made a restatement of educational objectives a critical necessity. *Presto*, yet another institution with a high-sounding title was set up by the AAJE—the *National Curriculum Research Institute*—and its discussions indicated the need for "bringing together the best available formulations of Jewish educational thought in America" (p. VIII), to this objective the present volume is dedicated. And what does it offer us? The same arid formulations by the same men who are so prominently identified with the failure of American Jewish education up to now.

There are, of course, some oases in the wasteland described: the Yeshivos and Beth Jacob Schools, Mesivtos and Kollelim, that have sprung up in the last fifty years to serve as the agencies of Torah education in the community. They have succeeded in large measure in attracting, holding, and molding their students. Apparently, Torah educators have at least some of the answers to the frustrating problems of Jewish education in America. We would expect that the *National Curriculum Research Institute*, which emphasizes the "gravity of the situation," would be interested in the views of Orthodox educators, and we are not disap-

1. *Judaism and the Jewish Schools*, selected essays on the direction and purpose of Jewish education, edited by J. Pilch and M. Ben-Horin (New York, 1966; Bloch Publ. Co.).

"A perplexing question must be faced at this point: Why do the men heading the American Jewish educational establishment fail to recognize the bankruptcy of their efforts, and to draw the proper conclusions from it? After all, the evidence of their failure is known to them — in fact, a good deal of it has emerged from their own surveys and studies."

pointed—not totally, at least. Among the forty-five writers presented in the present volume, *four* Orthodox spokesmen have been included! One could well question whether, say, the founder and headmaster of the Ramaz School and the author of *Jewish Values for Modern Man* should be considered the spokesmen for Torah education in America. But even after conceding this point to the editors we are left with four, just four, representatives of Orthodoxy. Out of nine sections *one*, out of 336 pages in this volume a total of 28 have been devoted to the only flourishing sector in American Jewish education!² It almost seems as if there were indeed a careful division of functions: there are those men who staff the AAJE, the National Council for Jewish Education, the National Culture Foundation, the Bureaus of Jewish Education, and the Colleges of Jewish Studies, and do the philosophizing and writing about Jewish education—and there are those others who furnish Jewish education, in the true sense of the word, devotedly and effectively, despite the immense handicaps put in their way.

A recent book on the Day School,³ of which more will be said later, spells out this fact very clearly. It points out how the overwhelming success of the *Yeshivah* movement has changed the minds of some former strong opponents such as Dr. Isaac Berkson who declared in 1964: "We need the intensive Orthodox Jewish Day Schools—the yeshivot—with their religious and educational intensity. We need them, realizing full well that many of them do not make accommodations. They need not make accommodations. We need their strong conviction and commitment. They are going to persist and they should persist" (quoted on pp. 161-2). But at the same time, the book points out the generally "unsympathetic attitude of the non-traditional Jewish educators to the Jewish Day School . . . an outstanding proponent of the communal school idea in Jewish education, speaking on the developments in American Jewish education between 1940 and 1960 at the 18th annual pedagogic conference of the Jewish Education Committee of New York, held in 1960, made no men-

tion whatsoever of the Jewish Day School. The lack of acceptance of this institution by some Jewish educators has not always been passive . . . [their] opposition has undoubtedly had a negative effect on organized communal support of all-day education. Thus the lack of greater financial assistance for the day school, in some cases and some measure, may be attributed to the local bureaus whose professional staffs often could not reconcile themselves to the idea of a traditional educational institution" (p. 207). The most glaring example of the lack of understanding that the establishment has for *Yeshivah* education is the recommendation of the AAJE that, instead of seeking Federal aid, *Day Schools send their pupils to the public schools till 2 P.M. and devote the later afternoon to Hebrew studies*—this from the agency that claims to be the national champion of Jewish education!⁴

A PERPLEXING question must be faced at this point: Why do the men heading the American Jewish educational establishment fail to recognize the bankruptcy of their efforts, and to draw the proper conclusions from it? After all, the evidence of their failure is known to them—in fact, a good deal of it has emerged from their own surveys and studies. Here are some extracts from the above-mentioned National Study:^{4a}

. . . how meagre is the knowledge that can be

4. The minutes of the meeting of August 28, 1966, of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, contains this interesting and relevant report: "The question of day schools was discussed by the World Council on Jewish Education and given marked priority. It was felt that day schools was the method to be employed to make Jewish education effective in the various communities. . . . On the other hand, the Americans prefer the afternoon schools. They reminded the conference that the afternoon schools had always been a very effective factor in Jewish education."

It is remarkable—and would be funny if it were not so ludicrous—that the AAJE, which represents this approach, considers itself the proper agency to conduct an evaluation of the Day School movement "under exclusive AAJE auspices in accordance with accepted 'scientific principles'" (I. Toubin, Pedagogical Reporter, September 1966). As Dr. Joseph Kaminsky's reply points out, the very placing of the Day School in the dock—in the face of the devastating disclosures of the National Survey about *Talmud Torahs and Sunday Schools*—shows the prejudice of those who made the suggestion. Certainly the AAJE has neither impartiality, nor indeed any understanding for the meaning of Torah education.

4a. *Jewish Education in the United States*, vol. I, by A. M. Dushkin and U. Z. Engelman, 1959.

2. It is interesting to note that a volume, *Modern Jewish Educational Thought*, published by the Chicago College of Jewish Studies in 1965, contains sixteen selections, *not one of them from an author connected with Torah education.*

3. *The Jewish Day School in America*, by Alvin I. Schiff (New York, 1966; Jewish Education Committee Press, \$5.00).

achieved by our children in Bible and Hebrew and in the other subjects of the curriculum, and how inadequate is the sense of achievement of the children and parents (p. 217).

Excluding the Day schools, . . . probably not more than 25% of our children (receiving Jewish education) learn enough Hebrew to be able to begin the study of the Hebrew Bible, even in simplified texts . . . the likelihood is that the vast majority of our children grow up without any knowledge of Bible text, either in Hebrew or in English (p. 189).

The National Study emphasizes that a majority of the pupils do not indicate a liking for, or enjoyment of, their Jewish school activities.

It would seem that in well conducted schools the proportion of children who enjoy or like their studies and activities should be considerable higher (p. 215). It would seem that the children in the Orthodox schools have more positive attitudes towards their schools and studies than do the children in other schools (p. 78).

The report emphasizes the failure of schools to retain their students: the average afternoon school pupil leaves after about three years, in two-thirds of the cases because of Bar Mitzvah and lack of interest of child and parent.^{4b} In the circumstances it is small wonder that our teen-agers grow up bereft of all Jewish involvement. The tragic alienation of our college youth is well known and documented; but perhaps even more significant are the results of a survey of a random sample drawn from 2,000 adolescent members of the Bnai Brith Youth Organization, youngsters—in other words—who have actual ties with the Jewish community. This survey (as reported in 1956 by JTA) questioned them about their interest in nine types of activities; among boys “Jewish content” activities took last place, among girls last but one. In listing community service activities, the youngsters rated “soliciting pledges for the UJA” at the bottom of their lists.

But there is actually no need to quote statistics; which can be endlessly duplicated; the realities of Jewish community life speak loud and clear. Why, then, is there no heart-searching among those who carry responsibility? The answer is tragically simple: *if the dominant groups in American Jewry, their lay leaders and their professionals, were to put aside their prejudices and rationalizations and acknowledged the unique power of Torah education, they would be forced*

4b. The preliminary report (1959) on the Detroit pilot study provides further detail: “over one-third of the responding children liked their weekday and Sunday schools little or not at all. . . . The Orthodox seem to indicate a more intensely positive feeling . . .” (pp. 5-6). Again, “the children in the sample were discriminating in their attitude toward the curriculum . . . The children in the Orthodox subsample were the most positive . . .” (p. 8). “Less than one-third of the weekday children and only 10% of the Sunday school children stated they would continue after Bar Mitzvah” (p. 13).

to draw certain further conclusions that reach far beyond the field of education—serious doubts about the validity of the non-Torah approaches to Judaism and, ultimately, about their own personal non-Torah ways of life and thought. There are some individuals today who have reached these conclusions and have acted on them—but not the men who are supposed to furnish educational leadership for the American Jewish community. They do not cling to the afternoon-school idea merely because, admittedly, there are large segments of American Jewry who are completely unprepared for the Yeshivah concept; they do not throw all their efforts into curriculum development, textbooks and all other aspects of the afternoon school, merely to make it a stepping stone to intense and inspired Torah education. If these were their motives and guiding principles, we could muster a great deal of understanding for their work—but, alas, they are unfortunately not at all willing to recognize the inescapable necessity of Jewish education to the Torah education. Thus, in the words of Avrohom Ibn Ezra’s Shabbos hymn, “the maidservant says to the true mistress, ‘no, thy son is dead and mine liveth’.” The living lesson offered by American Torah education is rejected while educators cling to decrepit formulae so admirably classified in *Judaism and the Jewish School: Communal-Hebraic-Progressive, Hebraic-Essentialist, Cultural-Progressive, Yiddish-Progressive, Communal-Hebraic-Reconstructionist, Conservative, Reform*. Truly, as the Prophet has it, “they have forsaken me, the well of fresh water, to dig for themselves broken cisterns that do not hold the water.”

The adherence to the pseudo-scientific formulae of some of the modern social scientists and the disregard for the living essence of the People of the Torah, as it is revealed in its history, is shown in the excessive preoccupation with the minutiae of educational techniques which pervades so many current Jewish educational publications. More significant still, even when efforts are made to explore our past, they do not penetrate to its real meaning but remain concerned with externals and remain unproductive. The Jewish Education Committee of New York found it appropriate recently to republish *The Jewish School, an Introduction to the History of Jewish Education*.⁵ The entire volume reflects the author’s evolutionary approach to Judaism, his acceptance of the theories of multiple composition of the *Chumash*, and of the Pharisees as the innovators of the Oral Law. Thus he declares: “The paradise story . . . reflects the mood of an age, in the remote past, when education, learning of any kind beyond that needed in the simple life of the primitive peasant, was regarded as suspect, even harmful” (p. 7). And Dr. Morris informs the reader—presumably a

5. By Dr. N. Morris (New York, 1964; J.E.C. Press, \$3.50), originally issued in London in 1937.

future Hebrew teacher—that in early biblical times “the greater the [father’s] love, the more acceptable the [child] sacrifice and the more efficacious in gaining the favor . . . of some powerful but cruel god. *This is the implication of the well-known story of the Binding of Isaac.* His escape in the nick of time was, it would seem, at least partly due to the circumstance of his being an only son” (p. 208, my italics).

WITH SUCH AN APPROACH to the *Chumash*, which completely negates its divinity and spiritual message, Dr. Morris obviously cannot discern in Jewish history and traditions the profound inner spark which has given them vitality. His elaborate and comprehensive survey of Talmudic references to Jewish education thus remains at best a competent dissection of a corpse. Given the author’s premises, his book becomes of mere antiquarian concern; we may be interested in learning something about the ancient manner of memorizing or translating, and we may even admire some of the old techniques, but we will not be able to gain a deeper understanding of Jewish education for our age. In his introduction, Dr. Morris expresses his view that “the survival of the Jew under conditions of unparalleled adversity” is neither a riddle nor a mystery but “mainly the result of a successful system of education” (p. xxvi). I am afraid that the reader of his book, while he may be impressed with a few features of ancient Jewish education, will hardly understand how it could account for Jewish survival. What gave Jewish education its meaning and impact was the very point the anti-traditional educator fails to understand: *the revelation and acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, and the daily reliving of this overpowering experience by the child.*⁶ It is ultimately this experience which furnishes the Jew with a basis for integrating his self with the forces which he encounters in the world, intellectually as well as psychically, through commitment to the will of G-d, who is at the same time his Father and the Master of the universe.

II

IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE very emphatic about this point, for it marks the difference between the living force of Torah education and the ineffective surrogates offered in its place—neither curriculum, nor methods, nor language of instruction, nor even a day-school-type program make the difference *per se*. This is not to belittle the importance of these and other factors—but they are only meaningful in the context of a full commitment to G-d and Torah. This has not always been clearly understood, even in traditional circles. Because the Day

6. Compare the Talmudic passage (*Kiddushin*, 30a) which likens the instruction of one’s children to a daily renewed “standing at Sinai,” and the Talmudic injunction that the Torah must be studied in the same spirit of awe, fear and trembling, in which it was received at Sinai. (*Beruchos*, 22a)

School is obviously the only school form permitting maximal Torah study; because most day schools have been created under Torah auspices; and because Orthodoxy has had to carry on the battle for recognition of the day schools, there has been a tendency unthinkingly to identify the progress of the Day School movement with the progress of Torah education. This is unfortunately not correct; there can be, and unfortunately are, institutions which are patterned on the Day School model and yet lack the spirit and orientation which characterize the living Torah institution. For illustration, we need only turn once more to Dr. Alvin Schiff’s survey of the Day School in America.

It is an extremely well-written work, containing a wealth of information never before assembled in one place. Anybody concerned with the Day School in its educational, fiscal, or communal aspects, will find this book of great value. At the same time, it has limitations. Most of these seem to me to stem from the fact that the author’s associations have been essentially with Yeshiva University and with the Jewish Education Committee which published the book.⁷ But more serious than any of these shortcomings, important though it is to note them, is the author’s treatment of the Day Schools as essentially *one* movement. He distinguishes the various types, ranging all the way from Chassidic to Solomon Schechter schools, but they all share in the accolade given to the Day School cause as “the surest method of insuring American Jewry’s creative continuity” (p. 249). He notes the spread of the Conservative day schools—and the increasing agitation for Reform schools—and poses the fiscal and enrolment

7. Dr. Schiff is more than explicit about the contributions of these institutions to the Day School cause, but does not do justice to the uniqueness of the role played by, say, Rabbi Mendlowitz and his followers, by the Torah Vodaath network of institutions, or by Lakewood and its five satellite Mesivots; none of these are dealt with correctly and adequately. This may simply be the result of the author’s being insufficiently acquainted with the *wider* yeshiva scene (thus, for example, he lists as a recently founded teacher training institution the Esther Schonfeld Teachers Seminary, which is associated with the JEC, but does not seem to know about the Yavneh Seminary in Cleveland and the Rika Breuer Seminary in New York). More serious is the way in which the author’s associations have affected his approach to basic Day School issues. He hedges on the crucial question of Federal Aid; while choosing to remain silent on the violent and destructive opposition of the AAJE (of which the JEC is a constituent agency), he gives the impression that *Orthodoxy* is profoundly divided on the issue, and concludes that greater help by Jewish Welfare Funds is the best solution—as if this were a solution generally agreed to be preferable. On the role of the JEC in the Day School movement he gives the impression that Torah Umesorah works nationally while the JEC is *the* accepted local agency for New York schools, and he mentions only one instance of a Yeshiva refusing to cooperate with the JEC on ideological grounds; the profound ideological reservations existing in actual fact have been highlighted—presumably since Dr. Schiff’s manuscript was completed—by the formal decision of *most* New York Yeshivos to be represented even locally in all matters except the ongoing lunch program only by Torah Umesorah and not the JEC. Similarly, the book contains no reference to Torah Umesorah’s teacher licensing system, which is not recognized by the JEC.

problems of competing schools in small communities. But obviously there is more involved here than just technical problems. There is a vital need for drawing a clear distinction between Torah institutions on one hand and schools, on the other hand, which merely represent a more effective propagation of futile approaches. In surveying the Day School scene, we cannot lump all day schools together, and assess in general terms their achievements. We must distinguish between uncommitted schools and Orthodox schools—and we even have to distinguish, among the latter, between those which see themselves specifically as Yeshivos and Beth Jacob schools, and those which prefer to be just Day Schools.

The differences between these groups may outwardly seem minute; but, in our quest to penetrate behind formulae and externals to the inner spirit of our educational institutions, we can discern the fine points in which these schools differ from one another—and the profound educational consequences that follow from them. What are the characteristics of *Yeshiva* education? Some years ago I tried to define them in *The Jewish Parent* (June, 1965) in this manner:

It is vital that we imbue our pupils with a feeling for the sanctity of Torah study and for our obligation never to stop studying; it is vital that . . . we stress the centrality of religious experience and practice for the Jew, and the demands they make on him; it is vital that we teach a pattern of life based wholeheartedly on the religious directives of the *Shulchan Aruch*, and show their applicability to modern life.

Our basic premises have ruled out a pallid pattern of education where every social and educational technique of the public schools is indiscriminately imitated; where the personal convictions and conduct of teachers is in conflict with their own teachings; where facile Hebrew self-expression is considered more important than the content of Torah study; where the Talmud becomes a plaything for coeducational classes; where there is a failure to prepare either the boys or the girls for the particular mission that the Torah assigns to them within a truly Jewish society; where not only coeducation but dancing, dating and all the other social morés of our time are the accepted rule.

These practices are naturally wrong because they are deviations from the way of the Torah. Moreover, even from a purely *practical* viewpoint, it is only those schools abiding by the true standards of Torah education which can *really* inspire our youngsters, make the experience of Sinai come alive again for them, and thus vouchsafe the future of our people. To these schools—and to these schools alone—can the eloquent words of Dr. Berkson, quoted above, truly be applied. YET A SURVEY of the American Jewish educational scene cannot really conclude on this note. We must

not give the impression, to ourselves or to others, that within *our* bailiwick everything is fine. Possession of the *correct* formula for Jewish education does not automatically assure its actual realization. The truth is that, while we may be clear about the ideal to be pursued, we are still far from having attained it—despite the successes we have had. I do not only think of all the children that we ought to have drawn into our institutions, and whom we have not reached. I do not only refer to all the day schools which, by guidance and perseverance, we could have turned into dynamic Yeshivos and Beth Jacob Schools, and which meanwhile proceed on their old uninspired and uninspiring course. I mean, above all, the shortcomings within our own schools which deserve constant scrutiny.

Do our teachers have the personal relationship with their pupils that is a necessary condition of successful guidance? Do we pay them in such a manner that they do not have to be overburdened by the search for side income and can concentrate on their task? Do we accord them the status and respect which they must have in the eyes of both parents and students?

Do our principals have the time and free hand to concentrate on teacher guidance, school supervision, and curriculum development? Do we provide differential curricula for the gifted, and for those slower learners who, under 'normal' circumstances, will emerge from their school career without any significant gain in evidence?

What do we do about the spirit of our institutions? Do we provide those all-important functions like *Minyan*, *Mishmar*, etc. which fix the character of a Yeshiva? Do we provide opportunities for the students, on Shabbos, Yom Tov and also at other times, to express themselves in appropriate Torah activities? Do our General Studies departments exist in splendid and competitive isolation, or are they taken under the wings of the Torah spirit which must be the central force in a Torah institution? Do we guide our students to spend their summers in pursuit rather than in contravention of the Torah principles which we preach through the school year?

Many more related questions could be posed, to highlight the many areas in which our institutions may be vulnerable. A good many of the weaknesses that it needs no study to reveal, are the result of the intolerable lack of money that afflicts our schools, or of the lack of time and peace of mind of our administrators, in consequence of the perennial financial crises. But there are also areas which depend exclusively upon our clearheaded understanding of the real meaning of Torah education. We can deem ourselves fortunate indeed that we perceive this real meaning, instead of being misled by superficial substitute approaches; but this very knowledge imposes upon us a heavier responsibility to act upon it with forcefulness and dedication. □

Entering Our Third Year

A Restatement of Objectives and Reaction to Our Critics

WITH THIS ISSUE, WE ENTER THE THIRD YEAR OF publication of THE JEWISH OBSERVER, and again we feel the need to restate and examine our goals and objectives.

A publication is not born full-grown. Its parents may have many plans and hopes for their infant child, but only a constant willingness to look at one's child can help to determine where the child is going and what we may expect of him. The hopes that are vague at birth begin to crystalize when we have had time to observe the youngster's performance and estimate more accurately its potential.

When the Jew enters a *Bais Haknesses* he recites the words of the prophet Bilam: *Mah tovu oholecha Yaakov*, "How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov." Often these words are engraved on the wall of the Schul. We all want to see the goodness of our own people just as we want the world to recognize the goodness of G-d's Chosen People.

But another prophet spoke to the Jewish people in less endearing terms, and perhaps these words too should be engraved on the walls of our Houses of Worship:

Woe to those that call evil good and good evil; that would have us believe that darkness is light, and light darkness. They would make bitter out to be sweet and sweet to be bitter.

The warm words of *Mah Tov* were spoken by a non-Jewish prophet who spoke them with great reluctance, almost wishing they were not so. The harsh words directed against those who distorted the realities of Jewish life many centuries ago were spoken by Isaiah and are words motivated by love of G-d, devotion to His Torah, and love for and concern with the Jewish people. Certainly both of these prophetic statements have their place in Jewish tradition and the concepts they embody are vital stimulants to Jewish thinking.

As one looks at the Jewish scene in America today there is much to justify the words "How goodly" and also much that makes the words of Isaiah as current as the morning newspaper. A mature approach to Jewish life must be based on the realization that just as confusion and distortion do not cancel out the good, so too, is the confusion and distortion not canceled out by the good.

In the early stages of THE JEWISH OBSERVER, we have felt the need to state for the record in firm tones

the thinking of an independent Orthodoxy, in the hope that we could clarify for our readers in a reasoned manner the boundaries which our time has forced upon the entire community of Jews. Our critics have suggested that we have been too negative, even destructive at times, but negativism and even destructiveness are relative terms and cannot *ipso facto* be labeled wrong. For example, to destroy something on Shabbos is not deemed to be an act of *m'lochoh* (work) and by Torah law is considered *kilkul*—not a constructive act and therefore not a desecration of Shabbos. But . . . if the aim of the destructive act is to make it possible to build, it becomes *m'leches machseves*, a constructive act, and therefore is forbidden on Shabbos. If we have been critical, negative, it has been in this spirit of striking out at the negativism of those "who would make bitter out to be sweet and sweet to be bitter."

Our Editorial Consensus

THE JEWISH OBSERVER is not a newspaper coldly reporting the facts. We are not objective; we are a journal of opinion. Most periodicals, even those which give the widest latitude to their writers, confine themselves to a clearly-defined editorial consensus. A left-wing journal is not likely to open its columns to right-wingers; a right-wing publication will not play host to left-wing thinkers. Even a middle-of-the road journal will not veer too sharply from the middle of the road.

What is our editorial frame of reference? We believe that the Almighty revealed His Torah to the Jewish people who were chosen to carry G-d's light to the world. We believe that the Torah scholars of each generation, imbued with knowledge of Torah and love for Torah, are the sole arbiters of authentic Jewish thinking on all matters relating to religious practice and religious thinking.

We claim no special privileges for living in accordance with this belief; we do feel privileged to have survived as believing Jews in a world which grows ever more hostile to traditional beliefs.

To some this smacks of snobbishness or even conceit. We, however, feel most humble in our belief and hardly adequate to be the spokesmen for this belief. But believe we do and it has fallen to our lot to speak these beliefs—and speak we must.

Some have said to us: "You fellows think you have all the answers." We don't have all the answers, but

there are some questions we *can* answer. We know that belief in Torah and dedication to its teaching is the basic ingredient of Jewishness and Jewish life. We do not have solutions to all the problems that beset the Jewish people, but we do know—this is a function of our firm belief—that any solution which does not proceed from the centrality of Torah as revealed on Sinai, while it may appear to be momentarily effective, can have no lasting value.

We may at times choose to defend our belief in *Torah MiSinai*; we may at times attempt to refute the argumentation of those who believe that Jewishness and Jewish life are possible without Sinai—but essentially our belief needs no defense—like our fathers and grandfathers before us we have staked our lives on this belief which we must constantly strengthen rather than defend.

It is this belief which provides the only key to Jewish survival; it is given certainty by Jewish historical experience. Even those who deny this, should realize that this belief—which is much more intense than political, social or economic beliefs, merits at least the respect of any such partisan belief, by those who disagree with these beliefs. We resent those who would dismiss us by the reckless device of labeling us “fanatics,” “fundamentalists,” or “ultra-Orthodox.” If one must use labels we might choose to be known as “life-and-death Jews.” We are prepared to make every sacrifice to live as Jews; we are ready to accept death in the face of any attempt to forcibly separate us from our Torah.

If we are at times harsh with those Jewish leaders who would repeal the eternal truths for which many of our ancestors gave their lives willingly, it stems from our belief that these leaders thereby discredit our sainted martyrs and jeopardize the souls of those they lead, together with all Jews.

An Angry Reader

In October we received a letter from an angry reader which opened with these words:

“Directly before Yom Kippur, I received the Elul issue of THE JEWISH OBSERVER and was appalled at the bitterness and the vicious hatred which spewed from your article on the eve of the Holy Day. . . .

“To declare, as you do, that the non-Orthodox are the ‘enemies of Torah,’ is to demonstrate not only your lack of understanding of Jewish learning and your complete abandonment of the true principles of Jewish unity, but to set yourself tragically, and all who think like you, in the ranks of those whom History will forget—as others were forgotten—whose energies were devoted to destroying the concept of *כלל ישראל*.”

We are ready to stand accused of “lack of understanding of Jewish learning,” but if we stand so accused

the charges must also be brought against other Jews who are no longer among the living. We must call to the bar of justice *Moshe Rabeinu* who taught that the Torah which he received from Sinai is an eternal Law for Israel, not a single word or letter of which could ever be changed; we must call the Sages of the Talmud whose teachings were based on their immutable belief that they were the instruments of G-d when they expounded the laws and beliefs of the Torah. Our reader’s accusation must be hurled at the *Rambam* (Maimonides) who taught that a Jew must be capable of declaring: “I believe with complete faith that this Torah [received on Sinai] will never be replaced; that there will never be another Torah emanating from the Creator, may His Name be blessed.” And we must make this charge against Saadia Gaon who proclaimed that “The Jewish people is a people *only* by virtue of its Torah.”

“Principles of Jewish Unity”

And what are these “true principles of Jewish unity”? When and where in Jewish history, which our angry reader calls to witness, have Jewish leaders ever proclaimed that *Klal Yisroel* must recognize the legitimacy of those who deny the Divinity of Torah and thereby themselves create the most dangerous breach in the ranks of *Klal Yisroel*? The anarchist who rejects the validity of a human society and seeks to undermine it, has no cause for complaint when that society rejects his bid for leadership. It is even simpler than that—our reader might do well to glance at a fifth-grade textbook of the ‘New-Math.’ *Klal Yisroel* historically is a set of human beings who stood at Sinai and accepted the Torah. One may choose to be a member of another set of Jews who reject Sinai, but he is then mathematically excluded from the other set and no appeal to History or “true principles of Jewish unity” can gain him admission to the set—only a commitment to *Torah MiSinai* can open the door to the set which is *Klal Yisroel*.

Most non-Orthodox Jews—and some who are Orthodox—fail completely to keep in mind that it is the Reformers and the “Conservers” who breached the walls of Jewish unity. Who ever heard in the past of a Jew without Shabbos, of a Jew who could attend a “Jewish Dinner” and eat shrimp cocktail and baked ham? Yet when we refuse to accept the warm hand of friendship which bids us enter that new set of Jews, it is we who are deemed to be destroyers of Jewish unity. We find it intriguing that Jews who would have nothing to do with the John Birch Society because it is opposed to basic American beliefs, expect Orthodox Jews to join hands with those who reject the most basic Jewish beliefs. Pretending, as some are fond of doing, that what divides us is not nearly so important as what

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unites us, is to play a dangerous game in which neither side can win.

A serious breach exists among American Jews and for everyone's sake we must recognize it. Take this case in point. Last October was celebrated by Hadassah, the women's Zionist organization, as "Youth Aliyah Month." Thousands of Jewish women throughout America attended luncheons and dinners sponsored by their local chapters telling them how wonderful they are for supporting the work of Youth Aliyah which has brought thousands of Jewish children to Israel from lands where their lives were endangered. No doubt many a tear was wrung from the hearts of good Jewish mothers whose compassion for a Jewish child welled up within them.

Yet, for an Orthodox Jew, the words Youth Aliyah bring a chill to his spine—if it brings a tear to his eye it is for a different reason. The words remind him of the thousands of Jewish children whose fathers and mothers suffered to raise them as G-d fearing Jews, and who were told by Youth Aliyah officials that when they touch down on the holy soil of Eretz Yisroel, they no longer need observe mitzvohs, they no longer need be the kind of Jews their parents insisted they be in the dark lands of the Gola.

Jewish "Journalism"

Were any of the ladies sipping tea at a Hadassah luncheon told about *these* children? We think that if they were told—they would care, and they would cry together with the Orthodox Jew—and we want to tell them. Another case in point. When the *Tchebiner Rav* (see page 15) one of the most important men of our generation died in Jerusalem, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency did not see fit to refer to his death in their news bulletin. This means that the entire network of English-Jewish newspapers published in America, which depends entirely on JTA to fill their news columns, carried no reference to the passing of this great Jew. We can think of no parallel in American secular life for such an omission—and this is typical of Jewish "journalism."

It is not here our purpose to discuss all of the causes of this breach in American Jewish life, but it will not go away if we pretend that it isn't there.

Some of our readers who are more sympathetic to the basic positions of THE JEWISH OBSERVER, have asked why we continue to harp on these differences, why in almost every issue we have some harsh words to say about our non-Orthodox brothers. If one reads the vast amount of newspapers, magazines, bulletins, releases and other printed matter produced by those who are unfriendly to Orthodoxy—we do—it would be clear that Orthodoxy is the target of a vast offensive against all that is holy to us. Each issue of THE OB-

SERVER could be easily filled if we attempted to react to every instance in which we are being shot at; it seems only proper that we make some attempt to reply so that our readers at least, should be made aware of the Orthodox positions.

In the two years we have been publishing, the response of our readers, the reactions of our critics and the realities of Jewish life, have reinforced our belief that there is a need for THE JEWISH OBSERVER, so that the one-sided picture which even many Orthodox Jews are exposed to should be counteracted in some measure.

Our Purposes

But the purposes of THE JEWISH OBSERVER go beyond simply counteracting the negativism and hostility of forces in Jewry which are opposed to the centrality of Torah in Jewish life. We feel that in the two years of our existence we have reflected our abiding interest in the following major themes of a vibrant Orthodoxy.

- The growth of Torah institutions and a growing appreciation for study of Torah as a constant obligation and need of every adult Jew, going beyond the sometimes frivolous and shallow activity which passes as "Adult Education."

- The importance of individual growth in the realm of the *nes homo*, and the basic nature of that body of Torah law which governs man's relationships with his fellow man.

- The importance of an organized Orthodoxy which can meet the daily challenges thrust at Torah in an effective manner.

- The need for Orthodoxy to react to legislative and governmental matters from a Torah perspective, independently of those groups who are not motivated by Torah concerns in making their claims and presentations to official government agencies.

- The importance of reacting to the problems of relationships with the non-Jewish world from the perspective of Torah and the experiences and teachings of the past.

- The realization that the upheavals the Jewish people have experienced and the tensions and fears which plague all mankind point strongly to the imminence of the coming of *Moshiach*—a realization which must influence our thinking in all areas of Jewish life.

- The willingness to examine the weaknesses of the Torah community as a means of strengthening every force which has the capacity to contribute to the growth of Torah and Yiddishkeit among the masses of American Jews.

We can best sum up these themes as being the

present-day re-enactment of *Kabolas Hatorah*; of creating within ourselves and all Jews who seek the Truth of Torah, the willingness to accept the Torah and to permit it to be our guide in our own lives and in the life of *Klal Yisroel*.

In many old *siddurim* there is a תפלה קודם התפלה, a prayer to be read before praying (which is unfortunately omitted from most new editions). The Jew

asks of G-d that He assist him in formulating his petitions and that his intentions should be properly articulated. In this spirit we pray to the Almighty that He will guide us in making our publication a medium for creating closeness to G-d and to His Torah; that we may be spared from misuse of the instrument of the written word and that we may merit the achievement of those goals and objectives which we earnestly seek.

Yaakov Jacobs

Communicating Torah

Behold days are coming, says the Lord G-d, when I will send a hunger in the land; not a hunger for bread nor a thirst for water, but to hear the words of G-d. AMOS 8:11

And you shall write upon the stones all the words of the Torah, clearly explained. DEUT. 27:8

. . . in seventy languages. SOTAH 36a

PERHAPS NO GREATER CHALLENGE FACES AMERICAN Orthodoxy than to communicate the words of the Torah to the many American Jews who have been disinherited from Torah, and whose souls thirst for the refreshing waters of Torah.

The Torah itself provides the most effective means for communicating Torah: *Limud Hatorah*, the study of Torah, which is the obligation of every Jew in every time and at all times. Study of Torah places the Jew in direct communication with G-d, teaching him the Divine Will and helping him to come closer to his G-d. But *Limud Hatorah* requires that the Jew must first understand that his life depends on Torah study, and he must then have access to the original works of Torah.

The vast majority of Jews in America—while their souls thirst for Torah—are not consciously aware of their need for Torah. A smaller group, whose need for Torah learning has already entered their consciousness, is unable to satisfy this need in any significant way, or is being misled to believe that their need is being met.

IT IS A TRUISM THAT TRANSLATING THE TORAH INTO a foreign tongue is not adequate to communicating Torah. Yet for many years to come it will be necessary to communicate with our disinherited brothers in the English language.

The problem of translating, or in the modern idiom, communicating thoughts originally expressed in one language, in another language, is of course not unique to Torah—except in one sense. A. F. Tytler in his

classic "Essay on the Principles of Translation" suggests this criteria for adequate translation: "*That the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.*" From this general rule he concludes that a translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work; that the style of writing should be of the same character as the original, and that the translation should have all the ease of the original composition. This is a challenge to any translator, but ever more so to one who wishes to communicate the teachings of Torah.

But perhaps the most rigorous demand that Tytler makes upon the would-be translator is expressed in his formulation that: "*The genius of the translator should be akin to that of the original author.*" While he was not discussing the problem of communicating Torah, Tytler interestingly points up the most difficult obstacle in bringing the words of Torah to one who has no access to the original, when he insists that the ability of the translator must be *akin* to that of the author of the original. It is for this reason that Judaism has accepted as authentic only those translations done by men who were gifted with *Ruach Hakodesh*, with a genius "*akin*" to that of the Author of the original work. It is for this reason too that Judaism rejects the efforts of any Torah translator who is not firmly convinced that the author of the original is the Almighty Himself.

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