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**ELUL:  
OF TRANSITIONS &  
TRANSFORMATIONS**

**ON TRACK IN TURBULENT TIMES** RABBI AARON M. BRAFMAN  
**FROM BEAR STEARNS TO *BAVA METZIA*** ANDREW J. NEFF  
**FROM *KOLLEL* TO THE WORKPLACE** YOSI HEBER

ALSO: **INSPIRED BY RABBI BORUCH BORCHARDT, זצ"ל**  
**NEITHER HEKHSHER, NOR TZEDEK** RABBI AVI SHAFRAN



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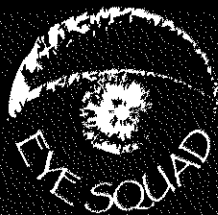
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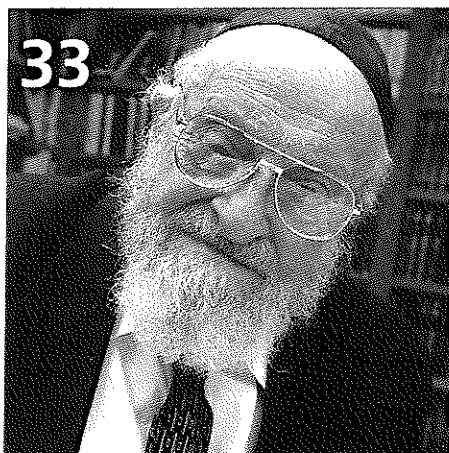
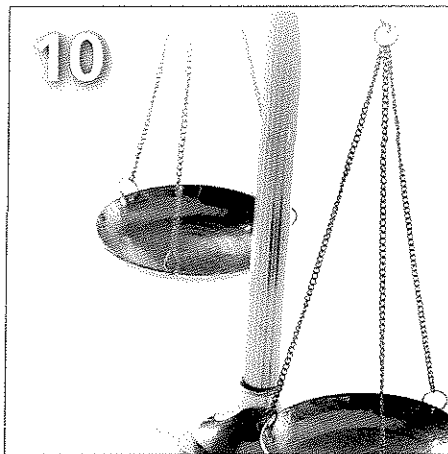
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COVER KOSHEL PHOTO: Yehuda Boltshauser

### CORRECTION

In Yitzchak Brandriss's "Personal Reminiscences" on Rabbi Alter Chanoch Henach Liebowitz, זצ"ל, in the Summer '08 JO, his first reference to the *Rosh Hayeshiva* was meant to be followed by *הב"מ*. Unfortunately it was misspelled. The letters stand for the expression *הריני כפרת משכבו* – literally, "I am atonement for his resting place" – reserved for one's parents and rav during the first year of their passing, as per *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Dei'a*, 242:28.

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# UNITY IS NOT ON THE HORIZON

## BOTH RELIGIOUS ... YET DISTINCT

LAMENTS ABOUT THE LACK OF UNITY among mitzvah observant Jews in *Eretz Yisroel* are nothing new. But they took on new force after the slaughter of eight yeshiva students, in the midst of their studies, at Mercaz HaRav in March, on *Rosh Chodesh Adar Sheini*.

Calls for greater unity between the Chareidi and national religious populations, however, are more frequently heard in *chutz la'Aretz* than in *Eretz Yisroel*, where they tend to be viewed as hopeless utopianism.

There are, of course, points of contact between the National Religious and Chareidi worlds. Many families can claim cousins and even siblings in both worlds. During the *Simchas Beis Hasho'eva* celebrations in Toldos Aharon and at the Mosad HaRav Kook book fare, *kippot serugot* and black hats mingle easily. There are prominent figures in the Chareidi world who have large followings in the national religious community, and even one who regularly gives *shiurim* in a *hesder* yeshiva.

Yet, for the most part, the two religious communities remain quite distinct. The demonstrations that attract Chareidim generally do not attract the national religious, and vice versa. Recent discussions about unifying the right-wing religious bloc before the next elections did not include the Chareidi

parties; nor did it occur to anyone that they might.

Points of tension between the two worlds are abundant. More than twenty years ago, the national religious educational system purged Chareidi teachers. Once, the Chief Rabbinate was viewed as the almost exclusive province of the national religious world. Today, it is more frequently (and exaggeratedly) described as Chareidi-controlled.

### THE PIVOTAL POINT:

#### THE STATE

The fundamental division between the two worlds remains theological, and focuses on the question: What is the significance of the creation of the State of Israel? Is it *reishit tzmichat geulateinu* – the first flowering of the Redemption – or theologically indeterminate? The different answers to that question, it turns out, have profound implications even for the interpretation of the most basic mitzvos.

In June, for example, Rabbi Avichai Ronsky, the Chief Rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces, accompanied troops on a Shabbos mission in Gaza. In response to criticism of his actions (some of it from within the national religious world itself), Rabbi Ronsky replied with an analogy. He likened himself to the *kohein meshuach milchama*, who accompanied Jewish troops into battle. He did not defend his presence in terms of *pikuach nefesh* – IDF missions, after all, are routinely conducted without the presence of a rabbi – but solely in terms of his ability to lift the spirits of the troops so that they would fight better.

Rabbi Ronsky's ready analogy of the IDF to the armies of Yehoshua and *Dovid Hamelech* and himself to the *kohein meshuach milchama* reflects a traditional national religious cast of mind, which tends to view the modern State of Israel as a renewed Jewish kingdom. It is safe to say that the analogy between the chief rabbi of the IDF and the *kohein meshuach milchama* is not one that would have occurred to any Chareidi *poseik*.

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## THE CONVERSION ISSUE

In no area, however, has the chasm between the halachic approaches of the national religious and Chareidi worlds been more evident, over a period of decades, than that of conversion. There is a long tradition in the national religious world of factoring ideological considerations into the conversion process.

In the famous Seidman case, for instance, then Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren "converted" a woman who said openly that she saw no need for an Orthodox conversion and had no intention of becoming mitzvah observant. He did so in order to forestall passage of a civil marriage law in the Knesset. Protecting the Chief Rabbinate's monopoly over marriage was important from the point of view of national religious ideology because the Chief Rabbinate's exclusive authority buttressed the claim that Israel is a "Jewish State."

In the same vein, Rabbi Goren and officials at Yeshiva University tried to convince the Reform and Conservative movements to stop pressing for recognition of Reform and Conservative converts in Israel in the late '80s. They proposed instead a system of joint conversion panels. Under the proposal, the Reform and Conservative movements could recommend candidates to a panel made up of Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox representatives. But the actual conversion would be overseen by an Orthodox *beis din*.

Obviously, the only incentive for the heterodox movements to accept the proposal was the assurance that their candidates would be accepted and converted. But that could only take place if the *beis din* made no attempt to ascertain whether the heterodox candidates intended to become *shomrei mitzvos*. Again, ideological considerations were at play: Official state recognition of heterodox converts would have undercut the national religious view of Israel as the first stage towards the realization of a "Torah state."

Chief Rabbi Goren, in any event, claimed that *kabbalas ol mitzvos* is not

a requirement for conversion, and that a sincere desire to attach oneself to the Jewish people is sufficient. Thus, he developed the "novel" concept of a *geirus* that is valid only so long as the *ger* continues to live in Israel. He had this qualification written on his certificates of conversion. Were the convert to leave Israel, with its majority Jewish population, according to Chief Rabbi Goren, he would no longer be sufficiently attached to the Jewish people and his conversion would be revoked.

Already in 1984, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rabbi Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky, Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Schach, and יב"ח, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv issued a public letter stating that *kabbalas ol mitzvos* is an indispensable requirement of *geirus*, and that *batei din* dealing with *geirus* bear a heavy responsibility to assure themselves that a would-be *ger* has a sincere intention to accept the yoke of mitzvos. That letter was explicitly written in response to overwhelming evidence that most of the

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## Simcha Guidelines

### THE VORT

- The *Vort* celebration is to be discontinued. The *L'chaim* (held at the time that the engagement is announced) should also not turn into a *Vort*.

### THE WEDDING

- For typical families, only 400 invited guests may be seated at the *chassuna seuda*. (The Guidelines make provision for exceptional circumstances – see full text.)
- The *kabbolas panim* smorgasbord should be limited to basic cakes, fruit platters, a modest buffet, and the caterer's standard chicken or meat hot dishes.

- The menu for the *seuda* is limited to 3 courses followed by a regular dessert.

- No Viennese table and no bar.

### THE MUSIC

- A band may consist of a maximum of 5 musicians (one of the musicians may act as a vocalist) or four musicians and one additional vocalist.
- A one-man band is recommended.

### FLOWERS & CHUPA DECOR

- The total cost of these items for the entire wedding should not exceed \$1,800.

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*geirus* performed in Israel involved no such *kaballas ol mitzvos*.

**THE MASS IMMIGRATION FACTOR**

**A**s heated as the conversion issue has always been, it became vastly more so after the immigration to Israel which began in 1990 of between 300,000 and 500,000 non-Jews from the former Soviet Union. The sudden influx of such a huge number of non-Jews again damaged the vision of Israel as a Jewish State, and was thus a challenge to both national religious and even secular Zionist ideology. Even apart from ideological considerations, that mass immigration threatened to undermine perhaps the last remaining base of national unity – shared Jewish identity.

Both the Zionist establishment and a large swath of the national religious world viewed the mass conversion of tens of thousands of non-Jews from the FSU as a high national priority. *Jerusalem Post* religion reporter Matthew Wagner wrote, "Religious Zionists see mass conversion of tens of thousand of non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union as important in fostering national and cultural unity."

The Chareidi world also views the influx of up to half a million non-Jews

***In short, there is no rabbinical fairy dust that can be sprinkled upon tens of thousands of non-Jews to turn them into Jews. For this stance, the Chareidi world has been pilloried by religious Zionists for being oblivious to the needs of the larger Israeli society and concerned only with its own narrow self-interest.***

to Israel as a major threat to Israel. But it is not a threat that is within the power of the rabbis to solve. The miracle of a non-Jew accepting upon himself or herself the yoke of mitzvos cannot be mass-produced or subject to numerical quotas. The halachic criteria for *geirus* cannot be altered – and in the process, the very definition of what it means to be a Jew watered down – in order to solve social problems, no matter how pressing.

In short, there is no rabbinical fairy dust that can be sprinkled upon tens of thousands of non-Jews to turn them into Jews. For this stance, the Chareidi world has been pilloried by religious Zionists for being oblivious to the needs of the larger Israeli society and concerned only with its own narrow self-interest.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made the shortening and easing of the conversion process a centerpiece of national policy from 2003 on, and in pursuit of that goal left the Chareidi parties out of his governing coalition. In September 2003, he announced the creation of a new Conversion Authority, which would be located in the Prime Minister's Office, not the Chief Rabbinate, and would be headed by Rabbi Chaim Druckman, a former National Religious Party Knesset member and head of a hesder yeshiva.

Sharon gave the Conversion Authority the specific mandate to increase the number of conversions annually. Around the same time, the Prime Minister called for a separate conversion fast track in the army. The Jewish Agency also set up a four-week conversion course in Eastern Europe for immigrants before they arrived in Israel. Finally, government-funded joint conversion institutes, with teachers from the heterodox movements as well, were created.

All these initiatives had as their explicit goal a dramatic increase in the number of converts, and all depended for their success on the active support of national religious rabbis. But equally obviously, the requirement of *kaballas ol mitzvos* would have to be fudged somehow for the quotas to be met – either by the *beis din* denying that the acceptance of the yoke of mitzvos is a requirement for conversion or by contenting itself with a pro forma declaration of intent by the would-be convert. If the national religious world believes that it is possible to bring tens of thousands of non-Jews to full *kaballas ol mitzvos* in short order, it would have to explain why it has been able to produce only a few hundred *ba'alei teshuva* over the past twenty years from among those born Jewish.

**NO CONVERSION, NO GET NEEDED**

**T**he depth of the division between the Chareidi and national religious worlds over conversion was brought into sharp relief in May when the *Beis Din Hagadol* of the Chief Rabbinate upheld the ruling of an Ashdod *beis din* that a particular woman did not need a *get* because she had never properly converted.

The woman in question had been converted by a *beis din* headed by Rabbi Chaim Druckman, the current head of the National Conversion Authority. Rabbi Avraham Sherman, writing the majority opinion of the *Beis Din Hagadol*, upheld the conclusion of the Ashdod *beis din* on the grounds that there had been no sincere *kaballas ol mitzvos* on the part of the woman in question.

But he did not stop there. Rabbi Sherman also upheld the earlier *beis*

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*din's* conclusion that Rabbi Druckman is not fit to sit on a *beis din* in cases of *geirus*. He did so on the basis of an extensive pattern of Rabbi Druckman's converts not becoming *shomrei mitzvos*. That pattern, Rabbi Sherman concluded, established that the *batei din* headed by Rabbi Druckman had made insufficient efforts to ascertain that the candidates intended to become *shomrei mitzvos*. That is also known to be the opinion of the *poseik hador*, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv.

Rabbi Sherman concluded that the *dayanim* on those *batei din* were in violation of the Torah prohibition of *lifnei iveir* (putting a stumbling block before a person "blind" to a situation) by converting those whom it had made inadequate efforts to ascertain if they were sincere in their *kaballas ol mitzvos*—*lifnei iveir* both with respect to the *ger* himself and with respect to the larger Jewish *kehilla* into which he would be entering as a Jew.

The repeated violations of *lifnei iveir*, particularly in their work as *dayanim*, rendered them unfit *dayanim*, according to Rabbi Sherman. He further cited uncontroverted evidence that Rabbi Druckman had signed certificates of conversion attesting to his presence at *geiruyim* abroad when he was in fact in Israel. Rabbi Sherman's ruling effectively cast a shadow over hundreds of *geirim* converted in *geiruyim* supervised by Rabbi Druckman, at least some of whom are *shomrei mitzvos*.

Rabbi Sherman did not write that Rabbi Druckman was a bad person or ill-intentioned — just misguided. Indeed, the strongest argument that he could marshal for upholding Rabbi Druckman's conversions — albeit one that he ultimately rejected — was: "Because the *batei din* think that they are doing a mitzvah, and that they have interpreted the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *poskim* better than all the *gedolim* and *poskim* of the generation, and perhaps they believe that they have the power to uproot a positive commandment from the Torah when there is a great need, and their error rests on the fact that they saw rabbis from the previous

generation acting with *hefkeirus* in the matter [probably a reference to Rabbi Goren — ed.] ..., therefore they are inadvertent sinners and they do not have the status of a *beis din pasul*."

Just how great the tensions created by the *p'sak* of the *Beis Din Hagadol* are of the Chief Rabbinate was evident at a conference at Mosad Harav Kook in the first week of Av. Rabbi Sherman was scheduled to speak on the responsibility of the *beis din* in the *geirus* process. But before he could even begin, supporters

of Rabbi Druckman were on their feet shouting and unfurling banners.

Eventually a temporary calm was restored, and Rabbi Sherman spoke. Sensing the tension in the air, I left at that point. But *Ha'aretz* reported that a brawl subsequently broke out.

On the way home, I passed by Mercaz HaRav, just a few hundred yards down the road. Rarely had the brief flicker of feelings of closeness after the terrible tragedy there just a few months earlier seemed further away. □

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RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

# Neither Hekhsher, Nor Tzedek



According to *Chazal* (*Nedarim*, 40a), ideas that on the surface seem entirely constructive can in truth be quite the opposite. A contemporary case in point is the effort calling itself “Hekhsher Tzedek,” or “Justice Certification.”

Conceived by the rabbi of a Conservative congregation, and now endorsed by that movement’s rabbinic arm, the Hekhsher’s promoters insist that it is not really a *hekhsher*, or *kashrus* certification, at all. It is, rather, an “enhancement” of such certification, an indication that a kosher product was also “made in compliance with a set of social justice criteria.”

Needless to say, a *kashrus* certifier certainly has a right, and in many cases, a responsibility, to ensure that a food producing company or food service establishment seeking its certification hew not only to the laws of *kashrus*, but to other requirements of halacha. Thus, a bakery that is open on Shabbos, a slaughterhouse that violates the dictates of *tza’ar ba’alei chayim*, or a restaurant where *tzeniut* is lacking would all be rightfully subject to a *machshir’s*

insistence that the business bring itself within the bounds of halacha.

And, of course, there are “social justice” issues, too, like the forbiddance of an employer to withhold workers’ wages, that are of no less concern to halacha. Tellingly, though, only that category of extra-*kashrus* concerns, and animal welfare, seem of interest to the purveyors of the planned “Hekhsher Tzedek.”

## BRAVE NEW “JUST AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD”

More telling still is that even in the realm of “social justice,” the advocates of the proposed non-*hekhsher hekhsher* seek less to ensure compliance with halacha than to supplant it with a broader social agenda of their own choosing.

Which explains why those advocates turned to a “social research” firm, KLS Research and Analytics – whose self-described mission is to effect “greater corporate accountability and, ultimately, a more just and sustainable world” – to create the document setting down the

conditions for awarding the “Hekhsher Tzedek.”

The resulting seven pages lay down a “strict set of standards” relating to “Wages and Benefits; Employee Health and Safety/Relations/Training; Product Development; Corporate Transparency and Integrity; and Environmental Impact.” Evaluation of companies, it explains, will be based on data collected from, among other sources, “governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the media.”

“Non-governmental organizations” would conceivably include groups like “People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals,” or PETA; and “the media” – well, we all know what sort of exemplars of responsibility that word encompasses.

## UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES AND MISCHIEF MAKING

We American Jews are fortunate to live in a *malchus* that is not only one of *chessed*, but of laws. And among those laws are more

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than a few that govern many of the areas into which the "Hekhsher Tzedek" seeks to insinuate itself. Federal and state labor regulations cover wages, safety, animal welfare, employees' rights, and much else. There are, moreover, secular laws covering areas that halacha may not explicitly address. In those cases, the principle of *dina demalchusa dina* requires Jews to respect the temporal law, and its violation perforce constitutes a violation of halacha.

Thus, laws, halacha and otherwise, are already in place to ensure proper treatment of workers, consumers, animals and the environment, and ignoring any of them renders a company subject to punitive action by federal and state agencies. To the extent that an envisioned new "badge of approval" simply reiterates those requirements, it is superfluous. And where it aims to go further, beyond halachic and/or governmental strictures, it overreaches, and can serve only to make mischief.

The proposed "ethical" certification, in fact, would require or favor (and, puzzlingly, only for producers of kosher food, not any other businesses) things that the law does not require, like an unspecified number of paid vacation days, pension plans, "positive relations with unions," "proactive efforts to have a diverse workforce," non-mandatory environmental management systems, and much else. However nice those things may sound, they have no place as the subjects of even a quasi-*hechsher*. What is more, their implementation— with companies paying not only for the new requirements but for the new certification itself — would raise already high prices for kosher food, driving some consumers away from kosher food, and likely putting companies out of business (and their employees, of course, out of work) — see opening paragraph. And one may ask if conservative synagogues and organizations maintain these standards of "kashrus" for their own menial employees.

THE PLOT THICKENS

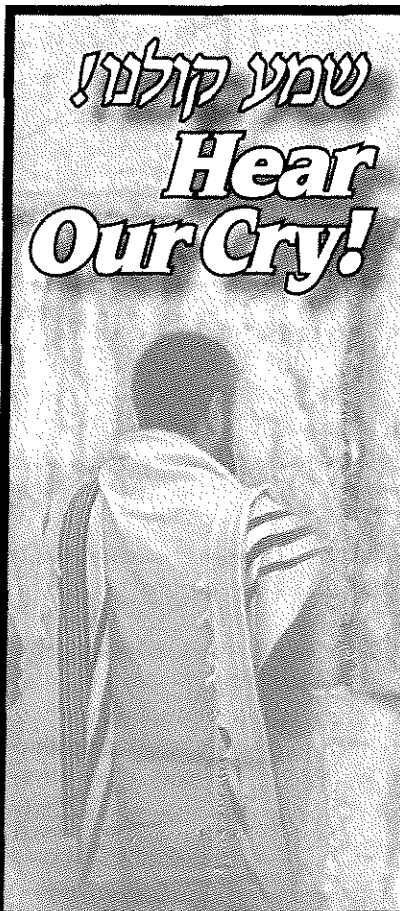
Finally, according to the document, "essential" for any company seeking to qualify for the "Hekhsher Tzedek" will be its "willingness to enter into dialogue with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), the Rabbinical Assembly (RA), and their partners."

Those, of course, would be the congregational and rabbinic groups, respec-

tively, of the Jewish movement that has, through its creative "*halachic* process," effectively erased entire *pesukim* from the Torah, and led the vast majority of its synagogues' members — our precious Jewish brothers and sisters — to abandon entire portions of the *Shulchan Aruch* with "rabbinic approval."

And that is the movement now presenting itself as the arbiter of a "higher standard" for companies producing or selling kosher food.

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## Even in the realm of "social justice," the advocates of the proposed non-hekhsheh hekhsheh seek less to ensure compliance with halacha than to supplant it with a broader social agenda of their own choosing.

Here, of course, lies the key to the matter. Only a naïf could miss the real motivation for the Conservative movement's recent front-burner of its Justice Certification. It is a bald attempt to portray itself as something other than dwindling and desperate. The movement's loss of members over past years and its embarrassing jettisoning of yet another *passuk* of late (this most recent one sacrificed to contemporary society's increasing approval of "alternate lifestyles") have left it with a well deserved intensified identity crisis.

As Gary Rosenblatt, the editor of the *New York Jewish Week*, politely put it: "This is just the kind of moral issue that could inspire and reinvigorate Conservative Jewry, which has lost members and been divided internally for the last few years ..."

Whether the project has the ability, despite all else, to inspire and invigorate the Conservative movement is uncertain, to put it gently. What is clear, though, is that the movement sensed, and seized, a golden opportunity created by the media's relentless assault on Agriprocessors, the embattled kosher slaughterhouse and meatpacker based in Postville, Iowa.

**BLOOD IN THE WATER**

The Conservative rabbi who conceived of the ethical "enhancement" of *kashrus* was inspired by a report in the *Forward* in 2006 that portrayed the Agriprocessors plant as rife with harassment, abuse and bribery. Although after his own visit to the plant, the rabbi admitted to *The New York Times* that "We weren't able to verify everything" that the *Forward* had reported, he insisted that he had discovered "indignities." He cited lower wages than those offered by unionized meatpacking plants, safety training only in English, and a single-option health care plan for \$50 a week per family.

Although the "abuse" seemed something less than truly abusive, the sharks, so to speak, smelled blood in the water. Before long, the Conservative rabbinic arm endorsed the "Justice Certification."

Then, this past May, Agriprocessors was the subject of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid during which hundreds of illegal immigrant workers were arrested. Some of those in custody leveled accusations of mistreatment of workers, and the

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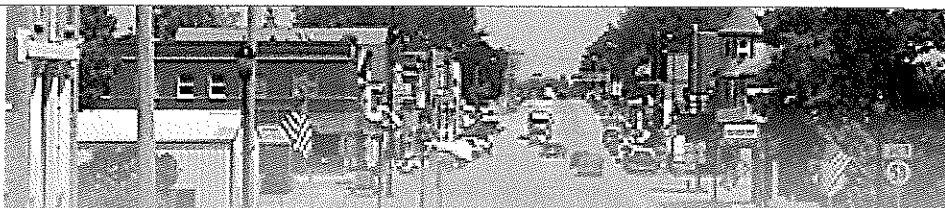
TAHARAS HANIFTAR SHOULD NEVER BE COMMERCIALIZED

Iowa Labor Commissioner charged that the company had violated child labor laws. Agriprocessors vociferously denied knowingly employing any minor, and pointed out that it had terminated four underage employees in 2007 who, it was determined, had submitted false documentation. And when the Iowa Labor Commissioner's Office told the company that it knew of other underage workers at the plant, Agriprocessors requested that the workers be identified so that their employment could be terminated, but the Commissioner's Office refused to do so.

Coming, though, after Agriprocessors was accused by PETA in 2004 of cruelty to animals (a post-*shechita* practice that was discontinued after objections to it were raised) and the *Forward* story, the raid set the media – and interested others – to salivating. In mere weeks, the “strict set of standards” document was publicly issued.

#### THE BOTTOM LINE

At least to the degree to which it might stimulate the Conservative laity to focus on actual *kashrus*, we might take some heart in all the publicity that the “Hekhsher Tzedek” has garnered. Few consumers already dedicated to *kashrus*, though, will be impressed with the proposed seal of Conservative “Justice Certification” approval; they will recognize it as neither a certification nor just. They know that halacha standards are already of concern to *kashrus* certifiers, and that any “enhancement” of *kashrus* – in particular, at the hands of a Jewish movement that has shown little respect for even clear and established halacha itself – represents not a raising of Jewish standards, but rather, a reaching for some semblance of a Jewish high ground, a cynical attempt to stake a claim in a realm until now uncharted by its new intrepid explorers. It is not inconceivable that the “Hekhsher Tzedek” seal, should it ever come to appear on a product, might even serve to repel consumers – at least those who recognize it for what it isn't, and what it is. □



## ALL-EXPENSES PAID VACATION IN POSTVILLE!

AS WAS WIDELY REPORTED AT THE END OF JULY, a delegation of some 25 Orthodox rabbis, reporters and Jewish communal leaders spent a day at Agriprocessors' Postville plant, observing the production process, speaking unhindered to employees, and conferring with government inspectors. Extensive reports from some of those visitors, including Agudath Israel of America executive vice president, Rabbi Shmuel Bloom, and Agudath Israel of America national director of government affairs, Rabbi Yehiel Kalish, painted a picture of a smoothly running and safe operation, satisfied employees and an employer committed to the highest standards of halacha, in its every realm.

Needless to say (although endlessly repeated by critics), the visitors could not know what may or may not have happened in the past. But some of those who toured the plant interviewed long-time employees, and claimed to see evidence that many of the claims about it had been grossly exaggerated, and may well have resulted from Agriprocessors' refusal to kowtow to outside union agitators.

The critics, though – as might be expected – were hardly silenced by the delegation members' reports. One amusing anti-Agriprocessors sentiment, referenced in a Jewish Telegraphic Agency report, was voiced by an Orthodox rabbi who, echoing one of the *Forward's* unsubstantiated claims, raised the specter, once again, of bribery.

“If somebody's being paid,” said the rabbi about the distinguished delegation's members, “you're beholden to [those doing the paying.]”

Being paid?

The reference was apparently to Agriprocessors' underwriting of the delegation members' transportation costs. Once a decision was made to organize a mission – National Council of Young Israel executive vice president Rabbi Pesach Lerner took the initiative – Agriprocessors was contacted to ensure full access to the facility and employees. It was also made clear that there would be no guarantee of any positive report – indeed, of any report at all – resulting from the visit. And it was requested that the company, in the interest of facilitating the no-holds-barred visit, arrange all transportation.

Whether there was any ethical preference to have the participants – a distinguished group that included a broad spectrum of respected Jewish rabbinic and communal leaders – pay their own ways is doubtful, to say the least. But the notion that anyone – let alone busy communal leaders, let alone on short notice – could regard a long plane ride followed by an even longer bus or van ride to a tiny, hot Iowa town as some sort of vacation perk was, to put it mildly, risible. And, like most everything about the onslaught against Agriprocessors, telling.

RABBI AARON M. BRAFMAN

# Staying On Track in Turbulent Times

A NEW WORLD

CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY is changing so rapidly that there is a generation gap almost every two years. Technological gadgetry is produced so fast that when one finally figures out how to use the latest phone or MP3 player, it is on the verge of obsolescence.

This has created a situation where one of the greatest deterrents to sin has practically disappeared. The Gemara in *Berachos* 28b relates the following story.

When the Tanna, Rabbi Yochanan *ben* Zakai, was on his deathbed, his *talmidim* came to visit him. They said to him, "Rabbi, bless us." (In other words, give us instructions to live by.) He said to them, "May it be His will that your fear of Heaven should be as [profound as] your fear of people." Surprised, his *talmidim* said to him: "That's all?!" To which he responded, "When a person (commits a sin), he says to himself, I hope nobody sees me ...."

That great deterrent is no longer here. The advent of the Internet, cell phones, iPods, iPhones, etc. has made it possible for one to see and do in privacy what was almost unimaginable years ago. Thus, one of the major defenses has disappeared.

Another deterrent that is not as powerful as it should be, or used to be, is the external *shemira* of tzitzis or Chassidic garb. When we were growing up, wearing our tzitzis out was a statement that we were different. It was like a fence around ourselves because it was something we had to live up to. Or if one decided to wear a black hat and a long jacket, it meant a certain commitment. Both are no longer the same. Today, one can see teenagers with their tzitzis flying, hanging out in unsavory places and acting unlike *bnei Torah*. Tragically, one can see Chassidic-looking Jews in places where they would have been ashamed to be seen years ago.

Another loss – the proliferation of *frum* neighborhoods, *glatt* Kosher eateries, and standardization of learning and *kollelim* means

that we need not develop an ability to withstand *nisyonos*. Just as in the physical body – when one does not use his muscles, they lose their strength and may atrophy – so, too, in our spiritual being. When we do not ever need to learn how to say No to anything, our willpower gets weakened. Years ago, we could not eat everything or go everywhere, and we developed the strength to say No to the *yeitzer hara*. Being a *frum* Jew required a degree of *mesiras nefesh* and a willingness to be derided as a fanatic.

While the growth of Orthodox life is a *beracha*, it has its drawbacks in terms of individual growth. Every type of *nosh*, every type of food is available with a good *hechsheir*. Kosher food is available to the *frum* traveler in every vacation area in



RABBI BRAFMAN, A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES, IS MENAHEIL OF YESHIVA DERECH AYSON IN FAR ROCKAWAY, NY.

Europe, but the rest of the atmosphere may not be kosher at all. We must have Pepsi and Coke for Pesach, and non-*gebros* pizza rolls that look like *chameitz*, because we cannot say No to our desires, even for eight days!

Is it any wonder, then, that teenagers who have been raised all their life getting everything they want can easily fall at the first real-life *nisayon*? If we don't develop internal strength in adolescents and adults, we are shortchanging not only them, but the entire community.

#### EMPHASIS ON SELF-INDULGENCE

How can we be shocked at what has happened to many teenagers when all they see in the adult world is a hedonistic lifestyle, when there are so many enticing ads using the words "luxury" and "elegant," when all the Chinese auctions entice people to plunk down their money to win a luxurious mink, trips to exotic travel destinations, and a host of other luxury items.

Lest one think this does not have a corrosive, destructive effect, listen to what the *Gra* on *Mishlei* (quoted in *Evven Sheleima*) writes: "All sins come from *chemda* (desire). 'Lo *sachmod* – Do not desire or covet' (one of the Ten Commandments) encompasses all of the commandments." *Histapkus* – being satisfied with what one has – is the foundation of all of Torah.

He also writes (*Evven Sheleima* 22:11):

"The way of the *yeitzer hara* is to entice one to learn, yet also to seek to fulfill his desires, because if he tries to stop him from learning altogether, he would not listen to him. But as a person gets used to indulging his physical pleasures, he will eventually stop learning on his own, for he will be too occupied with pursuit of fulfilling life's pleasures. The *yeitzer hara* will convince him that to stop fulfilling his desires would be harmful to his health, and eventually he will stop learning altogether."

**Is it any wonder  
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This sort of self indulgence permeates every area of life. It is not just that such enticements slowly wean a person away from learning. Inability to restrain desires for comfort, luxury, and "things" leads to refusal to give in to others or even tolerate differences of opinion. This is the underlying cause of most marital discord, and, all too often, marital breakup, with bitter battling between people who not so very long ago stood under the *chupa* bathed in smiles, love, and optimism. And the biggest losers are the children.

So many young couples' divorces, which are on the increase, broken engagements, and huge numbers of older singles are a result of a lack of *middos* in the areas of *ka'as* (anger), *ga'ava* (arrogance), *histapkus*, or the unwillingness to be (in the words of Rabbi Dessler, זצ"ל) a "giver" rather than a "taker." I have seen this deterioration of *middos* in my dealings with young couples and in discussions with social workers engaged in marriage counseling.

#### TWO TYPES OF MUSSAR

I would like to suggest a two-pronged approach that includes both the classic *mussar sefarim* and a program geared for adults, which would encompass creating *mussar va'adim*

(groups) to work on specific areas of *tikkun hamiddos* (character development). One is for implanting *yiras Shamayim*, the other for *tikkun hamiddos*. The first strategy, that of learning *mussar*, must start at an early age and continue throughout life.

In several letters, and in stories attested to by his son *Hagaon* Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon told people, "One can learn *mussar* with young children who are 10 years old every day from a light *mussar sefer*, such as *Orchos Tzaddikim* – even 10 minutes a day. Over time, this will have an impact, and eventually, the child will realize that there is a *Ribbono shel Olam*, and the world is not *hefkeir* (free for the taking)." Older teenagers could study *Mesillas Yesharim*. If it's not being done in yeshiva, then parents should make such a *seder* with their children.

The *Chofetz Chaim* in *Beis Yisroel* writes about the need for *mussar* in his time to counter all the ill winds. He writes that he spoke to many *gedolim* – who at one time were opposed to *mussar* – "and they all agree that today, it is necessary. Therefore, all *bonei yeshiva* and *ba'alei battim* should set aside time each day to study *sifrei yira*."

The Steipler is quoted in *Halachos Vehanhagos* as telling a *yungerman* to have a *seder* in *mussar*: "It is imperative to learn *mussar* everyday. Without it, one's *yiras Shamayim* cools off. The opposition to *mussar* in pre-War Europe was about some of its methodology, such as learning it in a special *beis hamussar*, or in a loud, plaintive voice, etc. But everyone agrees that one has to learn *mussar* to acquire *yiras Shamayim*."

The Chasam Sofer started every *shiur* with some *Chovos Halevavos*, and said, "Any day that I don't learn *mussar*, I feel a coldness in myself."

Since the Steipler's times, the world has changed so dramatically – not for the better – and rapid technological changes intrude into our lives, and even into *mekomos hakedoshim*. Now, it is all the more imperative for yeshivos and *ba'alei battim* to learn *mussar*. The *Mesillas Yesharim's* insight into human behavior and analysis of the struggles

of life and *nisyonos* (challenges) of all facets of living are as relevant today as they were 300 years ago.

But that is not enough. We also need a program for married men and women in the areas of *tikkun hamiddos*.

Most of a yeshiva *bachur's* life does not involve dealing with real life *nisyonos*. As the Steipler said, a *bachur* spends hours a day with his *shtender*, which does not talk back and is never grouchy, etc, which is not the case when he gets married and deals with another person, or when he reaches the stage of life when *kavod*, money and power come into play. Thus, adults have to set up *va'adim* in *sefarim* such as *Alei Shur* by Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, זצ"ל, where he has already mapped out sixteen areas of *avoda* in *middos*, with each section containing material for several weeks of exercises and insights to work on a particular area (the author has such a *va'ad* with *ba'alei battim*, which meets once a week). There are also many *sefarim* in both Hebrew and English that deal with specific areas of *middos*. Lest we think that *tikkun hamiddos* is not critical, the *Gra*, quoted in *Evven Sheleima* (81:12) writes, "The main reason to live is to be able to break one's bad *middos*."

Rabbi Chaim Vital (the primary *talmid* of the *Arizal*), in *Shaarei Hakedusha*, teaches that a person's *middos* are the foundation upon which

everything rests, like the foundation of a house: "Therefore, one should be more careful of bad *middos* than of performing mitzvos, because if one has *middos tovos*, it will be easy for him to fulfill all the mitzvos."

**INSTANT EVERYTHING**

There are two more negative consequences of the new technology and the atmosphere it has created. One is the effect it has had on our physical and mental well-being and, on a deeper level, our spiritual well-being.

The new gadgetry has created more stress on people. There is pressure for instant answers and instant solutions to all problems. People are connected to their work and their office all the time, always online and available to clients and colleagues, leaving no time for reflection. It has certainly taken away people's *menuchas hanefesh*, which is so essential to learning and *avodas Hashem*. About a year ago, I was at a *simcha* where someone was showing off his new Blackberry. He was proudly displaying his ability to sit there and do his office work, without even having to go to the office! I didn't have the heart to tell him, "But don't you realize that you never get away from the office?!" We all know of the longer and more hectic work schedules at all hours of the day

and night in many fields because we're all globally connected, no matter what the time zone.

In the *Orchos Chaim* of the *Rosh* (a compilation of 132 *mussar* and halachic statements), which is recited in many yeshivos (a few each day) during Elul and *Asseres Yemei Teshuva*, one phrase is "אל תמהל מעשך" (#100) Do not be hasty in your actions." In Kelm, this was said more slowly than the rest (Rabbi Nosson Wachtfogel, זצ"ל, a *talmid* of Kelm, instituted the same in Lakewood) because the *Alter* of Kelm felt that this was a cornerstone of *avodas Hashem*. (Those who were *zocheh* to know Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky, זצ"ל, saw this *Kelmer menuchas hanefesh* in him.)

There is, however, a second, more insidious negative effect of all this on our *avoda* and learning. That is the attitude that everything can be answered and accomplished instantly.

**LIFE: A WORK IN PROGRESS**

Another very important reason for learning *mussar* is that one discovers that life is a work in progress: a process of striving to constantly grow and improve. There are no quick solutions, and one learns that one sincere prayer by an individual is worth more than all the *segulos* and proxy *tefillos* being advertised today.

The Chofetz Chaim often told people (most recently quoted in a *Hamodia* interview with one of his few remaining *talmidim*), "Why are you coming to me for a *beracha* when you can go straight to the *Ribbono shel Olam*?" But *tefilla* takes effort and sometimes one has to daven a long time before being answered (as *Moshe Rabbeinu* had to daven 40 days and 40 nights for *Klal Yisroel* to be forgiven for the sin of the *Eigel*). By learning *mussar*, one will discover also that it's never too late to begin.

Someone once came to Rabbi Chatzkel Levenstein, זצ"ל, (the *mashgiach* in the Mir, in Shanghai, and then in *Ponevezh*) and asked for a *beracha* for *yiras Shamayim*. Reb Chatzkel responded, "I've been working all my life on my

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yiras Shamayim, and you want to get it with a beracha?"

Rabbi Gedalia Schorr, זצ"ל, once said, "Today, people want to learn Shas in one night and sleep that night as well." Every area of Torah and avoda requires a lifetime of work. But as it says in Pirkei Avos (6:4):

"This is the way of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground, live a life of deprivation – but toil in the Torah! If you do this, 'You are praiseworthy, and all is well with you' (Tehillim 128,2)."

It is also worthwhile reading the biographies of gedolim and mussar personalities such as Rabbi Chatzkel Levenstein, Rabbi Dessler, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky and Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz to see how they struggled and faced many difficulties in life, and how they forged the basis for their subsequent teachings.

By reading about Reb Yisroel Salanter, for example, one will learn to bring the well-being of others into the equation of his personal conduct. Stories abound of Reb Yisroel and others doing just that.

1. Being invited by a talmid for Shabbos, Reb Yisroel made one condition – that they finish the entire seuda and then talk divrei Torah. The widowed cook came in after the meal and thanked Reb Yisroel, saying that this was the first time she was able to go home early on Friday night after a long exhausting week. Reb Yisroel told the host, "I thought this would be the case ...."
2. Reb Yisroel once washed netillas yadayim and used only a minimal amount of water. When asked about this, since it is brought down in sefarim that one should use a lot of water, Reb Yisroel responded, "I looked out of the window and saw a yesoma carrying the pails of water from the well. So I said, 'I should be machmir (stringent) on her plaitzes (shoulders)?"
3. Reb Yisroel once gave up saying Kaddish on his father's yahzeit (when only one person said

Kaddish at a time) yielding to someone else, who had a lesser chiyuv to say it. When asked why, he said, "Kaddish is a zechus for my father. Doing a chessed for someone else is also a zechus ... perhaps a greater zechus."

4. A talmid came to the gaon, Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevtiz, Rosh Yeshiva of Mir-Yerushalayim, to complain that his wife couldn't seem to get ready in time for Shabbos, to which Reb Chaim responded, "So take a broom and help her."
5. A yungerman came to the Steipler and showed him his daily schedule of learning to ask his opinion. The Steipler said, "I see you are a very big masmid, but you did not leave any time between sedarim to help your wife. She is not your shifcha (maid)!"

These and hundreds of other such stories about gedolei Torah and mussar help create an imprint of good middos and a balanced avoda.

We all need chizuk, and perhaps this is an eitza for some of us.

I can't help but feel that if we all become more sensitive to each other in real life, we will go a long way towards easing some of the heartache in our communities. ☞

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NAFTOLI VERSCHLEISSER

# Never Again ... Again

My friends, the time is coming. Before we know it, we will once again find ourselves beating our fists against our chests, uttering the evocative words "Ashamnu, we are ashamed ..., *Al cheit*, for the sin of ...." Picturing this reality in my mind, I hear that little voice growing ever louder, commanding my attention – "Again? Didn't you tell *Hashem* that it

was over?! How can your soul be defended again for the very sins that you apologized for last year? Didn't you promise not to repeat these wrongs?" And I think to myself, How did I allow this to happen again? I remember my strong resolve to be better this year, my determination to live a cleaner life in the year to come. What went wrong?

Do you share my nerves as we approach the upcoming *Yamim Nora'im* and the month of Elul in which we focus on *teshuva*? And are you wondering, "How can I stand before Hashem repeating the confession for the same sins that I promised last year and the year before never to repeat?"

## THE SECOND GARMENT

A primary principle for a proper focus on *teshuva* can be learned from the first sin ever committed, that of Adam and Chava. Following his offense, the very first act Adam did was to sew garments made of fig leaves.<sup>1</sup> *Rashi* teaches that the reason Adam used this type of leaf rather than any other was because the *Eitz Hada'as* – the Tree of Knowledge – from which they partook despite being forbidden to, was a fig

tree. One can rectify a sin with the very object used for the sin by employing it for a holier purpose, thus "covering up" the iniquity. The embarrassment Adam felt, representing the full repercussion of his act, was alleviated by covering it with clothing as he sought to return himself to his previous state of being. From all of the trees created by *Hashem*, only the fig tree could provide Adam with leaves for garments – not because the other trees would not have assisted in Adam's repentance, but because the only way a proper *tikkun* (rectification) could be accomplished was specifically through the fig tree, as it would perfectly "fit" the gaping hole caused by the sin performed with it.

It sounds pretty simple, then, to accomplish repentance. All I need to do is to reverse my actions, and use my respective wrongs to create new rights. But I know that I have done that in many instances, working on some of the same issues for a number of years. And yet, I still find myself in the same position regarding certain items. What

is lacking from this *teshuva* that causes it to lapse year after year?

The Torah tells us that following His rebuke of Adam and Chava, *Hashem* personally fashioned new garments for Adam and Chava.<sup>2</sup> Considering that Adam specifically created garments from the fig tree to facilitate his *teshuva*, why did *Hashem* present him with a second set of garments? Certainly, there was great purpose in this set of clothing that was lacking in the first set that Adam had created. What was represented by the clothing created by *Hashem* Himself?

## LOSING FOCUS

The *Targum Yonasan ben Uziel* reveals a clue that brings us to a deeper understanding of *teshuva*. He explains<sup>3</sup> that the material from which *Hashem* fashioned these garments was actually the leather of the *nachash*, the snake that enticed Adam and Chava to sin. This serpent was a physical embodiment of the evil

NAFTOLI VERSCHLEISSER LEARNS IN YESHIVA RABBI CHAIM BERLIN IN BROOKLYN, NY. HIS ARTICLE, "PRAYING WITH FERVOR," APPEARED IN JO, SEPT. '07.

inclination that was external to mankind prior to its absorption into Adam and Chava upon their consuming the forbidden fruit. *Rashi* taught us that the way of rectification is through the very catalyst that brought one to sin. *Hashem* was telling Adam that focusing on the conduit of sin, the tool of the *yeitzer hara* (in this case, the fig tree), would not alone suffice to defeat the *yeitzer hara*. To eradicate this enemy, it would be necessary to take the *yeitzer hara* itself, represented by the snakeskin garments that He created, and use it to cover the ill effects of sin in order to return to the position of sanctity that existed previously.

This introduces a deeper understanding of sin and repentance. An outcome of sin is that it leads one to believe that the object with which the sin was committed is the actual obstacle, when in truth, it is the force behind the object, the *yeitzer hara*, which is the actual cause of the sin. Obscured spiritual vision weakens the proper focus on the evil inclination itself. The most that Adam was able to do was to fashion clothing from the fig tree, focusing on the object, as he was no longer able to identify an external evil inclination; it was now within him, physically invisible and difficult to identify. His ability to recognize the source behind the object of his transgression, namely, the *nachash*, was blurred. The practical reality of these two levels of repentance in our lives can be illustrated with one of the greatest tribulations of our time.

*In the not so distant past, a tool of the yeitzer hara affecting Torah Jewry was television, an iconic American invention. As the quality of American programming deteriorated, its detrimental effect on Jewish society grew. Strong public sentiment and chinuch brought about an accepted public hashkafa leading to communities that, on the whole, are television free, and a generation of children who would not consider installing one in their own homes. Many, young and old, who were accustomed to television, had to overcome strong desires in order to remove the television from their lives. This was a focus on the object of the yeitzer hara.*

**Those who have focused on the "snakeskin" approach, in which the successful person uses the core of this inclination in his endeavor to be a proper servant of Hashem, identify a defeated enemy in this challenge that must remain subdued, as it is just a new cloak for the same old yeitzer hara.**

*An elevated act would be to not only remove the television, but to slaughter the very desire that initially attracted us to it with such strength. Witnessing the children who would not bring a television into their homes, the yeitzer hara sought to expose Klal Yisroel to the same desire in a new fashion. This new weapon to ensnare Klal Yisroel is, unsurprisingly, the Internet and its accompanying dangers. There is so much good justifying its existence – communications and productivity that have made it a global staple – but at the same time, the dangers are spiritually lethal. Listing the pitfalls therein would not do justice to the dangers it poses to the unassuming individual.*

Those who have focused on the "fig leaf" approach to *teshuvah* in regard to television find that they have to tackle this new dangerous reality, as it awakens desires lying dormant inside oneself. Those who have focused on the "snakeskin" approach, in which the successful person uses the core of this inclination in his endeavor to be a proper servant of *Hashem*, identify a defeated enemy in this challenge that must remain subdued, as it is just a new cloak for the same old *yeitzer hara*.

**CHANGE FOR KEEPS**

**B**oth approaches focus on eradicating the same wrong – a spiritual challenge of the evil inclination to an individual or group – and both present a method of overcoming the challenge. The human approach is to stop performing a wrong act, and use the tool of sin for good, as that is all he can do, for he is blinded from identifying the core of the sin. This severs the ability of evil to influence one's life with that particular method. The Heavenly approach is to aim one's focus directly on the invisible root of the *yeitzer hara*

and the trait he wanted to corrupt, and turn it into a source of sanctified purpose. True change requires this elevated *teshuvah*, in which we reconnect with our Creator to approach life anew.

It does not take anything more than common sense for one to identify the spiritual challenges faced in life; we just have to be honest with ourselves. Upon recognizing an attack of the *yeitzer hara*, a person must respond by cutting off that venue of sin until he can accomplish *teshuvah* completely, when he will be strong enough not to repeat the sin, because he has identified and defeated its source. In his first step, the individual creates a garment for himself, covering the embarrassment of sin in which he is cloaked with the object of sin, the

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object he can recognize. Accomplishing this *teshuvah*, Hashem provides a second garment normally beyond human comprehension. This is the clarity to identify the source of the inclination and change that very core of desire to a spring of sanctification by reacclimating it for good purposes.

Hashem created these garments to facilitate a *teshuvah sheleima*, a complete repentance, for Adam and Chava. The purpose of these garments was to elevate man to the greatest level, allowing Adam

and his children to erase our sins forever, so that we never return to them again. Oftentimes, we are awakened to repent from our sins, notably during the weeks preceding the *Yamim Nora'im*, we successfully identify the wrong and resolve not to enter that realm and repeat that sin. We don our cloaks of repentance and sincerely intend to never repeat the sin, to stop exposing ourselves to the threat. But it does not last. What goes wrong is that we fail to don the cloak that Hashem is holding out to us, the cloak that allows us to root out the evil inclination and turn it into an entity of *kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying His Name. Otherwise, our desire still exists; it is only a matter of time until the evil inclination finds a new application of enticement.

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, the venerable leader of the *mussar* movement, teaches<sup>4</sup> that one must not simply learn Torah; one has to learn Torah that addresses the area in which he sinned. Every facet of life has its respective "Torah" teachings pertaining to it. Weakness in an area is exposed when a sin is committed. The Torah teachings corresponding to the sin are the garments that Hashem is holding out; it is the spiritually perfect fit that rectifies the wrong, covering the outcome of the wrong, and allows the person to rebuild on top of it. Studying the corresponding laws in the Torah "fit" the wound caused by sin spiritually as the snakeskin "fit" the sin of Adam. The garments Hashem gives us are found in the words of the Torah. Studying them properly will reposition the individual to view the physical world in the proper spiritual focus once more. *Ki karov eilecha hadavar me'od*<sup>5</sup> – the words of Hashem are very close to us, indeed; we need only to reach out and cloak ourselves in them.

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So, where do we find these garments that Hashem is handing out to us as we repent with all our being?

It is up to us to accept the garments that Hashem is holding out to us to complete our repentance, to change our outlook in a permanent way. This is unquestionably a more difficult accomplishment, for we have to break out of our physical bonds and view the same physical entity in a totally new, spiritual perspective. But we can be certain that "*Haba litaheir mesai'in lo*"<sup>6</sup> – one who comes to purify himself is granted Heavenly assistance. We will change ourselves permanently by wearing the garments of repentance that Hashem is handing us, wearing the words of Torah upon ourselves as we return to Him with all of our being. Successful repentance in one area will lead to success in another area, until we stand with all of Klal Yisroel before our Creator in purity, speedily in our days. □

ENDNOTES

- 1 See *Rashi, Bereishis 3,7*
- 2 *Bereishis 3,21*
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ohr Yisroel, Iggeres 7*
- 5 *Devarim 30,14*
- 6 *Reish Lakish in Shabbos 104*

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ANDREW J. NEFF

# FROM BEAR STEARNS TO BAVA METZIA



## HERE ARE MY FIVE MESSAGES:

1. G-d runs the world.
2. Your prayers are answered, so think carefully about what you pray for.
3. Think about your legacy.
4. Every benefit has a cost and every cost has a benefit.
5. Handling tests – it's easier than you think.

My topic is “From Bear Stearns to *Bava Metzia*,” but it’s really about some life lessons that I’ve picked up over the last few months since Bear Stearns, the company that I was with for 20 years and that had been in business for 86 years, disappeared in the midst of a financial crisis and panic, making me a “Bear Stearns refugee,” but more importantly, making me a “*kollel* boy.”

Since I am used to making presentations to a financial audience, I will start off with my conclusions – and then work backwards to my facts – since that was my standard approach in my 25 years on Wall Street, even though that is the opposite of the way most of the Bible commentators work. But I’m still new at this *kollel* life.

## LESSON # 1

### G-D Runs the World

When Bear Stearns collapsed, it shocked the world. It was not the normal course of events. Companies that are in business for 86 years without so much as a losing quarter (except for the last one, but we were profitable again) don’t go out of business, and they don’t go out of business overnight. I have been amazed at the level of fascination by friends and colleagues in the *frum* and business worlds with our demise and the circumstances surrounding our last days.

ANDREW NEFF WAS A SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR AT BEAR STEARNS, WHERE HE WAS A SENIOR SECURITIES ANALYST COVERING THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR. DURING HIS 25 YEARS ON WALL STREET – INCLUDING 20 YEARS AT BEAR STEARNS – HE WAS CITED ON THE INSTITUTIONAL INVESTOR ALL-STAR LIST, FREQUENTLY QUOTED IN THE WALL STREET JOURNAL AND APPEARED OFTEN ON CNBC. HE NOW LEARNS AT THE YESHIVA GEDOLA OF TEANECK.

## REMARKS TO YESHIVA GEDOLA OF TEANECK ANNUAL DINNER, JULY 28, 2008

Many people have asked me if I knew or sensed what was happening. Actually, it was just the opposite. We knew we were having a bad year, but we were in a cyclical business. We’d had good years and bad years. In fact, my area – equities – was having a good year, and the firm was profitable again – highlighting (we thought) the strength of the business model. Besides, we weren’t going out of business ....

But we went out of business. Who was at fault? Was it our new CEO? Our ex-CEO? The shorts? The press?

I have developed a different perspective. Let me digress with a reference to *Tehillim*. The backdrop for the third *perak* of *Tehillim* is rather unusual. *Dovid Hamelech* thanks *Hashem* during the rebellion of *Avshalom*. As I heard from Rabbi *Yissocher Frand*, the normal course of events is not for a son to rebel against the father. Usually it is a political opponent or an aide. But these circumstances – the rebellion by his son *Avshalom* – were extremely unusual. To *Dovid*, that was a sign that this rebellion was outside of nature, outside of *teva*, and that *Hashem* was watching over him and was involved in *Dovid*’s life. G-d runs the world.

What happened to Bear Stearns was outside of *teva*.

Until the demise of Bear Stearns, I knew what my schedule was going to be – more or less – for the next year or so. I was working on projects through the year 2010. I was firmly in control and I knew what the future would be.

But it wasn’t to be. I learned that I was not in control. Many of us went through – *lehavdil* – many of the signs associated with *shiva*. We were in denial, we were angry, we were depressed. Finally, we began to accept our situation.

I, too, went through these stages. I was in denial. I was angry. I was depressed. Because I was not in control.

I’m past that now, but I was only able to get beyond it because I came to realize Who is in control of the world. The events at Bear Stearns are all part of His plan. You can be angry with His plan, but it doesn’t change His plan. At one level, it’s like going to a museum and getting angry at the exhibits. But that is a rather silly reaction because it doesn’t change the exhibits. So you may as well enjoy the museum.

One more reason to see G-d’s Hand: Looking at the calendar, all of these developments around Bear Stearns happened the week before Purim. Some could say, “What a coincidence,” and ask “How can you see G-d’s involvement in

a financial crisis?" But that is the story of Purim – a story where G-d is both hidden and omnipresent. G-d's Name is not mentioned in the *Megilla*, but that is the point: We don't need to see a sea split to know that G-d is involved in our lives.

## LESSON # 2

### Your Prayers Are Answered, So Think Carefully About What You Pray For

**W**e are relative newcomers to Teaneck. We moved here about three years ago. I think the most important force one faces in life is peer pressure – for better or worse – so you have to focus carefully on what the peer pressures are where you live and work. In Teaneck, there is peer pressure to learn. Everyone does it. Every shul competes to have the best learning. The *battei midrashim* are thriving, and the *shiurim* attract crowds. That is one of the main reasons that we moved here.

I had often thought about taking some time off for learning. While our children are "*frum* from birth," Nancy and I are *ba'alei teshuva*. I have done many things, but I essentially see myself as a bit of an idiot savant – that is, I have "done the *daf*" for over 10 years, and attended multiple *shiurim*, but I never learned the basics: *tefilla*, Gemara without English on the other side, *Chumash* with *Rashi* and other *mefarshim*.

I thought about taking a sabbatical. But I would only do it when *neither* of two conditions was in play: I couldn't take off after a good year, since I needed just one more good year. And I couldn't take off after a bad year, since I really needed a good year to take off. Outside of these two mutually exclusive conditions, I would take time off to learn.

I started to talk to *Rosh Yeshiva* Rabbi Elyahu Roberts several months ago. He and I had started learning Gemara about once a week – on the laws of *ribbis* – but I realized it was not enough to get me to where I wanted to be. So we began to talk about learning at the yeshiva with some of the boys one or two mornings a week. I think we started to talk about this last November or so. But – when

it came down to it – I could never find the time.

*Hashem* found the time for me. He cleared my entire schedule. *Hashem* opened up all of my mornings – arranged a sabbatical year for me, so to speak.

As I mentioned, I saw what had happened to Bear Stearns as an "act of G-d." As we learn, though, we never know what G-d's plan is, and I certainly don't know why Bear Stearns went out of business. But I knew that the message – whatever it is – is that something is supposed to change. It's not business as usual. Ironically, I had a position, if I wanted it, at the new firm. In fact, the person who did what I did at JP Morgan coincidentally resigned the day Bear went out of business – for entirely unrelated reasons. So I could have glided from one spot to the next – from one vine to the next – with nary a glitch. But the emails we get from *Hashem* aren't always so clear. That is where prayer comes in.

But *Hashem* does answer prayers. Sometimes the answer is murky and unclear, and sometimes it is a smack on the side of the head.

So that is how I ended up learning two hours a day at Yeshiva Gedola of Teaneck with my excellent *chavrusos*.

Being in *kollel* is not as odd as you think. While there is a generational difference (we recently had a grandchild), I can talk about strollers and pediatricians. But just not about diaper changing. I leave that to the next generation....

## LESSON # 3

### Think About Your Legacy

**I** was on Wall Street for 25 years, including 20 years at Bear Stearns. I had some great calls and made people a lot of money (and may have lost people a lot of money at times, as well). I was on the Institutional Investor All-Star team for 16 years, and the Wall Street Journal All-Star team for nine years.

But that is not what I will be remembered for from my years at Bear Stearns. The *frum* world remembers me for

running the Bear Stearns minyan – thanks to an email from one of the participants.

Just a bit of history. When Bear Stearns was at 245 Park Avenue, there was a minyan in the stairwell – owing to its legacy as an Olympia & York building. That changed when we moved to a new building at 383 Madison. Owing to tighter security, there was no common area for the minyan, so it just stopped. After a few months, however, a summer intern from YU asked me if I could get a minyan going. Since it was a new building, I was able to get the conference room next to my office, and we were off and running.

In fact, word got around and we started attracting outsiders from nearby firms. Then – after a few weeks – I got a call from the head of Human Resources at Bear.

"I heard you have a minyan at Bear," he said.

"Sure. Do you want to attend?" I asked.

"No, but there is a problem. There were issues around security with outsiders coming to a 'secure' floor."

"What can we do?" I asked.

I left it in their hands and in *Hashem's* hands.

It turns out that there is a law that requires a company to provide its employees with reasonable accommodation to prayer. So, while the company did not want an official "Bear Stearns minyan," they agreed to give me a room every day – for the "Andy Neff meeting" – to which I could invite some of my friends to enable me to have a minyan. Hence the minyan, where we regularly had 20-30 people and, on a fast day, when we had a *sefer Torah*, we would have more than 100 people.

So here is the final irony: Bear Stearns is gone, but the minyan – which started at 245 Park – lives on. Roughly one third of the attendees were from JP Morgan, which owned three buildings adjacent to our headquarters, so we simply transferred the management of the minyan over to JP Morgan. So, it looks like a perfect plan: how to make Bear Stearns go away without interfering with the ongoing minyan.

#### LESSON # 4

### Every Cost Has a Benefit and Every Benefit Has a Cost

Wall Street is a great place to have a career – especially from a financial standpoint. Moreover, there is the prestige associated with Wall Street, and the power, etc. What's wrong with that?

In *Pirkei Avos, Perek Daled*, first Mishnah, it states: "Ben Zoma asks: 'Who is wise? The person who learns from everyone else. Who is strong? The person who controls himself. Who is rich? The person who is happy with what he has. Who is honored? The person who honors other people.'" All of these are nice, but what is it that ties all these comments together? What ties them together is that each of the *mid-dos*—wisdom, strength, wealth, honor—can only come from you. No one else can really provide it for you, because if you depend on others for these attributes, then they all go away when the external forces – the people – go away.

There is a cost to being on Wall Street – and probably in other high-powered positions. You lose track of priorities. You live with such stress all the time that you don't know what it is like *not* to have stress. The analogy that I use is of a scuba diver who lives from oxygen tank to oxygen tank, not realizing that all the oxygen in the world is available to him five feet above on the surface.

There is a Gemara in *Pesachim* and again, in *Bava Basra*, that says *Olam hafuch ra'isi* – in the World to Come, we see that it is inverted from this world. That was a hard Gemara for me to understand, until I left the high-powered world. After you move beyond the business world, what you think is important loses its importance. The things that I feared losing the most were the small things: a secretary, car services, etc. But in that world, the things that you give up most easily are time, time with your family, quality and quantity time – which are the things that I realize have the most value.

I'm not saying that effort is not required, and that you shouldn't devote time to your work; just that there

are ways to do it without stress. And much of it seems so unimportant in retrospect. And also – as we saw in the commentary on *Bnei Reuvein* and *Bnei Gad* – in choosing between family and materiality, you need to keep your priorities straight.

#### LESSON # 5

### Handling Tests:

### It's Easier Than You Think

At one level, I believe that I am fortunate to have had this test at this stage in my life.

We learn that *Hashem* never gives us a test that we can't handle. To me, conversely, that says that I was not ready to handle this test until now. I feel thankful that I have matured to a level that I can handle something like this.

Moreover, for many of us, our careers are our lives – or close to it, after our families. The loss of a career is devastating at many levels, some of which I have noted already. And financial turmoil is another nightmare.

But the positive for me is learning that I can deal with it. It's a new reality, but I am ready for the next reality.

I want to add one other very important item to the list of lessons. "A good wife – an *eishes chayil* – who can find?" I can't underestimate the importance of a partner who is your *eizer kenegdo* –

I feel thankful that I have matured to a level that I can handle something like this.

who is truly a partner in growth, in Torah. But Nancy has been davening every day for me to take the time off to learn. It's important to have a relationship that can handle change – and ours has gone from a secular lifestyle to *shomrei Shabbos*, with Nancy on the same page all the way.

#### SUMMARY

### Positive Comments

### About Yeshiva Gedola

Finally, the Teaneck/Bergenfield community is truly blessed to have such an institution.

Many ask what is the key to a Jewish community. To some, it is the kosher pizza restaurant. To others, it is a lot of shuls. But what really makes the community whole is a *kollel*, because of its impact by osmosis and just being there.

Yeshiva Gedola of Teaneck is special. The boys are sweet, *eidele menschen*. There is a wonderful quality to them. And the *Rosh Yeshiva* – the tireless Rabbi Roberts – is always focusing on how to bring Torah to the world. It is a valuable asset – and I am skilled at identifying undervalued assets. □



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YOSI HEBER

# FROM KOLLEL TO THE WORKPLACE

A "PRIMER" FOR WHEN YOU MUST MAKE THE TRANSITION



PHOTO: YEHUDA BOLTSHAUSER

I remember that my father, ע"ה, a beloved rebbi and *chazan* in St. Louis, used to tell me how lucky we were to live in the United States, where we were *zocheh* to be part of such a "*medina shel chessed*." We are basically free to daven where we want, learn what we want and where we want, and even work in whatever field and wherever we want. And thanks to the efforts of many, including Agudas Yisroel, legislation over the past forty years has made it easier than ever to be a *frum Yid* in the outside world – even in the corporate world.

At the same time, while just forty years ago there were only a couple hundred *kollel yungeleit* in America and Europe, today, *Baruch Hashem*, there are thousands of young men learning in *kollelim* around the world. We are living in an unprecedented period in Jewish history in regards to *kollelim*. In fact, today, it has almost become the norm to learn in *kollel* for at least a few years after marriage.

But when someone decides to move from *kollel* into the work world, he can

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often experience a difficult period of transition for a variety of reasons ... leaving the yeshiva world, a new day-to-day schedule, and commuting stress, to name a few. There has been little if anything written on the topic of how to actually make this move, yet, almost everyone will make this transition at some point in his life ... whether at age 25, 30, 35, or even later!

The Torah in *parashas Beha'alozecha* (9:20) says "*Al pi Hashem yachanu, Ve'al pi Hashem yisa'u* ... On the word of Hashem, Klal Yisroel camped, and on the word of Hashem, they traveled." The question is ... why did the Torah have to state the words "*ve'al pi Hashem*" a second time? The *passuk* could have simply said... "*Al pi Hashem yachanu veyisa'u*" – Why the double *lashon*? I once heard in the name of the Chofetz Chaim that when a *Yid* is in his natural environment – his home, his shul, or the "*arba koslei beis hamidrash*" – it is very easy to be a *frum Yid*. But when a person is in a "*yisa'u*" state, in the outside world, it is not as easy. The key is to always remember that even when one ventures out into that world, everything that one does must *also* be "*al pi Hashem*."

So how does one properly do this? What is the *hashkafa* perspective, and what is some practical advice on how to make such a transition into the work world?

It is important to point out that that the purpose of this article is not to encourage anyone to leave *kollel*.

Quite to the contrary. A person should attempt to stay in a formal learning setting for as long as it is possible and financially feasible, *ish kefi darko*. This essay is applicable only after one has spoken with his *rosh yeshiva*, *rosh kollel* or *rav*, and his wife, they've come to the conclusion that the time is right to make such a transition, and he now has a suitable job.

To lay the groundwork, we'll discuss ten important concepts grouped in three categories – The Mindset, The Job Itself, and The Home.

## A POSITIVE, BUT "REALISTIC" MINDSET

### YES, IT WILL BE AN ADJUSTMENT

Accept the fact that this is going to be one of life's major adjustments. For example, your daily life will be different than in *kollel*, there will be a commute to contend with, you won't have the camaraderie that you had in yeshiva, and your schedule at home will change. But like with every other adjustment in life, which most people get used to after a few months, it will soon become your normal routine.

### ASEI LECHA RAV!

This is a time in life that you must be sure that you remain close to a *rav* or *rosh yeshiva* so that you can receive guidance when you need it. New kinds of situations and *she'eilos* will come up and you'll need proper *had-*

*racha*. I've felt blessed that I've always had the right *rav* for me at various life transitions, when I've needed them the most. This will clearly be one of those times for you, as well. Be proactive in getting close to a *moreh hora'a*, and never hesitate to discuss any issue that needs clarification.

#### GROW IN YIDDISHKEIT; DON'T RECEDE

I've often heard people say: "Now that I'm leaving the yeshiva world, I won't be as *frum* as I used to be." Your attitude should be just the opposite; ....the goal should be that you want to grow in *Yiddishkeit*, not move backwards. For example, in addition to setting aside time for learning, you may also want to leverage your unique talents and get actively involved in a *chessed* organization or your local shul. If you and your wife, together, make "growing in *Yiddishkeit*" a specific and proactive goal, you will, in fact, continue to rise to greater heights.

#### A KIDDUSH HASHEM OPPORTUNITY AWAITS YOU

Don't underestimate the enormous opportunity that will now exist for you to be *mashpia* and *mekareiv* – have a positive influence on other people in the workplace. There will actually be people out there who will gravitate to you in search of "learning a bit more about their roots." By reaching out to people, you can achieve amazing results.

In the early 60s, when Lakewood had only a handful of *kollel yungeleit*, one of them had to leave the *kollel* and was very upset about it. Rabbi Aharon Kotler, זצ"ל, asked him why he was so upset, to which he replied, "I'm leaving *avodas hakodesh* and going out into the work world. How can I not be depressed about that?" To which Rav Aharon answered, "You're not going from *avodas hakodesh* to the work world; you're simply going from one *avoda* to another *avoda*. Yes, it's unfortunate that you won't be able to remain in the yeshiva, but now that you

have to leave, you will discover many new opportunities for being a *mashpia* on people and being *mekadeish Sheim Shamayim*. This is also an important *avoda*! You're not going to a new job; you're just moving to a new *avoda*."

#### SUCCESSING ON THE JOB

##### CARVE OUT SET SEDARIM FOR LEARNING

Torah is the binding *chut* (thread) that will make this transition much easier, and its halo effect will protect you from the outside elements. This can be accomplished in many ways. Ideally, one should continue with some sort of *iyun seder* and/or *shiur* (in-depth study) in his former *kollel* or yeshiva. In addition, for example, learn *Daf Yomi* in the morning before davening or in the evening, continuing to learn with your same night *seder chavrusa*, or add small *sedarim* during the day, such as 15 minutes of learning during your lunch break. If you're fortunate enough to be working in a place where there is a *Mincha* minyan in the area, take advantage of it every day if you can, especially in the winter. Today, many have even joined a "commuter *kollel*," where a group learns together while, for example, on the Long Island Railroad, or while driving between Lakewood and New York. Integrating various *sedarim* into your daily routine will set the proper tone for everything you do all day.

#### TREAT PEOPLE WELL

Many work environments are laden with office politics. Avoid getting involved. Be the nice guy. Bend over backwards to treat people well. Dispense compliments to anyone who deserves them whenever you can. Say Thank You and be *makir tov* to anyone who helps you, especially in your early work days on the new job. And when you start to manage others, you should, of course, expect people to deliver high quality work, but be an easygoing and nurturing boss. The bottom line is that if you treat people well, they'll both respect you and like

you, which, in turn, will bring a regular dose of *kiddush Hashem* to whomever you interact with.

#### DO A GREAT JOB

Whatever field you choose, strive to be one of the resident experts in your area of specialization. Don't just do your job; do it with excellence. Try to develop new and creative ideas that add intellectual and financial value to the business or organization you're working in. As time progresses, they'll really value your unique contributions and expertise.

#### FIT IN, BUT ALWAYS KEHALACHA

If you're in a corporate environment, you'll never be "one of the boys," but you can still project an image of being very "professionally friendly." For example, ask coworkers about their children, talk about the upcoming elections, or tell them a good joke. When they see that you're consistent about religious conduct, that you're honest, and that you talk like a *ben Torah* (i.e., *benachas* – calmly – and with no *nivul peh* – coarse language), but you're also very "normal" and friendly, this, too, creates a powerful *kiddush Hashem*. And of course, when social halachic questions arise, consult your *rav*.

#### BACK AT HOME

##### YOUR WIFE IS AN EQUAL PARTNER

While it may be you going out to the big new job, many changes and new pressures will be felt in your home. Keep your wife involved in all key decisions, especially those that involve your schedule and affect the family. In fact, when it comes to people-related issues facing you at work, your wife may be more intuitive than you. As the *passuk* in *Vayeira* (21,12) says, "*Kol asher tomar lecha Sarah, shema bekola*." Hashem told Avraham, "Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her."

Not making unilateral key decisions, but working with your wife as

a team, makes everyone's transition much easier.

SAVE FOR A RAINY DAY

It's never easy to put away money, but now that you'll have a new source of income, this is an opportune time for getting into the habit of setting aside a small portion of your salary for the future. The "time value" of money is truly amazing. Assume you're 30 years old and earning a starting salary of \$50,000. Assuming salary increases at

the rate of inflation, and a moderate 10% tax-deferred, long-term investment return, if you skim off and put away just 5% of your salary every month into a mutual index fund, by the time you're aged 60, you'll have over \$500,000 in your savings account! Also make certain that you have a suitable life insurance policy in effect. At the cost of just a few hundred dollars per year, a life insurance policy is a must for anyone with children.

THE CONCLUDING AND OVERRIDING RULE

As you venture into the work world, the most important thing to remember is that you represent *Klal Yisroel*. People will judge you on a higher standard, and you must always be cognizant of this with every action that you take.

At an Agudas Yisroel Business Ethics Conference that I spoke at a number of years ago, I mentioned the famous Gemara in *Berachos* (29b):

Rav Chisda says that when a person takes a trip, he has to say *Tefillas Haderech*. What is the wording of this prayer [asks the Gemara]? *Shetolicheini leshalom, vesatzideini leshalom* – Lead me in peace, and direct my steps in peace." All in singular ... about "me." Abaye comments that a person must always remember to include himself with all of *Klal Yisroel*. Therefore, he should say "*Shetolicheinu leshalom, vesatzideinu leshalom* – Lead us in peace, and direct our steps in peace." It's interesting that this Gemara about *Tefillas Haderech* makes a special point of teaching us that *tefillas bakasha* (prayers of request) are not said *belashon yachid* (in singular), but rather, *belashon rabbim* (in plural).

The obvious question is – there are many Gemaras about *tefillas* and *berachos*. Why didn't the Gemara teach us this rule of saying *berachos* and *tefillas belashon rabbim* regarding *Shemoneh Esrei* or *Birkas Hamazon*? Why specifically by *Tefillas Haderech*? The lesson we must learn is that when a person is in his natural surroundings, like his home or the yeshiva, he realizes that he's part of *Klal Yisroel* and he knows how to act. But when one is traveling alone in the outside world, it is very easy to forget this. Thus, *Tefillas Haderech* is in plural as a big reminder that this is the most important place not to feel alone. When you travel literally or when you travel figuratively outside the home and into the work environment, you must make a good impression, look for ways to make a *kiddush Hashem*, and remain strong in your levels of *ruchmtyus*. Don't think that just because you're "*baderech*," you can relax. Always remember that you are a part of *Klal Yisroel* and to everyone you meet in the outside world, you represent *Klal Yisroel*.

As you make the transition from *kollel* to the workplace, keeping these important concepts in mind, you and your family can have a much easier transition, you can transform your new *avoda* into an *avodas hakodesh*, and can generate a beautiful *kiddush Hashem* on an ongoing basis.

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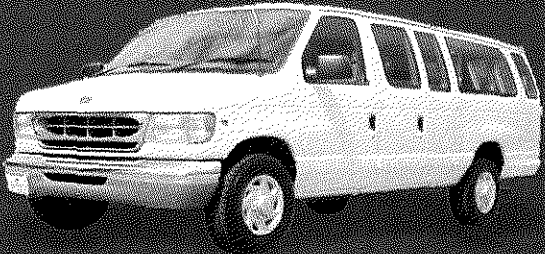
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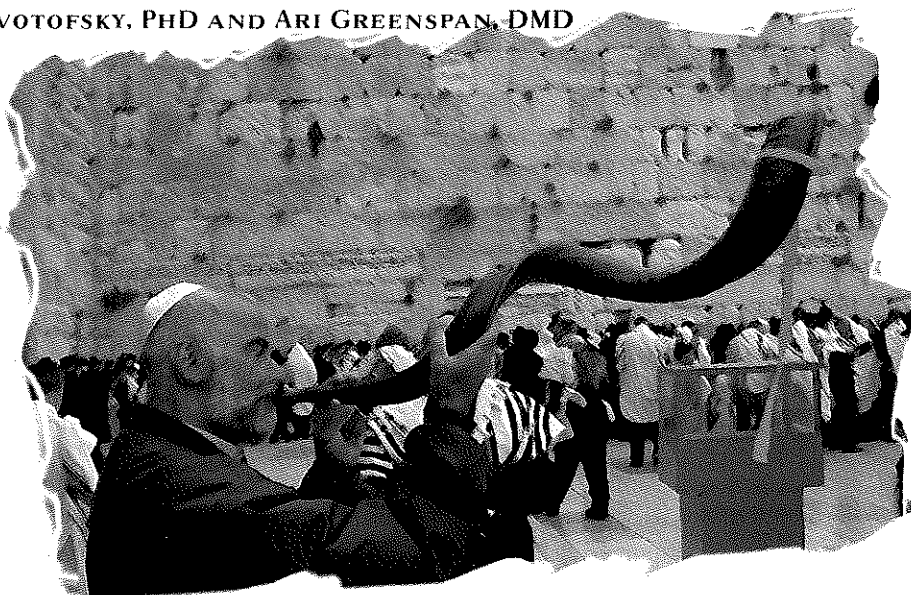


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RABBI ARI Z. ZIVOTOFSKY, PHD AND ARI GREENSPAN, DMD



# Shofaros: Are They All The Same?

## INTRODUCTION

The Torah commands one mitzvah on Rosh Hashana – to hear the blowing of the shofar.<sup>1</sup> We imagine that the sound is produced by the *ba'al tekia* using the familiar, relatively short, and slightly curved ram's horn. But this may not have been the way it was always done at all times and in all places. We will explore the background by examining mosaics, illustrated manuscripts, travelogues, broadsides, and of course, halachic works.

In the Torah there are only two brief, ambiguous references to the spe-

cial Rosh Hashana mitzvah (*Vayikra* 23,24, *Bamidbar* 29,1), and one mention of the mitzvah to blow the shofar on Yom Kippur of *Yoveil* (the Jubilee year) (*Vayikra* 25,9).<sup>2</sup>

Because *terua* appears in both contexts, *Chazal*<sup>3</sup> linked the laws associated with all the *teruos* in the seventh month and concluded that a shofar is the instrument for producing the *terua* on Rosh Hashana. But there is still little biblical guidance regarding the species of the shofar. It should be noted that regarding the nature of the sound that the shofar produces, the Gemara states (*Rosh Hashanah* 27b) that whether it is thin or thick or dry is irrelevant because all sounds are kosher for a shofar.<sup>4</sup>

There are several statements in the Mishna that address the source of the shofar. The first (*R"H* 3:2) states that all shofaros are kosher for the mitzvah except for one made from a bull's horn, and Rabi Yossi seemingly permits even that. The Mishnah next states (*R"H* 3:3) that the shofar used on Rosh Hashana should be made from a "simple" (i.e., not twisted) ibex horn, and (*R"H* 3:5) that Rabi Yehuda said that the shofar used on Rosh Hashana should be from a ram. The Gemara (*R"H* 26b) cites Rav Levi as ruling like Rabi Yehuda, who said in a *beraisa* that on Rosh Hashana a twisted ram's horn is used. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashana* 16a) also contains an independent statement: "Rabi Abahu asked: 'Why is a shofar of an *ayil* [ram] blown [on Rosh Hashana]? Because G-d said 'Blow before Me with a ram's horn so that I will remember the sacrifice of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham, and I will credit you as if you sacrificed yourself to Me.'"

1 The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Shofar* 1:1; 3:10; cf *Rambam*, *Pe'eir Hador*, 51 in Rabbi David Ovadia, 1994 ed. And see his very extensive footnotes) writes that the commandment is to hear the shofar. Rabbi Kafich (on *Hilchos Shofar*, note 5) points out that in regard to the mitzvah of shofar on Yom Kippur of *Yoveil*, the *Rambam* (*Hilchos Shmitta Veyoveil* 10:10) wrote that the mitzvah is to blow the shofar. A practical ramification would be if one blew the shofar with his ears plugged, in which case he would not fulfill the obligation on Rosh Hashana but would on *Yoveil*.

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2 Nowadays, there is a custom to blow the shofar at the conclusion of every Yom Kippur, either *tashra"t* (*Shulchan Aruch OC* 623:6) or one *tekia* (*Rama*, *ibid.*) Some view this as a remembrance of the once-a-*Yoveil* Yom Kippur blowing (*Kol Bo*, 70). Others reject this reason and provide alternate rationales (*Smag*, 69; *Tosafos*, *Shabbos* 114b; *Shibolei Haleket*, *Seder Yom Hakippurim*, 322; *Kaf Hachayim OC* 623:32).

3 *Rosh Hashana* 33b-34a; see *Rashi*, 26a s.v. *Shehu keren*. Cf *Toras Kohanim*, *Behar*, 1:2.

4 The halacha is ruled in accordance with this statement (*Shulchan Aruch OC* 586:6). *Aruch Hashulchan OC* 586:13 states that the sound must nonetheless be loud, although the *Kaf Hachayim* (586:49) may disagree with this. Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach held (*Halichos Shlomo*, vol. 2, 2:9 [p. 27]) that if the sound changes in the middle of a *tekia* it is not a problem. His students note that *Maharil Diskin* and Rabbi Charlap had a stringency that the sound during any one *tekia* should be consistent throughout.

## MOSAIC TILES EVIDENCE

What type of shofar did the Jews of the Talmudic and immediate post-Talmudic period use? Was it an assortment of horns like the first Mishnah, an ibex horn like the second Mishnah, or a ram's horn like those used today?

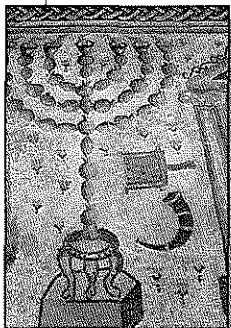
The oldest surviving mosaic floor in Israel was uncovered in 1921 in Hamat

Teverya, south of modern *Tverya*, in a small shul dating from between the third and the fifth centuries CE. It is today known as the Severus Synagogue (not to be confused with a shul of the same name that *Chazal* mention as existing in

Rome), and was probably in use during the period when the Sanhedrin met in *Teverya*. Its exquisite mosaic suggests that it may have been the main shul and thus possibly frequented by members of that august body. Among the items depicted in the mosaic is a shofar that is clearly a "curved ram's horn" (figure 1).

In 1936, the Shalom Al Yisroel synagogue of *Yericho* was discovered and is assumed to have been founded in the 6th-7th century CE. The images on

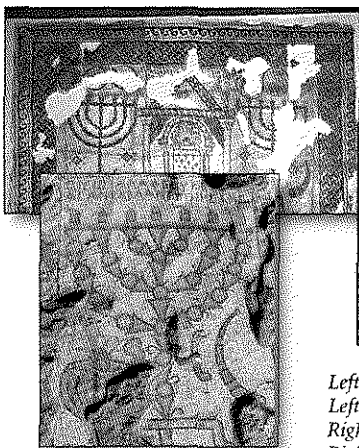
the 10x13-meter mosaic floor include an *aron hakodesh*, a menorah, a *lulav*, an inscription reading Shalom Al Yisroel, from which the synagogue derives its current name, and a shofar. Here, too, the shofar is clearly a "curved ram's horn" (figure 2).



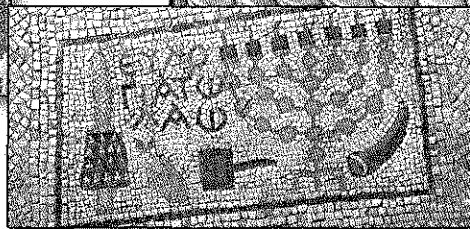
Hamat Tverya synagogue



Jericho synagogue mosaic



Left Top: Beit She'an synagogue mosaic  
Left Bottom: Tzipori synagogue mosaic  
Right Top: Ashkelon synagogue design  
Right Bottom: Hulda mikvah mosaic



Similar portrayals of shofaros can be seen in excavated shuls from the same period that were found in Bet She'an, Tzipori, and Ashkelon. Even what appears to be a *mikva* in Huldah dating from the late 5th century shows what a shofar from the period looked like.

These and the many other ancient mosaic floors that have been uncovered in recent years provide a wonderful vista into the worlds of halacha, Midrash, and the *Beis Hamikdash*, and give us a sense of the reality of life during the era of *Chazal* and shortly thereafter.

#### NON-RAM SHOFAROS

Because of a seeming contradiction between the Mishnaic sources, there arose two strands of *p'sak* among the *Rishonim*. One group saw two debates in the Mishnayos. The first is between the Rabbanan and Rabi Yossi

regarding the use of a bull's horn, and the second is between the Rabbanan and Rabi Yehuda, and seems to be only discussing preferences. This is the way *Tosafos*, the *Rosh*, *Rashba*, *Ran*, *Ramban*, *Ra'avad*, *Roke'ach*, *Me'iri*, and *Tur* understood the sources. In this paradigm, Rabi Abahu's statement is an explanation of the preferred, not exclusive, source of a Rosh Hashana shofar. The *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 586:1) ruled in this manner when it states that the mitzvah on Rosh Hashana is with a curved ram's horn, but post-facto, all shofaros, whether curved or straight, are kosher, although curved is preferred. Only a shofar from a cow is always *passul*.

There is an alternative way to understand the sources. The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Shofar* 1:1) understood that the Mishnayos disagree with each other. He viewed Rav Levi's and Rabi Abahu's statements regarding the ram's horn as being exclusive to other shofaros and that the halacha is not like the first Mishna. Thus, the *Rambam* states that the shofar on Rosh Hashana *must* be from a curved sheep's horn and all others are *passul*. This opinion, while usually attributed solely to the *Rambam*, is also the opinion of Rav Sa'adya Gaon, the *Smag*, *Hagahos Maimaniyos*, and the *Yerei'im*.

Despite the fact that even those authorities who permitted non-ram shofaros viewed them as non-ideal, there have been times and places where, either purposefully or by chance, other shofaros were the norm.

It is reported that:<sup>5</sup> "It is a tradition among the Spanish and Portuguese Jews to use the horn of an antelope for the

<sup>5</sup> Rabbi Herbert Dobrinsky, *A Treasury of Sephardic Laws and Customs*, Ktav, 1986, p. 331, (without a source)

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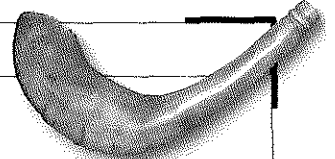
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Shofar used in recent decades in the Porto, Portugal shul

shofar. Thus, it is longer and straighter, without the many bends that some shofaros contain.”

There was an interesting shofar controversy in Germany during the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Muehlhausen (died ca. 1421)<sup>6</sup> bemoans the shocking fact that he uncovered – that for 40 years, the Jews of Germany had not properly fulfilled the mitzvah of shofar. All shofaros there were made by non-Jews and were from goat horns! Rabbi Muehlhausen arranged for Jews to make ram’s horn shofaros and lamented that the “curse of Rabbi Yitzchak” (*R”H* 16b), that tragedy with follow any year in which shofar is not blown, had indeed been fulfilled with German Jewry during the years they had used goat horns. He issued a public curse on anyone who makes or utilizes a non-ram shofar, that applied whenever a ram’s horn, even of inferior quality, is available.

The most well-known example of the use of a non-ram’s horn shofar is also the most puzzling. The Yemenite Jews, who in general follow the rulings of the *Rambam*, use what is colloquially known as a “Yemenite shofar,” made from the long curved horns of the greater kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*), a type of African antelope.<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Yaakov Sapir<sup>8</sup> of *Yerushalayim* records in his travelogue that he spent Rosh Hashana 5620 (1859) in Mocha, Yemen, and that he had with him a ram’s horn shofar from *Yerushalayim* that he blew. However, he says that he also attempted to blow one of the local shofaros, because there, as in all of Yemen, they do not have ram’s horn shofaros, but rather, use the horn of a *yaeil* [ibex] (sic) that is two *amos* long, spiraled when on the head of the

animal, with a sound that is loud and frightening.

Rabbi Yosef Kapach’s<sup>9</sup> grandfather, Rabbi Yechiah Kapach (1853-1932), a leader of the Yemenite community, strongly objected to the use of those large shofaros because he was concerned that they were made from a “*se’o*,”<sup>10</sup> a member of the bovine family, and thus *passul* even *bediavad* according to all opinions. In 1887, Rabbi Yechezkeil Shaul-Rofeh, an emissary of the Tiberias *beis din*, attempted to clarify the issue with the *beis din*, which referred the question back to Yemen. Rabbi Yechiah continued to advocate for the use of ram’s horns and in his shul, ram’s horns were exclusively used. As late as early

1930, he sent a series of letters to the rabbis of Jerusalem asking them for a proclamation signed by the leading rabbis of *Yerushalayim*, including Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Hakohein Kook, that the kudu shofaros are of bovine origin and totally invalid.<sup>11</sup> There is no evidence that he ever received such a document.

SHAPE OF THE SHOFAR

The shape of the shofar is also important. The *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rambam* both write that the shofar should be a spiraled ram’s horn. In making a shofar, heat is usually applied to straighten the mouthpiece, resulting in the familiar shape of a shofar with a straight section near the mouth. Although not all *poskim* were pleased with this, the standard practice in many communities was to not only straighten the distal end, but also to straighten the spiral at the proximal end,

9 Halichos Teiman, 1987, pp. 11-12.

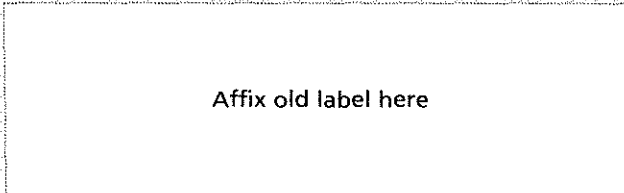
10 See Yoran Seri, *Masoret hatargum shel R”Y Kapach Lesheimos Ba’alei Chayim Shebemikra*, in Rabbi Yosef Kafih Memorial Volume, Zohar Amar and Hananel Seri, editors, 5761, pp. 90-91 on the identity of the *se’o* according to Rabbi Yosef Kapach. If he thought it a *chaya*, as indicated, then it cannot be from the bovine family. See *She’eilos Ya’aveitz*, 1:50 that no bovine horn is acceptable.

11 Reprinted in Gimani, pp. 33-35

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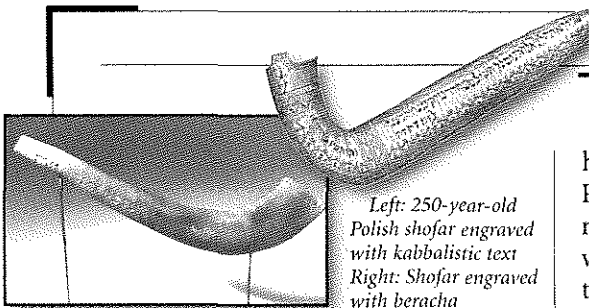
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6 Rabbi Muehlhausen’s letter was republished by Avraham Berliner in *Dvarim Atikim, Kevod Halevanon*, Sept 2, 1869 [26 Elul, 5629], *Halevanon*, vol. 6, pages 278-279. I thank Professor Yisrael Yaakov Yuval for this reference.

7 For more on the use of the kudu horn, see: A. Gimani, “The Shofar and Blowing of the Horn in the Yemenite Jewish Tradition” [Hebrew], in: Aharon Ben-David and Isaac Gluska, *Hebrew Language and Jewish Studies*, Jerusalem, 2001, pages 23-36 and Ari Z. Zivotofsky, “Yemenite Shofar: Ideal for the Mitzvah?” *The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, 53 (Pesach 5767 / Spring 2007): pp. 106-124.

8 *Evven Sapir*, 5749 ed., page 165



Left: 250-year-old Polish shofar engraved with kabbalistic text  
Right: Shofar engraved with beracha

leaving a bent, two-dimensional-looking shofar. This can be seen in pictures of typical 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Ashkenazi shofaros in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (vol. 14, pages 1445-1446, pictures 1 and 2). The typical Moroccan shofar to this day looks like that, as does the shofar that

has been used in recent decades in the Porto, Portugal shul (see photo). As reported by Rabbi Yosef Kapach, there were Yemenites who were careful not to straighten it, and through a difficult and tedious process produced what they considered to be the only acceptable kosher shofaros.

Another interesting facet of shofaros that is less common today is engraving images and verses on the shofar. At one time, it was almost normative to decorate the shofar in some manner. The *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 586:17), quoting the *Ramban*, says that those who paint the shofar to beautify it are doing wrong. Clearly this was something that was done in the time of the *Ramban* and was still done 300 years later in the time of Rabbi Yoseif Karo. The *Rama* adds, however, that it is permitted to engrave on the shofar, and that seems to have been the common practice, at least in Ashkenaz. On the other hand, the *Kaf Hachayim* quotes from the *Shulchan Gavvo'a* that the custom was not to engrave. Common images found on old shofaros include rams symbolizing the *akeida*, *pesukim*, and *tefillos* related to the mitzvah of shofar and the *akeida*. Figure 5 shows a 250-year-old Polish shofar, housed in the National Music Museum in South Dakota, which is engraved with a long kabbalistic text relating to shofar blowing. Among the many interesting shofaros shown in the Jewish Encyclopedia is one with a *beracha* engraved on it.

CONCLUSION

The shofar is not simply a musical instrument, but rather, a utensil in our worship of G-d, and that thought should go into its origin, shape, and structure. According to the Gemara (R"H 26a), the blowing of the shofar is called "*zikaron*" (a remembrance), and it is regarded as being akin to the service of the *Kohein Gadol* in the Holy of Holies on Yom Hakipurim(!).<sup>12</sup> In 21<sup>st</sup> century USA,

12 This startling statement is expanded upon by Rabbi Shmuel Misochatchov (*Sheim MiShmuel*, R"H, 5674, pages 29-33 in 5764 ed.), who explains that the shofar is blown for no reason other than

kudu and oryx horns are gaining popularity, possibly because of their majestic appearance. Rabbi Amram Korech, the last Yemenite chief rabbi in Yemen, observed that the kudu shofar is beautiful for the mitzvah due to its length and sound.<sup>13</sup> Although undoubtedly kosher,<sup>14</sup> these horns may be less than ideal. The *Aruch Hashulchan* (OC 586:3) concludes his discussion of this topic by noting that for fulfilling the biblical mitzvah, we should not permit any other shofar [besides a ram's], and that is indeed the custom of the Jewish people.

One might be inclined to see in the kudu shofar a "*shofar hagadol*," a phrase that is found in *Tanach* and our daily liturgy as the long awaited herald of *Moshiach*. In the 10th *beracha* of the daily *Amida*, we invoke *Yeshaya* 27:13, that the great shofar should be sounded to bring the scattered Jews home to Israel, as it states: "And it shall come to pass on that day that a great shofar shall be blown, and they who were lost in the lands of *Ashur* shall come and the outcasts in the land of *Mitzrayim*, and shall worship the L-rd at the holy mountain in *Yerushalayim*." It should be obvious that "*gadol*" in these contexts means "great," as defined by its role, and not necessarily physically large. This is how it was traditionally understood, as can be seen in this depiction from the Mantua (Italy) Haggadah from 1560.<sup>15</sup>

May our blowing of a ram's horn on Rosh Hashana this year usher in the blowing of the true *shofar hagadol*. □



Drawing from the Mantua (Italy) Haggadah showing Elyahu blowing the shofar heralding the Messiah

that G-d commanded it (R"H 16a), and that this parallels the Holy of Holies, the source of Jewish souls, and is diametrically opposite to what the Golden Calf represented. He further uses this concept to explain why specifically the shofar of all the instruments listed in Mishnah *Keilim* that are made from a ram reminds G-d of the *akeida*.

13 Cited in Gimani, p. 24

14 See Ari Z. Zivotofsky, *Shofar mikarnei re'eim, yaeil, ve'ayal*, *Techumin*, 27 (5767[2007]): pp. 112-116.

15 See Plate 26 in Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Haggadah and History*, 1975.

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INSPIRED BY

# Rabbi Boruch Borchardt ש"ס

## A SON REMEMBERS HIS FATHER'S DEDICATION TO KLAL YISROEL

in *matzavim* causes one to be affected by one particular situation differently than by another one. Rather, he was constantly in one overarching *matzav*: that of being an *eved Hashem*, doing Hashem's will in whatever manner each particular situation called for.

*Kol ma'asecha yihyu leSheim Shamayim*: Hashem gave every person strengths and skills, and he must use them all to honor Hashem. Our father's life was a manifestation of this principle. He devoted every moment to the service of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. He constantly emphasized that a Jew must always serve Hashem – not merely during the time he davens and learns, but during the day and the night, whether sleeping or awake. His was a total servitude, echoing the Jew's response at Sinai: "*Na'aseh venishma* – We will do and we will listen." He readily performed his duty, considering no task too big or too small if it was necessary for the honor of Hashem, *Klal Yisroel*, or an individual *Yid*.

### CAMP AGUDAH – HIS SETTING

**A** *vanim mikir titzak* – man's actions in his home has an effect on the stones in its walls. Camp Agudah was known as "his place." And the very stones of the Agudah camps continue to proclaim our father's accomplishments!

The foundations of camp were built by our father and others. The strengths of our father and mother were part of the foundation of camp's warmth, *simcha*, and *hashkafa*. From the day our father assumed the leadership of camp, he yearned for it to become an even greater *mekom Torah*. This was no easy task in those days; when he joined camp, learning sessions were 45 minutes

### ABOVE THE CURRENT MATZAV

I would like to begin by relating what our father said to me as we walked to shul on the first night of Pesach 1984, two nights after the passing of our mother, ה"ע. She was quite a young woman and had not been ill; her passing was completely unexpected and shocked us all. He said to me: "What I do *bechadrei chadarim* (in total privacy), nobody has to know, and no one will know. But outwardly, I will appear no different whatsoever. For I am *oseik betzarchei tzibbur*, involved in communal life; people come to me for advice, to request favors, and for various needs. If these people see that I look any different, they will hesitate to approach me when they need assistance. Therefore, my outward appearance will be unchanged, as though nothing has occurred."

This was symbolic of how our father never lived in any *matzavim* (responding to specific circumstances); living

The following tribute is excerpted from a speech delivered by Rabbi Yitzchok Borchardt, oldest son of Rabbi Boruch Borchardt, at a *zikaron* for his father at Camp Agudah on July 6, 2008. It was prepared for publication by Reuvain Borchardt, the author's nephew.

RABBI YITZHOK BORCHARDT, ONE OF THE SENIOR AVREICHIM OF YESHIVA BAIS HATALMUD, LIVES IN THE BENSONHURST SECTION OF BROOKLYN

# Rabbi Borchardt Is the Daddy of Us All, the Daddy of Us All ...

I was newly married and making *Havdala* for my wife for the very first time. When I finished drinking the wine, my wife, a Camp Bnos alumna and the daughter of the veteran Agudist, Reb Yossel Friedenson, broke into the following chant: "*Gut voch, ah gezunta voch, a mazeldiga voch, mir zol heren besuros tovos un alles gutten, Amein... un ah chassan far alleh meidelach!*"

I looked at her as if she were from outer space. She said with a smile, "Camp Bnos – that's how we always did it."

Then she started a sing-song chant, "*Rabbi Borchardt is the daddy of us all, the daddy of us all, the daddy of us all, Rabbi Borchardt is the ...*"

I had the merit of working alongside Rabbi Borchardt for 26 years in my tenure at Agudath Israel of America, first at 5 Beekman, then at 84 William, and finally at 42 Broadway. In fact, our offices were often adjacent to one another, and our work often overlapped.

And you know what? ...

He was the daddy of us all.

His office was the address to go to when one needed cheering up. He was the one who always sensed when something was amiss. And he was the one, in the spirit of *Avraham Avinu*, to always have a cookie or piece of cake to offer a famished staff member or a guest to the Agudah headquarters. His office was always open to everyone, and he truly welcomed all who entered.

Although there were suggestions, at times, to eliminate the "goodies" cabinet in his office, he would have none of it. *Hachnassas orchim* was part of his very being. I remember him *shlepping* packages from Washington Heights, huffing and puffing along the way ... but there was no stopping him. This was *his mitzvah*, his way of welcoming strangers to the Agudah office, his way of engendering warmth to the halls that he dedicated his life to.

This, of course, extended to every Agudah Convention, when he insisted that his adjoining room be open 24/7 with first aid materials, tea and cake, and a welcome befitting an Agudah delegate.



Above: Rabbi Borchardt with Rabbi Moshe Sherer  
Below: His youngest son, Yaakov (left), Rabbi Borchardt, late Gerrer Rebbe, Pnei Menachem, and yb"l Rabbi Aaron Brafman in Camp Agudah

## IT RUBBED OFF ON ALL OF US

His dedication to the *klal* rubbed off on all of us. He never tired, no matter how tired he really was. I vividly remember one extremely late evening, after an extremely hectic day, when I saw how tired Rabbi Borchardt looked. I walked into his office and with a firm voice told him, "Enough. Go home. There is a limit ..."

"Young man," he interrupted, "there is no limit! A woman must go home to take care of her children. For a man, there is no limit to the work one must do for the *klal*."

His adherence to *da'as Torah* was infectious. I cannot begin to count how many times he would talk about the *gedolim* of yesteryear whom he interacted with, their allegiance to the Agudah, and their dedication to the *klal*. Invariably, his voice would choke up with emotion as he described them to us, and his handkerchief would then come out to dab away the tears. This was real *chimuch* in the *sugya* of *ahavas Yisroel* and *ahavas haklal*.

Although *The Jewish Observer* was not known for its movie reviews, I once received two press passes to a premier viewing at the Time Warner offices of a documentary about Shanghai, China during World War II. Knowing that Rabbi Borchardt spent the war years there, I asked him if he would like to accompany me, to which he readily agreed. When the film started, he began to shake. He pointed to the screen and said, "That was how it was, that was it!" And then came the handkerchief. All the great Jews he had known in Shanghai were passing before his very eyes. What a lesson!

His tradition of making *Havdala* for the girls of Camp Bnos continued for decades, as he loved to make *Havdala* for them, their children, and sometimes their grandchildren ... as at the conclusion of the Agudah Women's *Shalosh Seudos* session at the annual Agudah Convention.

He was still their daddy, and yes, he still is the daddy of us all. □

RABBI GOLDING, CURRENTLY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RCOS, SERVED IN VARIOUS CAPACITIES FOR AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA FOR OVER 25 YEARS, INCLUDING THAT OF MANAGING EDITOR OF *THE JEWISH OBSERVER*

per day, and each time a few minutes were added, it was very controversial and caused quite an uproar.

After years of effort, in the early 1960s, he was finally able to arrange a "TT (Talmud Torah) Bunk", composed of eight or nine children from the entire camp who were willing to learn throughout the morning. Establishing this bunk was a tremendous accomplishment that brought him much joy, and this bunk eventually grew into today's *Masmidim* Program. How thrilled he was when, in later years, new *battei midrashim* and bunks were constructed to accommodate a growing *Masmidim* Program, and year after year – during his time as Camp Director and beyond – he proudly watched the *Masmidim* Program grow with remarkable success.

Despite his heavy schedule – and through particular hardships in recent years – he was *moseir nefesh* to come to camp every Shabbos, making the weekly trip upstate even decades after he had relinquished his formal duties in camp and was no longer involved in its decision making. He felt that it was his obligation to come, and there was virtually no situation that would cause our father to miss a Shabbos in his beloved camp. While he was extremely family oriented, attending every family *simcha* no matter the time or distance, and was sure to go to the airport every time one of his grandchildren left to learn in *Eretz Yisroel*, he did not attend the *aufruf* of one grandson and the Shabbos *Sheva Berachos* of another because doing so would have meant missing Shabbos in camp.

**MAINTAINING A BEN TORAH PERSPECTIVE**

Our father's *hisbatlus* (self-negation) toward *gedolei Torah* was truly awesome. He sought *da'as Torah* on every issue, and when discussing a matter with a *gadol*, he was entirely submissive to the *gadol's da'as*, unadulterated by any prior views he may have had on the issue. He was instrumental in promoting the importance of *hisbatlus* and *kavod* for *gedolim*. He was thus very

involved in arranging visits by *gedolim* to camp, so that the children would see them, honor them, and yearn to reach their heights.

He was *nisdabeik* (attached himself) to the *mashgiach*, Rabbi Chatzkel Levenstein, as a teenager in Shanghai, where he learned in the Mirrer Yeshiva upon its arrival there after its miraculous escape from the Holocaust. (He had arrived in Shanghai several years before the yeshiva did, after previously fleeing Germany with his parents and brother.) After arriving in America, he

was *nisdabeik* to the *gedolim* here, particularly Rabbi Aharon Kotler.

Once, upon returning from a *Kenessia Gedolah* (International Conference of Agudath Israel in *Eretz Yisroel*), our father was visibly in a particularly good mood. When I asked him why he was glowing, he told me that while there, he had met a man who, by that man's own admission, would bother our father very much about various issues. This man was a *talmid* of Rabbi Efraim Mordechai Ginsburg – a son-in-law of Reb Chatzkel – who was our father's

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## He always stressed how one must work with all his strength as long as Hashem grants it to him.

Rabbi Borchartt with Rabbi Aaron Perlow. זצ"ל, late Novominsker Rebbe

rebbe. The man related to our father that Reb Efraim Mordechai had said to him, "Don't worry about bothering Rabbi Borchartt. You can go to him. He is a *ben Torah*. And you can bother a *ben Torah* as much as you wish." Our father was overjoyed that his rebbe viewed him as a *ben Torah*! Indeed, all marveled at the amazing *ben Torah* perspective through which our father viewed every issue.

In *Da'as Chachma Umussar, Cheilek 2*, Reb Yerucham quotes *Chovos Halevavos*, which states that one's *seichel* (intelligence) teaches him what Hashem's will is – but only when one is free of biases engendered by personal desires, for such desires contaminate the clarity of one's *seichel*. Indeed, our father's amazing *seichel* would ascertain Hashem's will, for he was free of biases toward personal desires; his only desire was to understand what Hashem wanted of him.

Prominent *bnei Torah*, *mechanchim* (educators), and *askanim* (active lay leaders) looked up to him as if he were their rebbe in matters such as *chinuch*, *askanus*, and simply how one should be concerned for and toil for *Klal Yisroel* with every ounce of strength that he possesses.

He always stressed how one must work with all his strength as long as Hashem grants it to him. Reb Yisroel Salanter explained the phrase (in *Hoshei'a* 11,1) "*na'ar Yisroel veohaveihu*," to mean that every Jew, whether old or young, is called a *na'ar Yisroel* – youth of Israel – for we must always remain "young" and vigorous in our service of Hashem. Our father truly personified this trait. He was always youthful and enthusiastic, never pausing to reflect upon what he had already accomplished, but always focusing on the work at hand.

Indeed, even as he grew older and his illnesses grew more serious, his efforts and motivation would not wane. He

maintained his superhuman schedule that would have exhausted a man half his age and twice as strong until the very end, when he simply had no strength left. And that, perhaps, was the greatest *nisayon* (challenge) that he had to endure. He made heroic efforts to still do all that he could: going to the office whenever he could, attending important meetings when possible, and joining *simchos* with every last bit of strength that he possessed.

### CELEBRATING THE GROWTH OF TORAH

His love for Torah was awe-inspiring. He would constantly speak about how Reb Aharon had brought *ahavas haTorah* to this country and was responsible for the tremendous growth of Torah on these shores – with a clarity and vigor as if Reb Aharon were still in his presence.

And if *chas veshalom* there was a *chillul Hashem*, whether individual or communal, it would sadden him tremendously.

His only source of *simcha* came when discussing or hearing of the growth of Torah. And what a true *simcha* it was! Whether he was stressing to a *ben Torah* that Torah is the *tachlis* (ultimate purpose) of the world, rejoicing at the establishment of a new *mikva*, or delighting in the news that a new rav was successful in his position, anything related to a *chizuk* in Torah or *Klal Yisroel* brought him elation and true *nachas ruach*.

Nothing was too small or insignificant to him. In his *Peirush Lemishnayos* on the Mishnah (*Makkos* 3:16) "*Ratzah Hakadosh Baruch Hu le'zakos es Yisroel*," the *Rambam* states that Hashem gave us all 613 mitzvos so that at least one mitzvah will be done completely *leSheim Shamayim*, without any ulterior motive

whatsoever. Regardless of how small that mitzvah may seem, performing at least one mitzvah in that manner is the only way that one can be *zocheh* to *Olam Habba*.

And how many of these seemingly insignificant actions did he perform! He pursued them, while no one else knew he did them, or even knew that they had to be done. His *hachmasas orchim* (hospitality) was enviable; all felt welcome in his home, including vagrants of society. When *gedolim* or *ba'alei battim* affiliated with Agudah passed away, he worked diligently to make sure that that proper respect was given to their widows, that they received proper honor, and were not forgotten.

He was deeply involved in *kiruv rechokim* well before it enjoyed its current popularity. He mentored college students who grew to become *bnei Torah* or marry *bnei Torah*. The words that he spoke were truly in the category of "Words that emanate from the heart gain entry into the hearts of others."

At Reb Aharon's *levaya*, instead of listening to the eulogies, he and several assistants walked through the crowd of 25,000 that overflowed a shul that seated 500, searching for *rabbanim* and *roshei yeshivos* whom he would then escort to their proper seats inside the shul, ensuring that they received proper respect.

### CARING FOR OTHERS

Our father's *nosei be'ol im chaveiro* (sharing the burdens of others) was astounding. I personally witnessed him fulfilling the Gemara's standard of assuming other people's burdens "*ad sheyecheleh* – to the point of becoming ill"! A man once told him of his terrible misfortunes, and I watched as he suddenly broke into a sweat, and developed a fever. He had a heart from the past generation. While this is difficult to emulate, we must nonetheless draw inspiration from him.

When I was engaged, he and I went to Reb Moshe Feinstein and requested that Reb Moshe serve as *mesadeir kiddushin* (officiate) at my *chasuna*. Reb Moshe immediately agreed. Afterwards, one



Young Rabbi Borchartt (second from right) with Vaad Hatzalah leaders

of Reb Moshe's closest *talmidim* told us that at that time, Reb Moshe was generally no longer serving as *mesadeir kiddushin*, except for *chassanim* who learned in his yeshiva. However, he said to his *meshamshim* (aides), "*Rav Borchartt iz azoi fil matriach far di tzibbur, mir darfen zich amal matriach zein far ehm.* – Rabbi Borchartt so exerts himself for the community at large, sometimes we must do the same for him."

**TOTAL EFFORT ... UNTIL THE END**

Indeed, until his very last few days, he continued on with the greatest *mesiras nefesh*.

Now that he can no longer acquire *zechuyos* for himself, those who were close to him should become inspired, either to learn a Mishnah or take action, whatever that may be. He never wished to cause anyone to exert himself; but I'm sure he'll be a *meilitz yosher* (advocate) for anyone who does something for him now. Each of us – *bnei Torah, mechanchim, askanim*, and *ba'alei batim* – should endeavor to learn from him to serve *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* as long as one has been granted strength by *Hashem*.

"*Tov acharis davar meireishiso*. The conclusion of a matter is always better than its beginning." (*Kohelles* 7,8) The *reishis* alone is not sufficient. It must continually be built upon. The growth of Agudas Yisroel and Camp Agudah brought him much joy. His only desire was that it should continue growing *meichayil el chayil*, that Agudah should continue to be the forum through which *gedolim* disseminate their *da'as Torah*, that it should be clear that Agudah stands for "*Mi laShem eilai!* – Those who are for *Hashem's* cause come join me!" and that its purpose should be nothing other than to perpetuate *kevod Shamayim*. □

**LETTER FROM AN INMATE**

Upon receiving notice from Agudath Israel of America of Rabbi Boruch Borchardt's *petira* and *levaya* on *Erev Shavuos*, I wrote a *piyut* in his memory, for he was more than "*harav*" to my *neshama*. He was a soul doctor to my spiritual life as a *Yid*, and brought out my spirituality to have the courage and strength to live and act as a *Yid* within *Torah Yiddishkeit*, no matter what my circumstances or environment may be.

Over the years, Rabbi Borchardt encouraged and motivated me in everything I did to always ask: "*Ayei mekom kevodo?*" ("Where is the place of His glory?") always remembering that as *Yidden*, we stand before G-d and His throne of glory. Rabbi Borchardt, with kindness, stood by my efforts to fight the dark forces in our lives, and win the constitutional right to three meals per day that did not violate the laws of *kashrus* in Arizona Correctional Institutions (as per *Ashelman v. Wawrzaszek* (9<sup>th</sup> circuit, 1997).

In at least eleven states, Jewish prisoners can now receive kosher meals to sustain them in good health.

Rabbi Borchardt shared his *Torah* and *avoda* by explaining how we Jews have the power of *his'chadshus* – renewal – no matter what our station in life may be. In his merit, I came back, stood in His presence, and will travel our *Torah's* path in *emuna* and *avodas Hashem*, in thankfulness that He brought *Harav Boruch Borchardt* to touch my spirituality and bring me to realize that I will always be a member of *Am Yisroel*. *Yehi zichro baruch*.

YITZCHAK BEN YEHUDA (KENNETH ASHELMAN), AN INMATE IN FLORENCE, ARIZONA, WHO WAS ONE OF MANY PRISONERS WHO BENEFITED FROM THE ATTENTION AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE LATE RABBI BORUCH BORCHARDT, ♫, AS ONE OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES HE UNDERTOOK.

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*Uttered words can sometimes be more revealing than their speakers intend. They can be a source of deeper understanding— some yielding smiles; others, tears. With the goal of mining contemporary quotations for insights, intended or otherwise, The Jewish Observer here continues its feature, "Of Public Record," which presents illuminating citations culled from various media.*

## Of Public Record

**"I respect the moustache of this Hitler, because he humiliated the most despicable sect in the world."**

– Allam Muhammad Abdel Al-Halim, member of the Egyptian Unique Moustache Association, explaining his "respect" for a particular style of upper lip hair in a July 11 Egyptian television interview *Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), August 5*

**"We are like the people of Israel. We wander in the desert with Moses for 40 years, until the return to the promised land."**

– Tomaki Juda, a Bikini Island leader, explaining his people's desire to go back to the land from which they were removed in the 1940s when the islands were an American trust territory and the United States used them to test atomic weapons  
*The New York Times, August 7*

**"Possibly we will have to expel them from our country ... as other nations have done."**

– Editorial in a Caracas, Venezuela newspaper, *El Diario de Caracas*, referring to "Israeli-Zionist associations, unions and federations that are conspiring" to take control of the country "Hugo Chavez's Jewish Problem," *Commentary, July/August*

**"[an] unforgivable mistake"**

– Depiction of the statement by Iranian vice president for tourism Esfandiar Rahim

Mashal that Iran is "a friend of all people in the world, even Israelis and Americans," in a counterstatement signed by most of the Iranian assembly  
*The New York Times, August 14*

**A contemporary way to honor the rabbinic statement that "We were all at Sinai"**

– Organizers' characterization of a Shavuot night "tikkun leil Shavuot" at the Manhattan JCC that included "swimming until 2 a.m., live music, ... text study, meditation, yoga and more"  
*International Jerusalem Post, June 13-19*

**"We were here when your forefathers were drinking wine, burying their children alive and worshipping idols."**

– Bar Ilan University political scientist Dr. Mordechai Kedar, in an interview on Al Jazeera, responding to the assertion that Jews have no right to build in Jerusalem  
*Arutz-7, June 16*

**"That, gentlemen, is the "heroic" story of Samir Kuntar."**

– Kuwaiti columnist Hamad Nayyef Al-'Anzi, in a wry comment after recounting the actions of the Arab terrorist released by Israel as part of a deal, including his murder of an Israeli father in front of his four-year-old daughter and subsequent smashing of the little girl's skull against a rock with the butt of his rifle  
*Al-Jarida, July 25*  
(courtesy of MEMRI)

**"[The] paint was easier to wipe away than the pain."**

– Simonas Gurevicius, managing director of the Jewish community center in Vilnius (Vilna), after the cleanup of swastikas and anti-Jewish epithets that were painted on its walls, doors and windows  
*Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 14*

UNUSUAL PERSPECTIVES DEPT.

**"Israeli Bulldozer Driver Shot Dead"**

– Initial headline on the report about the first of two terror attacks in Jerusalem by Arabs driving bulldozers  
*British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News, July 2*

HAPPY ENDING DEPT.

**"Why do Steve Cohen and the Jews Hate [the object of Christian veneration]?"**

– Question on a flyer written by an African-American minister, part of an attempt to sway Memphis, Tennessee voters to cast their ballots in a Congressional primary for a black candidate rather than the Jewish incumbent. Mr. Cohen won by a landslide in the majority black district.  
*The New York Times, August 7*

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and to all of Klal Yisroel*

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*To all our family & friends*  
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relatives and Klal Israel for  
a Happy, Healthy and  
Prosperous New Year.*

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to all of Klal Yisroel

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and to Klal Yisroel

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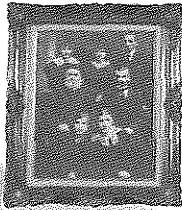
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<p>לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו</p> <p><i>Best Wishes</i> to all our friends and relatives for a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year</p> <p><b>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Avrohom Schonberger and Family</b></p>	<p><i>Shana Tova U'mesuka</i> A Year of Health, Happiness &amp; Parnossa</p> <p><b>Irving (Yisroel) and Ruthie Safrin Jacob and Shiffy Safrin</b></p> <p><b>SAFRIN ASSOCIATES</b> Insurance &amp; Financial Services Offices in Manhattan and Pomona, NY Tel. 845-362-8000 • Fax 362-8008 isafrin@safrin-ins.com</p>	
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<p>Best wishes to all our friends and relatives for a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year</p> <p><b>Dr. and Mrs. Moshe Katz</b> Lawrence, NY 11559</p>	<p><b>Rabbi &amp; Rebbitzen Wolpin</b> May Hashem grant you the good health to continue your good deeds</p> <p><b>Dr. &amp; Mrs. Lawrence Slater</b></p>	<p>לשנה טובה תכתבו</p> <p><b>Rabbi &amp; Mrs. Y. C. Golding</b></p>
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Pnina & Yitzchok Wilk & family of Ranaana  
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our friends, and to all of  
Klal Yisroel

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to all our friends  
and relatives

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relatives and friends  
כתיבה וחתימה טובה  
און א גוט געבענשטע יאהר  
**Reuven and Leah Gluck**

We would like to wish  
all of Klal Yisroel a Shana Tova  
U'mesuka, V'shnas Geula V'yeshua  
**Chaim and Ildi Leibel  
and Family**

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May the New Year usher in  
a bounty of nachas, hatzlacha and  
siyatta diShmaya for  
all of Klal Yisroel.  
שנת גאולה וישועה

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to  
All our Family and Friends  
and for all of כלל ישראל  
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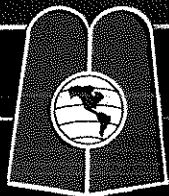
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**Imagine if  
that someone  
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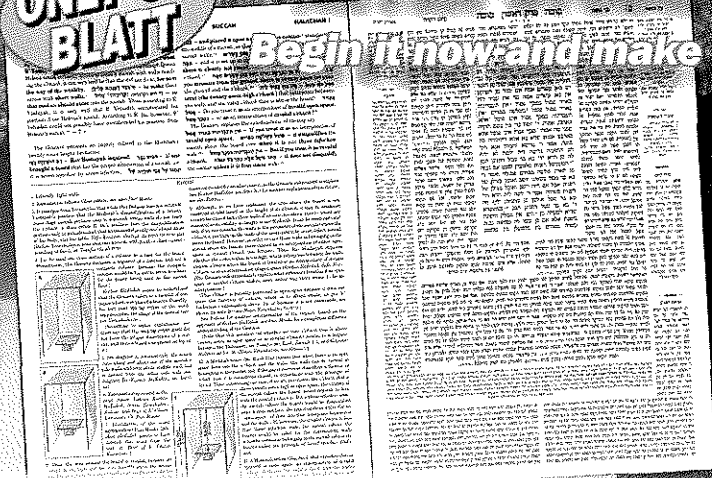
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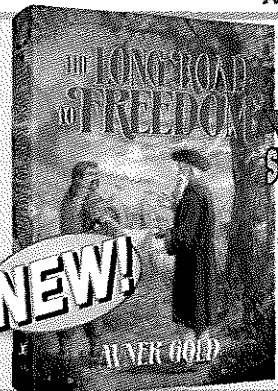
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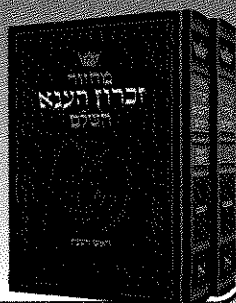
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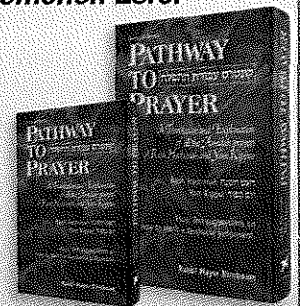


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