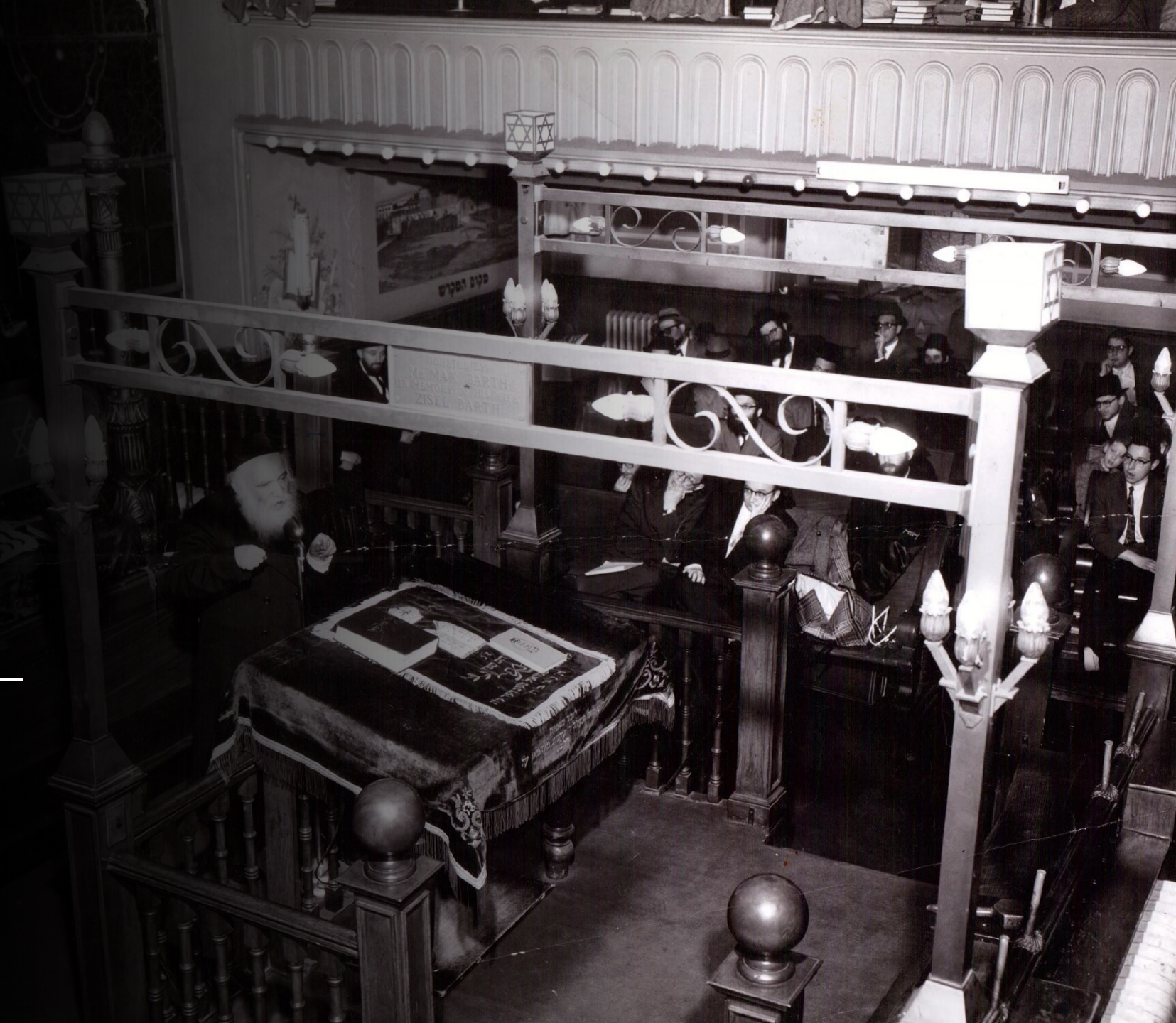




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RABBI AARON KOTLER ON WAY TO JAPAN

Jews Face Misery And Death In French Camps

NEWS — VIEWS

JERUSALEM —
WORLD CENTRAL
OF AGUDATH ISRAEL

JERUSALEM — A recent report has been received that a division of the world central office of Agudath Israel has been opened in Jerusalem. During the last month many of the leaders of Agudath Israel have settled in the Holy Land, amongst them the Gerer

Thousands Interned Give Up Hope, Lacking Nearly All Decencies of Life

New York, Jan. 25 — Starvation was blamed directly for "a certain number of deaths" in French internment camps in reports just received here.

In some of the camps, specifically that at Gurs, near the Pyrenees with a hetero-

"OUR CIVILIZED WORLD"

The world stands aghast at the tragic horrors of the last two weeks in Roumania which remains unparalleled in the annals of modern civilization. The confirmed reports are enough to shock every decent human being into the realization that entire Europe is under the vicious misrule of a group of monomaniacs.

The torturous butchery and dreadful murder of hundreds of innocent Jews on that unforgettable Wednesday, (January 22) can only find its equal in the black periods of the Spanish Inquisitions and the Kishiniev pogroms. To think that in this modern day and age there could exist "so-called human beings" who could herd together innocent men, women, and children, take them to the slaughter house, there cut their throats and then burn their mutilated bodies.

It is bestialty of the most horrible kind. The savage

FIRST GROUP OF RABBIS AND TALMIDIM LEAVE LITHUANIA

A cabled report has been received that Reb Aaron Kotler, the Kletzker Rosh Hayeshiva is heading one of the first groups which is leaving Lithuania for the United States. They have to face the long and perilous route over Siberia before coming to Japan and every effort is being made to hasten the journey.

הרב משה מאיר ישר, דאס לעבען און שאפען פון חפץ חיים (ברוקלען):

שולזינגער ברידער, תרצ"ז [תשי"ח], 238

ליידער האבען די פיהרענדע גדולים פארפעהלט צו רעאליזירען דאס וואס דער גאון הדור ר' חיים וואלאזשינער האט מיט מעהר ווי הונדערט יאהר פאראויסגעזאגט אז אמעריקא וועט ווערען א צענטער פון אידענטום און אז די תורה וועט אין אמעריקא געפינען איהר אכסניה אלס לעצטער עטאפ פון די עשר גליון וועלכע זי דארף דורכמאכען לויט דער מסורה. האבענדיג שוין דורכגעגאנגען די לענדער בבל, אפריקא, מצרים, איטאליע, ספרד, צרפת, אשכנז, פולין און ליטא, איז אמעריקא באשערט צו ווערען די לעצטע היים און צענטער פאר תורה.

למגנת לב נמנעו הגדולים המנהיגים להכשיר באפן מעשי את אשר חזה מראש גאון הדור ר' חיים מוולוז'ין לפני למעלה ממאה שנה, כי אמריקה תהפך למרכז של יהדות וכי התורה תמצא באמריקה את אכסניתה כתחנה אחרונה של עשר הגליות שעליה לעבור לפי המסורת. לאחר שכבר עברה את הארצות: בבל, אפריקה, מצרים, איטליה, ספרד, צרפת, אשכנז, פולין וליטא, יעלה בגורלה של אמריקה להיות אכסניה ומרכז אחרונים לתורה.

It is regrettable that some of the great leaders refrained from legitimizing what Rabbi Hayim of Volozhin had predicted over a century ago: that America would become the center of Judaism and the Torah would find in America its host, the last stop along the ten exiles, according to the tradition. After it had already passed through the following nations: Babylon, Africa, Egypt, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Poland and Lithuania—America will be the last Torah center [before the messiah].



ובנוכחות קהל בני הישיבות הניצבים בזה, אומר דברים
מפורשים אודות המכשלה הנוראה של נגיסת מחצית היום
ללימודי הקולג'. מאד יש לחשוש צענין נורא זה, מלבד עצם
החסרות של בזיון התורה שהרי באופן זה ממעיטים תורה וגדולי
תורה מכלל ישראל, כי איככה יצמח "בריסקר רב" או דוגמתו
מכאלו שמפנים כשרונותיהם וזמנם ללימודים חיצוניים.

הרב אהרן קטלר, משנת רבי אהרן ח"ד עמ' רי"ב



בדור הזה אחרי החורבן באירופה, שנחרבו מרכזי התורה ונמצא העולם שמם, הוטל התפקיד הנשגב על יהדות ארצות הברית וארץ ישראל לבנות הנהרסות ולטעת הנשמה, להקים מבצרים לתורה ויראת שמים, וליצור אוירה של התמסרות לתורה ואמונה בקדושתה ונצחיותה מבלי להתעסק בשום דברים צדדיים וחיצוניים, שרק באוירה זו אפשר לגדל דור של תלמידי חכמים שלמים בתורתם וברוחם.

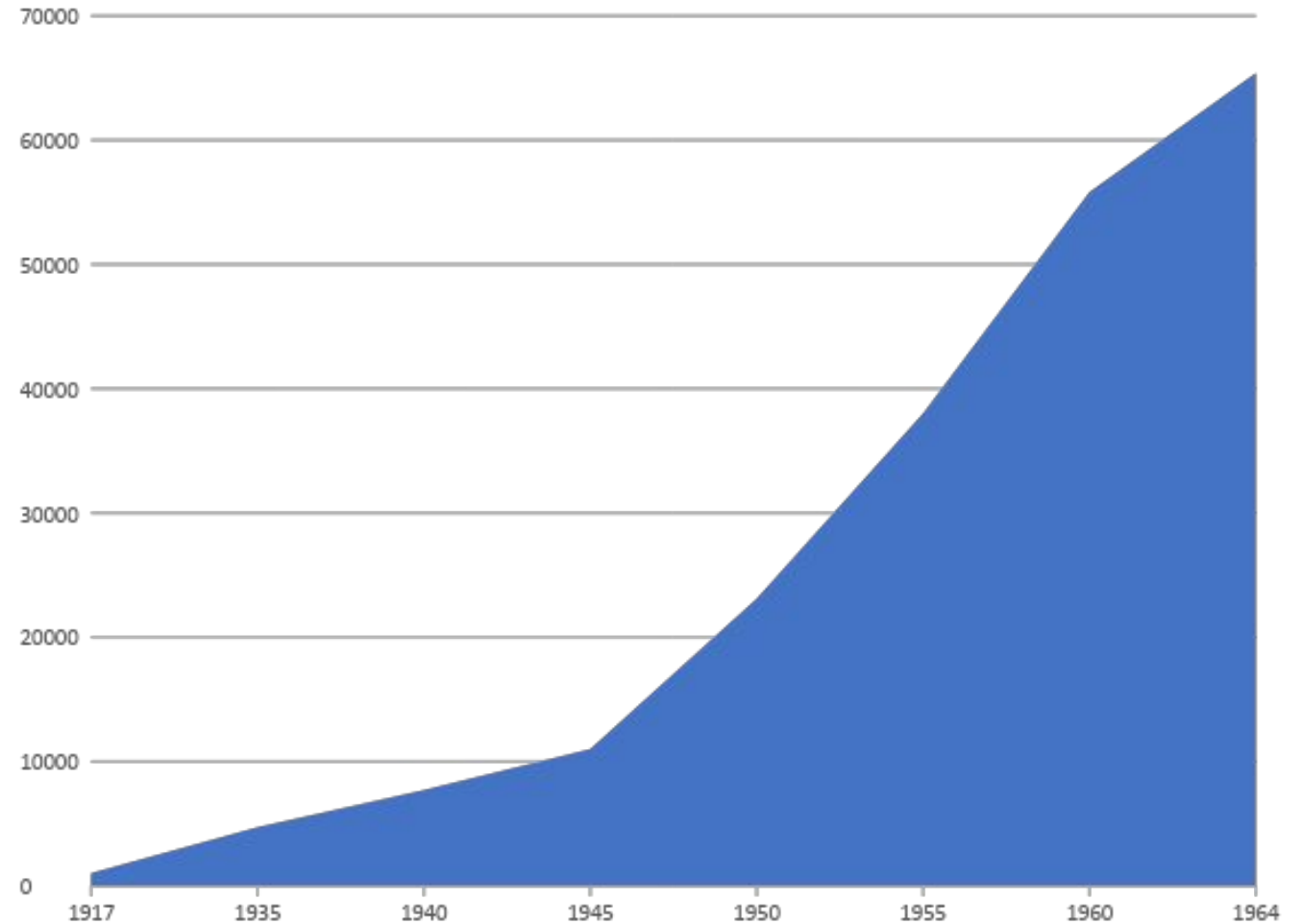
הרב אהרן קטלר, מאמרים בס' כתר תורה



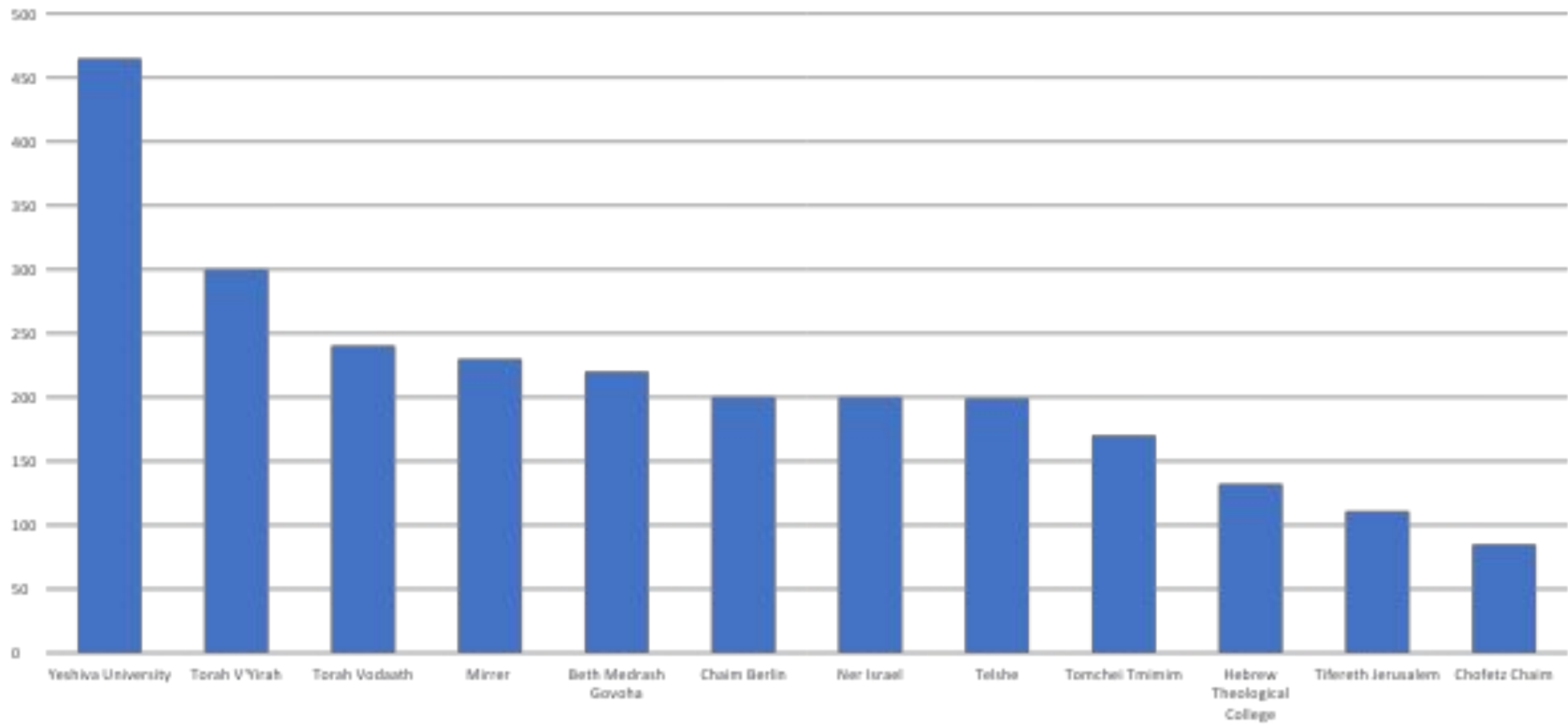
“Rabbi Kotler was to be the diadem of Torah Umesorah. The fact that he gave not only his endorsement but also his own time and effort emphasized its special mission. During the 18 years that he served as the spiritual authority of Torah Umesorah until his death in 1962, the organization saw its greatest growth. Not only was he concerned with the quantitative increase of day schools, but he spurred educational and qualitative improvements as well.”

Doniel Z. Kramer, *The Day Schools and Torah Umesorah*, 95.

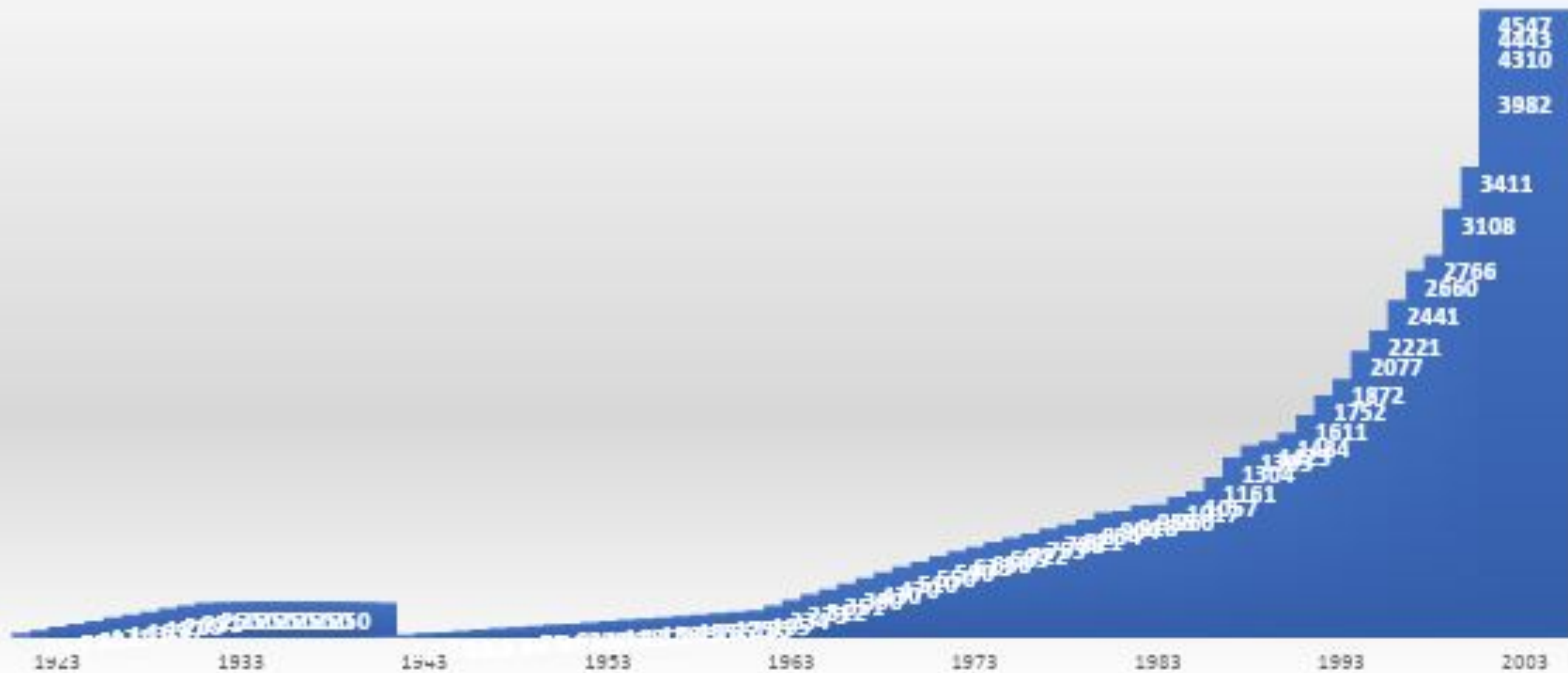
American Jewish School Enrollment



Major Yeshivot in the United States, 1965



Beth Medrash Govoha Enrollment



REBBETZIN VICHNA KAPLAN, A'H Founder of Bais Yaakov in America



Rebbetzin Vichna Kaplan, *a'h*, star pupil of Sara Schenirer, arrived in America in 1937. With her husband, *yb'lc*, Harav Boruch Kaplan, *shlita*, she founded America's first Bais Yaakov school for girls.

Around her dining room table she taught her first seven *talmidos*, not necessarily "by-the-book", certainly not "by-the-clock." She was the lesson. Her sterling character and deep rooted *bitochon* captivated her *talmidos*.

Rebbetzin Kaplan, with vision and clarity of purpose, lovingly imparted the pure waters of Torah. She transformed Jewish Americans wavering in their religiosity, into proud American Jews. She fomented a veritable revolution in the education of Jewish women in America.

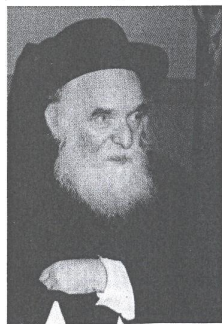
As more and more young women learned of this small haven of Torah, Bais Yaakov grew. And grew. Girls came from as far away as British Columbia to the newly purchased South 8th Street building in bustling Williamsburg.

The seeds thus sown, the tree blossomed. Bais Yaakov became the mother school of every Orthodox girls school in America, many of them founded and staffed by our alumnae. Bais Yaakov graduates were also the first to marry and help support *kollel yungeleit*. In the words of Reb Aharon Kotler, *zt'l*, "If not for Bais Yaakov," the great *Rosh Hayeshiva* said, "Lakewood Yeshiva could never have succeeded."

Rebbetzin Kaplan was *zoche* to realize the fulfillment of her goal during her lifetime—transplanting Sara Schenirer's Bais Yaakov to American shores. She succeeded beyond her greatest hopes and dreams. She fostered the glory of Torah-living to three generations of American youth.

"If not for Bais Yaakov, Lakewood Yeshiva could never have succeeded."

HARAV AHARON KOTLER, *zt'l*



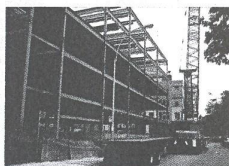
WILLIAMSBURG
1948



CROWN HEIGHTS
1959



BORO PARK
1965



TARGETED
COMPLETION DATE:
1990

I find comfort in the words of our great leader of the Seminary in Cracow, Reb Yehuda Leib Orlean *הי"ד*. He was *מהוק* us when he said that in *חנוך* there is a maximum and a minimum program. The maximum has no limit. The -minimum is that no one should die without doing *תשובה*. **What is the maximum program for a girl educated in Bais Yaakov?**

I heard in the name of the Chasan Sofer ז"ל, as an explanation of the *פסוק* in *קהלת* **אדם אחד מאלף מצאתי ואשה בכל אלה לא מצאתי** "There arises the question, how is it that there was found only one righteous man among a thousand? The answer is because **אשה בכל אלה לא מצאתי**" There were no women there to stand behind the men and encourage them to greatness.

Dear children, I hope that in the years that you spent in Bais Yaakov, you learned the *השקפה* that a woman can receive her share in Torah only through encouraging and strengthening her husband towards learning, and by guiding her children in the ways of Torah. I am sure that your highest ideal is to marry a man whose *אומנות* will be Torah - *תורה אומנותו* - one who will dedicate his life to *הרבצת התורה*. Those of you who cannot reach this high ideal should at least see to it that your husbands will have regular times set aside for learning Torah even when it entails certain sacrifices on your part.

The minimum program, I believe, should be that on every girl who has gone to Bais Yaakov, there should at least clearly be recognized the stamp of Bais Yaakov. In her dress, in her behavior, and in her ideas she should be different and above the empty, meaningless life of today's women. There should be fulfilled in her the *פסוק* from *אספלו הרקים שבך מלאים מצוות כרמון*, "אפילו הרקים שבך מלאים מצוות כרמון", *As Rashi* explains it, "Even those comparatively empty among you, are as full of *מצוות* as the pomegranate is full of seeds.

At this moment of graduation, I see the picture of the radiant face of our spiritual mother Sarah Schenirer *ע"ה*. She looks down upon you, dear graduates, with her usual cheery smile, and I ask the question that troubles my mind at every graduation, and now again at the time of your graduation. "Dear Mother, are you satisfied with our Graduates, your spiritual children?" And her brilliant eyes twinkle and her lips whisper *יע, איך בין מיט איך צעפרידען. זייט געבענטשט!*

My heartfelt blessings for your *הצלחה*!

Your loving,
W. KAPLAN



“Yet those who affirm an orthodox or even a moderately orthodox version of Jewish identity continue to define the latter as such a fact. Their problem is that they must affirm it in the face of empirical evidence to the contrary. The orthodox precisely defines Jewish identity as destiny, while the social experience of the individual reveals it as an ongoing choice. The dissonance between definition and experience is at the core of every orthodoxy in the modern world. The orthodox defines himself as living in a tradition; it is of the very nature of tradition to be taken for granted; this taken-for-grantedness, however, is continually falsified by the experience of living in a modern society. The orthodox must then present to himself as fate what he knows empirically to be a choice. This is a difficult feat.”

-- Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (Garden City: Anchor, 1979), 27

Seymour M. Glick

Time For A Change

A Hard Look at Yeshiva Attitudes to Science

AS AN ACTIVE participant in an ever-growing group, the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists (AOJS), one can easily become overly optimistic about the growing numbers of Orthodox Jews who are leaders in their chosen secular professions. This optimism can be destructive if it leads to complacency about the American yeshiva education that has yielded such 'hybrids.'

Let us examine the background of the American Orthodox Jewish scientist. At the risk of over-simplification, I would suggest that the average AOJS member emerged from one of two types of educational background. One of these could reasonably have been expected to produce an excellent scientist or other secular professional, but with marginal religious observance, at best. By this background I mean education at day schools where secular and Hebrew 'culture' are stressed, with little emphasis on the practical observance of mitzvos. In a graduate of these schools the Orthodox outcome represents a miracle, so to speak. In contrast, another group of AOJS members emerged from schools whose graduates were expected to be *Shomrei Mitzvos*, but could not reasonably have been expected to become scientists. From these schools, the emergence of a *scientist* represents the miracle, since the prevalent attitude toward secular education is often one of *bitul*.

The AOJS is a freak, since there are few institutions which are geared to turn out Orthodox Jewish scientists. Your response at this point might be, "so what," and if the absence of a sizable group of Orthodox Jewish scientists were the only result of the dichotomy of educational institutions, such complacency might well be justifiable. But, I feel that this educational vacuum is symptomatic of far more serious problems.

Since I am convinced that the future of Judaism in this country lies primarily in the second type of institution, I will confine my comments to this group of schools. The shortcomings of the first type of institution are clear to most readers of this publication and need no further elaboration.

DR. SEYMOUR M. GLICK is the president of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists and Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Downstate Medical Center. He also serves as Chief of the Department of Endocrinology at the Coney Island branch of Maimonides Hospital.

WE MUST ACCEPT the premise that most of the readers of this magazine, most of the educators in the yeshivas we are discussing, and certainly most of the parents sending their children to these schools have made a decision to attempt to live within the fabric of modern American society.

The decision was made at the moment when they rejected the choice of living in a community like Squarctown. The *wisdom* of this decision is not, at the moment, under discussion, but certainly they have chosen to live with English-language newspapers and magazines, radio, and in most cases, television. For them it is no longer possible to recreate the small village of 19th-century Poland in which a pious Jew could be born, live and die without significant exposure to an alien culture. Having made a choice, and having recognized that such a choice has been made, one must learn to live intelligently with this choice. It is foolish to make a decision and then guide one's actions in a manner that suggests that the opposite decision was made.

It is, I believe, self-defeating and unwise in our society to try to resolve conflicts between Torah and science by teaching children, or intimating to them, as is sometimes done, that science and secular knowledge is foolish, that scientists are fools, and that their theories are silly. We *should* point out that secular knowledge takes second place behind Torah knowledge, that scientific training, unlike Torah training, does not bring with it *Hishalmus Ho'odom*; that scientific theories, unlike Torah, are hypothetical, ethically neutral and limited in scope. But to belittle and ridicule science and scientists, as was done in a recent popular book by a Torah educator, invites in turn ridicule by the teenager. An intelligent ten-year-old is now sophisticated enough to reject allegations of the foolishness or evil of science and scientists, and if his *rebbe* tells these to him, *the student is apt to reject not only these ideas but perhaps other more basic concepts.*

The educational system of yeshivos adopting such an approach will, at the very least, produce laymen, rabbis and teachers who are ill-fitted to cope with problems posed by their children, their congregants and their students. It yields not only a paucity of scientists, but much more important, it does not adequately pre-

understand their statements by discussing the issue through the mails or otherwise with the scholars involved before formulating his opinions.

At this point allow me to take issue with the editors of THE JEWISH OBSERVER for—1) Airing in the press areas of jurisdiction in which the layman has no authority to voice an opinion. This area of Hashkofa and guidance in Jewish life has always been the sacred domain of the *Gedolim*. 2) To allow laymen or even rabbis, (who have not yet attained great heights in Torah) to publicly suggest or state that the Roshei Hayeshiva are neglecting or overlooking obvious areas in their jurisdiction . . . is presumptuous, in bad taste, and out of line for a publication speaking in the name of the *Gedolim* i.e., Torah.

I have often wondered if THE JEWISH OBSERVER is subject to review before publication by a *Godol* or a group of *Gedolim*. Without such direct scrutiny the public has no assurance that the views expressed . . . especially when written by layman are indeed those of the *Gedolim* . . .

St. Louis, Missouri
(Name withheld by request)

—his point was a pedagogical one: that it is "unwise and self-defeating" to use ridicule as a way to resolve conflicts between Torah and science, "as is sometimes done" (Dr Glick's words, our emphasis). What Dr. Glick was calling for was a need to react to the challenge of science in a factual, intelligent manner rather than by mere *bitul* or name-calling, albeit deserved. That there are some yeshiva teachers who use this weapon, and sometimes in rather unfortunate ways, can hardly be denied; that this does not involve a maligning of the

THE TO

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“Although a rabbi may be authorized to issue rulings on questions that can be answered by halachah, that does not necessarily qualify him to render an opinion on matters for which there are no direct halachic guidelines. In such cases, one should be guided exclusively by Torah hashkafah.

“There are principles of Torah hashkafah that can serve as guidelines for all situations in life. However, a person giving an opinion must be certain that his opinion is based on pure Torah concepts. This can be done only by someone whose entire thought processes are the result of Torah knowledge.

“I have studied psychology and it is possible that my thinking may have been influenced by my secular studies. Even if I had adequate Torah knowledge, I could not be considered daas Torah because I have been subject to concepts that did not derive from Torah. Therefore, daas Torah is a talmid chacham who was never influenced by anything other than Torah.”

-- Rabbi Abraham J. Twersky, *Dear Doctor: The Renowned Rabbi-Psychiatrist Gives Straight Answers to Tough Questions*, vol. 2 (Brooklyn: Shaar Press, 2007), 79

Jacob Mermelstein

An Orthodox Psychotherapist Confesses

Must the Torah-loyal therapist take all his cues from Dr. Freud, or may he enter the therapeutic process employing his own code of values?



(This article is abstracted from a paper presented to a Professional Forum sponsored by the Behavioral Science and Mental Health Section of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists, and is to be published in the forthcoming issue of Intercom. In releasing his remarks to the public at large, Dr. Mermelstein asks our readers to be aware of the limited scope of what is attempted here. Specifically, he asks us to bear in mind what is being said, and why — and what is not said, succeeded or omitted. Though some of these cautions

print the following preface for emphasis:)
Dr. Mermelstein's remarks were made in response to the needs of some of his colleagues who, as Torah-observant individuals expressed difficulty in maintaining their integrity as Bnai Torah while practicing their profession, because of an alleged antagonism between Torah and scientific psychotherapy. To them he addresses himself, attempting to share his beliefs and methods. In addition he endeavors to show how Torah can indeed be a source for insight and method in deal-

DR. JACOB MERMELSTEIN, a psychologist in private practice, is certified in his field by the State of New York and New Jersey, and is a diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology. He is well known as a lecturer and author, and is a featured columnist in Torah Umesorah's The Jewish Parent.

Lee M. Spetner

Evolution—Fact Or Theory?

A Scientist Finds the Facts Weak and the Theory Wanting

It has long been felt that the theory of evolution is less a scientifically developed and supported hypothesis than an effort by hook or by crook to account for the existence of living beings without reference to a Divine creator. Questions such as these have been asked:

- Evolutionary changes could only be the result of the mutation of genes. Are not the mutations that have been observed degenerative in nature?
- To bring about a change in the structure of, say, the eye, a number of other, related changes would have to happen coincidentally, e.g. in the nervous

THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF modern culture and in the hundred years since it was first proposed by Charles Darwin it has had a stronger influence on human philosophy and sense of values than has any other single scientific theory. The concept of organic evolution is accepted by most literate people today as a well established truth, and evolution as a principle in nature has become intuitively natural to such an extent that the phrase, "the origin of" yields to "the evolution of" in almost any context when there is an attempt at erudition. Much of the influence of evolutionary theory is hidden and not immediately

*In addition to his work in the sciences, Dr. Spetner is the president of the new Yeshiva High Schools, one for boys and one for girls, established in Washington, D.C. last year. Headed by Rabbi Pinchas Lipner, formerly of Yeshivath Ner Israel, the school's religious studies are supervised by a committee headed by Rabbi Gedalia Anemer, Rabbi of the "scientists' schul" Young Israel-Shomrei Emunah, and the general studies, are supervised by a committee chaired by Nathan Lewin, assistant to the Solicitor General of the U.S.A. The schools serve Washington as well as out-of-town students.

effort on the subject in the popular field.

"In addition to his work in the sciences, Dr. Spetner is the president of the new Yeshiva High Schools, one for boys and one for girls, established in Washington, D.C. last year. Headed by Rabbi Pinchas Lipner, formerly of Yeshivath Ner Israel, the school's religious studies are supervised by a committee headed by Rabbi Gedalia Anemer, Rabbi of the "scientists' schul" Young Israel-Shomrei Emunah, and the general studies, are supervised by a committee chaired by Nathan Lewin, assistant to the Solicitor General of the U.S.A. The schools serve Washington as well as out-of-town students.

is sometimes called the "fact" of evolution and what is called the "theory" of evolution. The so-called "fact" of evolution is that living organisms have descended with modification from pre-existing forms. The lineage is continuous, all forms of life are related to all other forms of life. Life began as a simple form and gradually evolved to more and more complex forms. The evidence usually adduced for the fact lies chiefly in the fossil record. The rocks containing fossils can be fairly

The Jewish Observer / January, 1966

Sylvan M. Shane

THE CREDO

DR. SYLVAN SHANE is an anesthesiologist and has published six volumes and twenty-two articles in his field. Dr. Shane serves on the staff of Maryland General Hospital, Sinai Hospital, and others in Baltimore, Maryland, where he lives with his family in a home built with his own hands. He has traveled widely and lectured on new medical techniques which he has developed. He serves on various boards of Orthodox educational institutions, and was recently a candidate for the Congress of the United States. The following is an extract from an unpublished manuscript titled "Why I Am an Orthodox Jew," which expresses Dr. Shane's credo as a scientist and as a Jew.

The fact that the oxygen concentration of the atmosphere remains approximately fixed and nearly constant in anticipation of the respiratory needs of generations of man, and animals and of insects, yet unborn, is a miracle. The almost unvarying intensity of the sun, the periodicity of rain, the regularity of the revolution of the earth, the precision of the moon's orbit and the very fact of human thought are all miracles, are all beyond and above human comprehension. That a mass of physical and chemical energy can think, can plan and construct the Golden Gate Bridge, a computer, or send a rocket to the moon is a miracle.

I have studied the human body, including the brain. I have studied physiology and chemistry and bacteriology. And the more I learn, the more convinced I become of the miracle of life and the Divine creation of the universe.

How is it possible that at a certain fixed moment in the development of the embryo, one cell divides into two which differ from the original cell in structure and function. From the original two cells which united there

Miracles are real but they are not scientifically permissible concepts; they cannot be measured. The exact sciences imply precise measurement. We cannot measure thought; we can never know or measure the force which impels the sperm to the egg, causes it to unite, divide and metamorphose into a human creature which thinks, loves, learns to comprehend justice and appreciate beauty.

Beauty is also very real and meaningful when considered in the framework of aesthetics. It is meaningless in the framework of natural science since it is impossible to measure beauty. We may approximate beauty by various physical criteria, but to know exactly what beauty is, we must work within the non-science framework of aesthetics.

When the statement is made that G-d created the world, this is meaningful only within the framework of the Torah, but meaningless in science, (just as beauty is meaningless in science) and thus cannot contradict science. Creation is a scientifically meaningless concept. The account of Creation in the Torah

The Jewish Observer / December, 1966



GET ANSWER FROM 'BRACHOS BEE'

How Would You Thank God For That Strawberry Popsicle?

NEW YORK — How do you thank God for a strawberry popsicle? What kind of a “bracha” (blessing) do you recite before partaking of a matzo ball? pie a la mode? Since thanks to the Creator in very short Hebrew blessings is usually expressed in specific food categories (fruit of the tree, fruit of the earth, varieties of sustenance, etc.) what kind of a “bracha” is recited when eating an ice cream sandwich — a combination of foods? Do you thank God first for the cracker (grain) or the ice cream (a catch all formula — a “thank you” to God who has created everything)?

These and other questions were posed to Hebrew day school students — champion blessing reciters and “knowers” — at a unique “Brachos Bee” sponsored by the National Conference of Yeshiva Principals, an affiliate of Torah Umesorah, the National Society for

spelling bee — known to all school children — the “Brachos Bee” used the spelling bee approach in a number of Hebrew day schools in the New York City area to select individual school champions in the three pupil divisions of juniors, intermediates and seniors. Borough champions were then selected and tension was, indeed, high as the finals were reached where the city-wide champions were crowned before a select audience of school champions, educators and a panel of judges — rabbis and scholars who were chosen because of their superiority in Talmud and the Jewish Codes.

According to Rabbi David Price, principal of Yeshiva of Prospect Park, Brooklyn, N. Y. and co-ordinator of New York City’s first “Brachos Bee,” the seven champions showed charming poise as well as a wide range of knowledge.



Aryeh Nudell, 13, of Baltimore, with a

COLLECTIBLES

Bubble Gum Not Included

“Hey, I’ll trade you a Ruderman for a Feinstein!” No, this is not a proposed baseball-card swap, but the kind of deal that might occur among children with a religious bent: trading

 Chops Chewing
**CENT
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 GEDOLIM**
 A Reprinting of
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 Gedolim Set Issues
**COLLECT BOTH
 CARDS**

Building blocks of Binyan Blocks... One of my partners was building a shul out of Lego with his kids, and he realized that the pieces were really limited in what they allowed you to do. He approached me and said, “Let’s create something that *heimish* kids can enjoy.” A lot of the Lego themes out there aren’t so appropriate for *frum* kids. We wanted to create Legos that could be used to build the things that are more meaningful to us.

We didn’t have a lot of experience with manufacturing, so we joined forces with a neighbor of his who had experience with manufacturing in China, and we looked for a manufacturer who could create the Lego blocks to our specifications.

BINYAN BLOCKS
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 OF BINYAN BLOCKS

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What I do today... I do product design, which means planning our next series, hiring an artist to draw the stickers, creating the labels, designing the boxes, and more. I hire 3D artists, in places like Spain and Poland, to create pictures of the product before it’s ready, otherwise we wouldn’t have any picture to put on the box when it comes out!

Our newest releases... We recently came out with a Duplo-size set, we got a lot of requests for that. Although in general we try to make smaller sets that are more affordable, a lot of people asked for a yeshivah, so we created that too. Now for Chanukah, we’re releasing a menorah, complete with lights and music. That took almost a year to develop, we needed to have the manufacturer so it would all work properly.

The most unexpected reaction I’ve ever gotten... I’ve gotten e-mails from non-Jews asking for our sets because they’re very wholesome, without movie themes. One woman, though, wrote to complain that since the women in our Shabbos scene are wearing skirts, they can’t sit down! She wanted to know why we discriminate against women. I explained that Orthodox Jews hold women in the highest regard, but for reasons of modesty, the women wear skirts. That was an interesting experience.

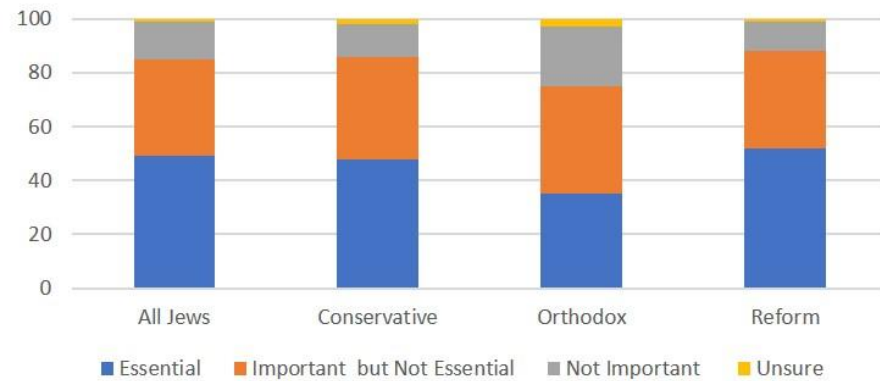
The nicest feedback... A *frum* pediatric oncologist e-mailed me that he’d ordered our toys for his patients, and they loved them. In response, we sent him a case of Binyan Block dreidels last Chanukah, and he wrote, “I can’t thank you enough for the joy you’ve brought my patients.”

The hardest part of the process... is dealing with the manufacturers! They’ll make us a sample and send it to us, and sometimes it just doesn’t look right or it doesn’t hold together as we thought it would. It’s a process of communicating and redoing until we feel it’s ready for production.

AM UP AN IDEA OF A NEW TOY OR GIMMICK? DON’T LET YOUR DREAM, IT JUST MIGHT HAPPEN ONE DAY!

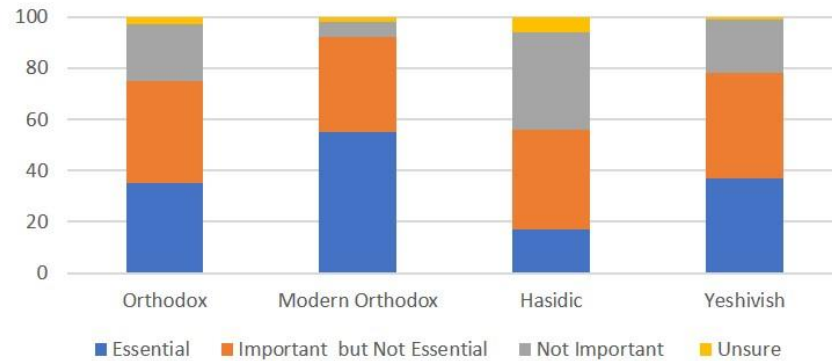
“Binyan Blocks,” *Mishpacha Junior* 636 (November 23, 2016): 25.

The Importance of Intellectual Curiosity to Jewishness



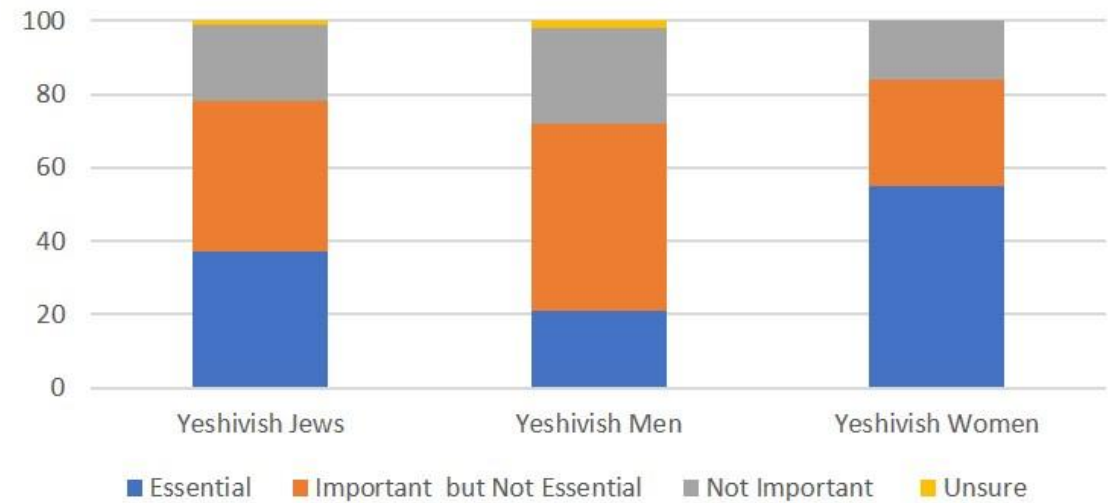
Based on data gathered by the Pew Research Forum. Available at <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>

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“This was a challenging case,” remarked Mr. Kurzmann in an interview with *Yated*. “We were seeking to defend the *rebbetzins*’ right to claim clergy privilege without redefining the term “*rebbetzin*” or misrepresenting the *mesorah*.”

Mr. Kurzmann agreed with Rabbi Fischer that it was reasonable to argue that despite Orthodoxy’s position that women cannot be ordained rabbis, the *kollel* wives were in fact officially hired by the *Kollel* to “minister” to the community in crucial ways that overlapped with the duties of clergy.

“Ordainment – *semicha* - is about *halacha*, applicable to men exclusively. While women have no authority in that area, we were determined to prove that they do have the authority under Orthodox Judaism to educate, guide and inspire, especially regarding family and marriage issues.” Kurzmann said.

“Even more important, we wanted to demonstrate that in contemporary times, a *rebbetzin* can be so defined even if the woman is not the wife of a rabbi. There are several examples of renowned *rebbetzins* whose husbands are fine upstanding Jews but not rabbis.”


9/16/2020 A Female Rabbi? Just Don't Call Her That - Bloomberg

Opinion

A Female Rabbi? Just Don't Call Her That

Judge validates the idea that Orthodox women can be clergy.

By Noah Feldman
September 27, 2015, 10:00 AM CDT



Will women tak
Is what you
Jewish news,
Oregon, holding that the answer is yes.

The twist is that the women who successfully asserted the privilege were members of a branch of Orthodox Judaism known as “yeshivish,” which staunchly denies that women can be rabbis or even rabbinic advisers. Their argument was that the rabbi’s wife is, practically speaking, a kind of adjunct clergywoman in whom female members of the community confide in the expectation of privacy.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2015-09-27/a-female-rabbi-just-don-t-call-her-that>

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The idea of *mesorah* is often mistaken as a mere historical record of Jewish practice. That misunderstanding, combined with both the absence of historical uniformity of normative practice, and the gradual evolution of *halakhah*, can be misconstrued as compromising the authenticity of *mesorah*. Authentic *mesorah* is rather an appreciation for, and application of, tradition as the guide by which new ideas, challenges and circumstances are navigated.

Notably, the Rav turned to the halakhic ethos in explaining the prohibition of praying in a synagogue with mixed gender seating.¹³ While the Rav briefly mentioned (but did not elaborate upon) possible legal concerns, his arguments relate primarily to the precedent of separate areas for men and women in the *Beit HaMikdash*, as well as various aspects of the “Jewish spirit of prayer.” The Rav’s global understanding of the Torah system led him to vehemently oppose the structural changes being suggested in the Orthodox synagogue of his time.¹⁴

The same is true of the Rav’s nuanced embrace of secular knowledge and modern civilization. Based on his Torah *weltanschauung*, Rav Soloveitchik developed Avraham’s words to Ephron in *Parashat Chayei Sarah*, “*Ger v'toshav anokhi imakhem*” (*Bereishit* 23:4), “I am a stranger and an inhabitant with you,” into a sophisticated, practical philosophy for engaging the world.¹⁵

Moreover, embracing the inner logic of *halakhah* as a source of values is the *sine qua non* for navigating this engagement with society in a manner that is in consonance with the Torah. Our community’s mandate to understand both the world

13 “On Seating and Sanctification,” in Litvin, Baruch, *The Sanctity of the Synagogue*, third edition, pp. 114-118.
14 Similarly, the Rav’s approach to the question of interfaith dialogue was primarily guided by Torah values. See “Confrontation” in *Tradition*, 1964, vol. 6 #2 and *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, pp. 259-265.
15 Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Rav Speaks*, pp. 70-80.

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