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תכלה שנה וקללותיה
תחל שנה וברכותיה

In this issue

REMEMBERING RABBI NACHMAN BULMAN זצ"ל

Rabbi Mendel Weinbach • Rabbi Hillel Goldberg
Rabbi Leonard Oppenheimer • Rabbi Zev Kahn

Also

The Torah Map of America – Revisited

Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller

Yamim Noraim Reflections

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Yahrzeit

September 11 / 23 Elul

Anniversaries are ripe with meaning and charged with emotional resonance – with joy or sorrow, with hope or sense of loss, depending on the event they mark. A prime example is September 11, the day that in a matter of ninety minutes the Twin Towers, icon of America’s financial preeminence, and a section of the Pentagon Building, the nerve-center of America’s unrivaled military might, came crashing down. With them came the loss of our country’s sense of invulnerability.

A first *Yahrzeit* brings the initial year to a close and ends a period of mourning – mourning for loss of innocent lives, mourning for precious brothers and sisters who were caught in the inferno and left behind bereaved families and stricken communities, mourning the loss of America’s imperviousness to physical attack. And then there is the shock from the loss of a symbol that proclaimed for all the world that even the sky is no limit to American growth and unchallenged superiority.

On a personal level, a *Yahrzeit* is an encounter of sorts on a spiritual plane,

■
An event of such magnitude that took place on the eve of Rosh Hashana surely carries a compelling message to us as Jews.
■

with the essence of the departed. Their *neshamos* are summoned for a review of the Divine judgment. And the survivors experience a closeness, as they evaluate

their loss once again, and draw lessons, and find inspiration and instruction, from each person’s contributions and achievements. Even as the wounds are open afresh, there is a concomitant healing and a growth of sorts, as well.

In the case of the World Trade Center, we cringe in horror at the brutality of those who perpetrated the atrocity. At the same time, we become awe-struck once again at the fullest measure of devotion expressed by New York City’s fire-fighters, police and rescue personnel, as well as countless volunteers – valiant *Hatzolah* members prominent among them – who risked all... and, at times, gave all – to save others.

As we pause, we also experience a profound appreciation for the kinship we feel with all of our fellow Americans – not just for a sense of shared victimization, but for all the blessings of living in a country that not only tolerates our path of worship and *avodas Hashem* (service to G-d), but welcomes its flourishing. Indeed, we are all in this together, and perhaps we can draw a straight line between shared blessings

and shared suffering. As Jews, and as Americans, we were – and are – targets of the destructive hatred of those who do not see room on this planet for our chosen ways of life.

There are a number of lessons that we would do well to review and reinforce on this *Yahrzeit* and continue to reflect on even after it passes. If, indeed, in the wake of September 11, Americans in general and New Yorkers in particular have felt a need to devote more time and attention to the spiritual dimensions of their lives, how much more so should we Jews, the People of the Torah, do the same. Suffering a humbling blow in terms of physical might and material glory can in its way be an impetus for dedicated spiritual growth.

Those who mark the passage of time by the civil calendar think in terms of “9/11.” We Jews live by the rhythms of the lunar year, and to us, 23 Elul is the *Yahrzeit* of that cataclysm. An event of such magnitude that took place during the days of *Selichos*, on the eve of Rosh Hashana – and now is being revisited during the same season of introspection – surely carries a compelling message to us as Jews. The call of the hour – and the year, for that matter – issued by political leaders was one of “Let us continue our lives as usual. We will show the enemy that we have not surrendered!” It is a call worth listening to. Our teachers of Torah, however, issued another call, as well, summoning us to respond to an alarm that echoes the shofar’s cry, “Wake up! Wake up from your slumbering!” On this *Yahrzeit*, we should review the words spoken by *Gedolei Yisroel*¹ in the aftermath of 23 Elul, and follow their directives – their remarks, reflections, and recommendations – as we prepare to continue to build on the deep impression of what is commonly referred to as Ground Zero.

¹ We refer the reader, for example, to essays based on addresses by Rabbi Matisyahu Salomon (the *Mashgiach* of Bais Medrash Gavoha in Lakewood) and Rabbi Yaakov Perlow (Novominsker *Rebbe* and *Rosh Agudas Yisroel*) among others, published in this journal last October and November.

Yes, it *is* a time to build – in realms of the spirit. After all, aren’t we Jews well-versed in finding paths through mountains of ashes, and building impressive edifices on tragedy-scarred terrain? Isn’t translating prophetic visions and

timeless hopes into thriving realities – especially with the approach of the New Year – our People’s sacred mission? Isn’t this a most appropriate time to respond to this call?
N.W.

Rav Bulman *zt”l* Had One Last Dream...



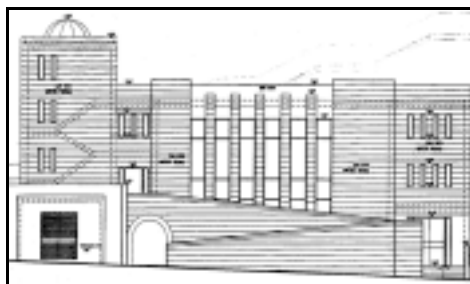
Rav Nachman Bulman *zt”l* gave all he had to the Jewish people. He gave his time. He gave his health. He gave himself.

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Rabbi Nachman Bulman זצ"ל

– An Appreciation

“Father, father, chariot of Israel and its horsemen.”

There were two occasions when this painful outcry was recorded in sacred writings – uttered by someone who mourned the passing of a leader of his generation, expressing a sense of inadequacy to take up the mantle of responsibility bequeathed to him.

The first was when the Prophet Elisha saw his master, Eliyahu Hanavi, taken up to heaven in a storm. The second was when Rabbi Akiva encountered the funeral procession of his mentor, Rabbi Eliezer, on its way from Kesari to Lod on a *Motza’ei Shabbos*. And it has been echoed again and again in similar circumstances.

It was on *Motza’ei Shabbos, Parshas Mattos-Massei* (July 6), that this cry was heard from a huge crowd of *talmidim* and admirers who gathered at one o’clock in the morning in the *Beis Hamidrash* of Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim for the funeral of Rabbi Nachman Bulman זצ"ל.

The cry of “Father, father” truly expresses the grief felt not only by those at the late night funeral but by countless thousands in *Eretz Yisroel*, the United States and throughout the world

Rabbi Weinbach, *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, is author of several books on the teachings of the Chofetz Chaim as well as *127 Lessons From Megillas Esther*, and *Turnabout*, based on the *Malbim’s* commentary on *Esther* (Feldheim).



Rabbi Bulman at dedication of new Torah scroll, Beis Midrash Nachliel in Neve Yaakov.

whose lives were transformed by the impact of Reb Nachman’s Torah, his personality and his love for every Jew.

“Father, father,” says the Midrash, means “Father and mother.” Reb Nachman, like Eliyahu Hanavi and Rabbi Eliezer, was both father and mother to

his *talmidim* in Ohr Somayach and his congregants in the communities in America and *Eretz Yisroel* whom he served as *Rav* for many decades. He was the wise father sharing his wealth of Torah with his beloved children and guiding them with his profound Torah

hashkafa. But he was also the caring and compassionate mother to whom men and woman of all ages came with their personal problems, and left his presence with lighter hearts and clearer minds.

“Chariot of Israel and its horsemen” is explained by *Targum Yonasan ben Uziel* as “Your *tefillos* were more valuable to Israel than chariots and riders.”

All of these aspects – father, mother, and the praying protector of his people – found such poignant expression on that Yom Kippur eve in Ohr Somayach a quarter of a century ago when our beloved Mashgiach, having lifted our souls with his Kol Nidrei, ascended to the Aron Kodesh platform to speak words of chizuk.

“It is traditional,” he said to the hundreds of talmidim, “for parents to bless their children at the outset of Yom Kippur. Since your parents are not here to do so, I will act as their shaliach, their proxy.”

And there he stood in his kittel, with tears in his eyes, reciting the blessing of the Chaye Adam to his “children,” who suddenly realized that for them he was a father, a mother and a protective shield.

Reb Nachman was the true *ish eshkalos*...the man of many diverse talents, which he dedicated to *avodas Hashem*. His articulate tongue brought the truth and beauty of the Torah to



audiences throughout the world. His brilliant pen and literary genius launched *The Jewish Observer*, and created the English version of the Torah classic *Book of Our Heritage*. He set a standard for the rabbinate in America with his courageous championing of *daas Torah*, and emerged as a spokesman for genuine Orthodoxy. He made his secular knowledge a tool for communicating Torah values to a modern generation.

AS SEVERE A LOSS AS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BEIS HAMIKDASH

The death of a *tzaddik*, say *Chazal*, is as severe a blow as the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* (*Rosh Hashana* 18a). This comparison, as it relates to the passing of Reb Nachman, is illuminated by an

insight offered by the *Iyun Yaakov*:

A *tzaddik* does not leave this world, say *Chazal* (*Yoma* 38), until another *tzaddik* appears to replace him. Why, then, are we so distraught by the passing of a *tzaddik*?

The answer lies in the mourning we express till this very day for the destruction of the First *Beis Hamikdash*. Why cry for the destruction of that Temple when it was replaced by a second one? *Hashem* indeed gave us the opportunity to build that Second *Beis Hamikdash*, but it lacked five elements that distinguished the first one – there was no *aron kodesh* with its *kapores* and *keruvim* to serve as a repository for the *Luchos Habris* (Tablets of the Law) and *Sefer Torah*; fire from heaven in the form of a lion did not descend to the altar; the *Shechina*, which invested the first *Mikdash* with such sanctity, was missing; the *Ruach Hakodesh*, which imbued men with prophecy, was not there; and the *Urim v'Tumim*, which lit up the breastplate of the *Kohein Gadol*, no longer functioned as the transmitter of a Divine response for guidance.

Just as the Second *Beis Hamikdash* served as a replacement but was not quite the same as the first, so, too, the novice leader who replaces the *tzaddik* of a previous generation is never quite the same, for each generation is one step further removed from the source.

How can we replace the role of Reb Nachman as an *aron hakodesh* who was such a great repository of Torah, whether in his role as founder of *Yeshiva Derech Ayson* of Far Rockaway, of a Talmud Torah in a remote community in Virginia, or as *Mashgiach* in *Ohr Somayach*? Where will we find that leonine fire with which he waged battles against compromise in American Jewish life and which helped win the battle against a stadium (planned in 1978 for *Shuafat*, on the edge of Jerusalem, today the location of thriving *Ramat Shlomo*) that threatened *chareidi* neighborhoods in *Yerushalayim*? Where will we be able to have that sense of

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Shechina, which one felt listening to his moving *tefillos* or his words of private counsel? Where can we seek that *ruach hakodesh* anticipation of the future needs of Torah Jews arriving in *Eretz Yisroel* from the Western world, which made Reb Nachman the father or guide of such communities as Betar, Migdal Ha'emek, Telz Stone, Neve Yaakov and many others? And, finally, who will supply us with the unflinching, unequivocal responses to queries on public and private issues which characterized the *Urim VeTumim*?

These have all been lost with the passing of Reb Nachman.

A LINK IN THE GENERATIONAL CHAIN OF MESORAH

But there is yet another perspective of his passing as comparable to *Churban Beis Hamikdash*. In our *Shemoneh Esrei*, we pray for the welfare of *pleitas sofrehim* – the remnants of our scholars. This is a reference to those spiritual giants who serve as a link from one generation to another, creating a golden chain which connects us to the *Beis Hamikdash* and Sinai. When such a generation-bridging figure passes, we sense the trauma of that chain being broken and our links to the *Beis Hamikdash* suffering destruction.

Reb Nachman served his *talmidim* and all who heard him as a link to another generation, another world. His approach to *Gemara* echoed the *derech* of the sacred Lithuanian *yeshivos*, which he had received from his great teachers. His stories about the colorful *Chassidim* in the *Poilshe Shteibel* on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where he grew up, introduced *talmidim* to a hitherto unknown world of *Chassidus*. He blended the wisdom of the Chassidic writings with that of the masters of *Mussar*, inspiring his listeners to strive for the moral perfection of past generations. When he taught the *talmidim* in our Ohr Lagola Leadership Training Program, preparing them for careers in *rabbanus*, *chinuch* and *kiruv*, he connected them to the *Chasam Sofer*, Rabbi Shmshon Rephael Hirsch and Rabbi

Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, and made them feel as if they were fighting the same battles against Reform, Haskala, secular nationalism and compromise that these giants had waged in their countries, and that Reb Nachman had waged in America. When he explained the world views of the Chazon Ish, the Brisker *Rav*, Rabbi Aaron Kotler and Rabbi Elazar Shach, he brought home the depth of *daas Torah* of the previous generation as it applied to our own.

But it was not only in regard to the

spiritual wealth of these generations that he served as a link. The golden chain went back to the *Neviim* who would come alive in his incomparable *shiurim* in *Chumash* and *Nach*, to the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* whose superhuman wisdom and impeccable character seemed to jump off the pages of the *Gemara* or *Midrash* he explained. He enabled us to virtually hear what the *Rambam*, *Chovos Halevavos*, *Mabit*, *Mesillas Yesharim*, the Vilna Gaon and *Reb Tzaddok Hakohein* had to say about our

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

- Only 400 invited guests may be seated at the *chassuna seuda*.
- 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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own lives and aspirations. And when he spoke with such pathos about Jews who chose to be burned at the stake rather than embrace the cross, our eyes welled up with tears as if we were ourselves witnesses to their heroic martyrdom *al Kiddush Hashem*.

He had a brilliant historical perspective of every movement in the Jewish world and every segment. He taught us to understand the ideology of each, to criticize when necessary, but to do so out of compassion and love for a fellow Jew.

HIS LEGACY

Reb Nachman's passing indeed leaves us an orphaned generation, like the children who have lost their father who connected them to the glorious past. For half a century, he taught Torah and Torah values to so many *talmidim* and congregants. But he also taught those of us who were privileged to work with him some powerful lessons: To dedicate every talent and

every experience to *harbotzas* Torah (Torah dissemination) and *avodas Hashem* (service of G-d). To strive constantly to reach higher goals and to set higher standards for our own *talmidim*.

Most of all, he taught an entire world the meaning of *mesiras nefesh*. An intellectual giant who would have been lionized in the secular world chose instead to serve in far-flung rabbinical positions, to deal with youngsters as one of the founding fathers of NCSY, and to dedicate so many years to helping alienated Jews find their way back to their Torah and their people. His remarkable *Rebbetzin* and outstanding children earned a significant share in his self-sacrifice for having made it possible for Reb Nachman to achieve so much in his lifetime. Their example of *mesiras nefesh* will serve as a standard that all of us will strive to live up to. While we may feel inadequate to fill his giant footprints, whatever we succeed in achieving will be to his credit and shall serve as a living monument to his memory. ■

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Modesty: An Adornment For Life

Halachos and Attitudes concerning Tznius of dress and conduct

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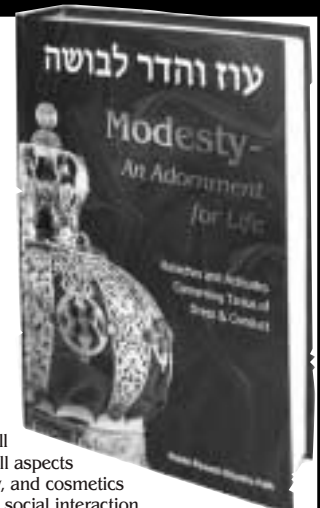
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Unfinished Symphony

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Sympathetic observers commented over the years: Notwithstanding the obvious – Rabbi Nachman Bulman’s extraordinary talents, stature, deeds – he was not always justly recognized for his gifts. His vision of the depths of the Torah, of the integrity of the Torah community, of the connection with the giants in the Torah past, was too fertile to be fully appreciated. His insight was so sharp, so cutting, as to recall the Prophets of old. Did Jeremiah realize his vision of a repentant Jewish people? Rabbi Bulman saw through things, within individual lives and within the community. With his

Rabbi Hillel Goldberg is executive editor of Denver’s *Intermountain Jewish News* and active in a wide variety of outreach efforts, including the *mikveh* team of Torah Community Project. A frequent contributor to these pages, he was represented by “Is Reform Jewry Coming Home?” in the June ’99 *JO*.

piercing vision came a magnitude of aspiration and a certain inevitable pain, and frustration. Things cannot be put right just because the right is seen and the solution is conceivable.

Ah! The scope of his “shortfall.” Rabbi Bulman revolutionized families, seekers, simple people, sophisticated



Rabbi Bulman never wrote his overarching, discursive masterpiece of Jewish thought. He never wrote it: on paper. He wrote it on the human heart.



people. His stopping points were official positions in official institutions, but no less in chance encounters, on countless travels, and over *Shabbos* meals.

Rabbi Bulman built institutions. He had a major hand in founding one *kehilla*, two girls’ seminaries, one *yeshiva*, one synagogue, *The Jewish Observer*, all of which continue to this day. Rabbi Bulman delivered masterful lectures in *yeshivos* and seminaries, and mesmerizing orations at conventions. Quietly, behind the scenes, he delivered

shrewd advice that helped sustain Torah institutions in cities across four continents. Rabbi Bulman translated Eliyahu Kitov’s classic works, setting a standard for accuracy and elegance, and led the prayers for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, setting a standard for emotion and inspiration. Rabbi Bulman coerced, by unrelenting force of intellect and emotion, countless people to see beyond their limited vision. His vision, he did not fully realize; others’ vision, he nurtured, expanded, deepened, layered – individually, literarily, institutionally.

Who mourned his passing? Lithuanian *roshei yeshiva*, Chassidic *rebbe*s, modern Orthodox neighbors, ex-hippie types, *chareidim*, non-religious Jews, scholars, despairing divorcees whose *get* – after countless previous failures – he had successfully secured, penniless orphans whose *shidduchim* he had made, and the families of people who died prematurely, whom he had counseled: the list, in all its variety, is not the final point. Rabbi Bulman never wrote his overarching, discursive masterpiece of Jewish thought, integrating *Mussar*, *Chassidus*, philosophy and Midrash. He never wrote it: on paper. He wrote it on the human heart. People connected to him, not as they might connect vicariously to a public figure, or professionally to a counselor, or pedagogically to a learned rabbi, or lovingly to a fam-

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ily patriarch, though he was a public figure, counselor, rabbi, and patriarch. They connected to him because he did not stand apart. For all his presence and charisma, he was, like he once said of the great Polish *talmid chacham* Rav Menachem Ziemba, a simple Jew, accessible, direct. Who mourned his passing? Surely not least, his students and disciples.

Riveting, humbling: the way he unfolded a text of Torah, even so much as a single line or phrase, unveiling otherwise unseen layers, nuances, made so ample, so striking, under his probing eye

– unfolded which such ease, passion, and precision.

Who is the paradigm? The Baal Shem Tov, who transformed individuals in spiritually charged encounters? It fits: Anyone ever buttonholed by Rabbi Bulman knows the transforming emotion, pungency and *kedusha* of his teaching. Rabbi Israel Salanter, who gave visibility to the Torah's stress on character? It fits: Rabbi Bulman's visceral recoil at lapses in integrity was part of his essence. Rabbi Samson R. Hirsch, who wove tapestries of thought, and who rejected any tactical compromise with non-Orthodox Judaism and secular Zionism – and some of whose descendants settled in Israel? It fits in every particular. Rabbi Bulman would cringe at being included in this esteemed company, but he embodied all of their legacies – but they are not his model. American born, subject to realities they never knew, Rabbi Bulman was his own paradigm, refracting his multifaceted inheritance through his own lens.

An eloquent expositor of all threads of Torah thought, Rabbi Bulman was shaped by the severity of his father, the Gerrer remnants of his childhood, the *lomdus* of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the person of Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner, the ideology of Agudas Yisroel, the thirst for Torah evinced by *ba'alei teshuva*, and the breakdown of the Jewish family. He was both telescope and microscope, reflector of vast knowledge, and acute focus on individual quest.

The wonder is not that Rabbi Bulman left much undone. The wonder is the way he improved on the saying of the Lomzer Yeshiva's *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Moshe Rosenstein: "It takes five hours of thinking to achieve five minutes of pure thought." In Rabbi Bulman's case, every word and gesture seemed to be a pure thought. A concentrated essence. His symphony, if unfinished, was both a kaleidoscope and an unflagging thirst for the absolute simplicity of the most concentrated essence of all, the oneness of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. ■

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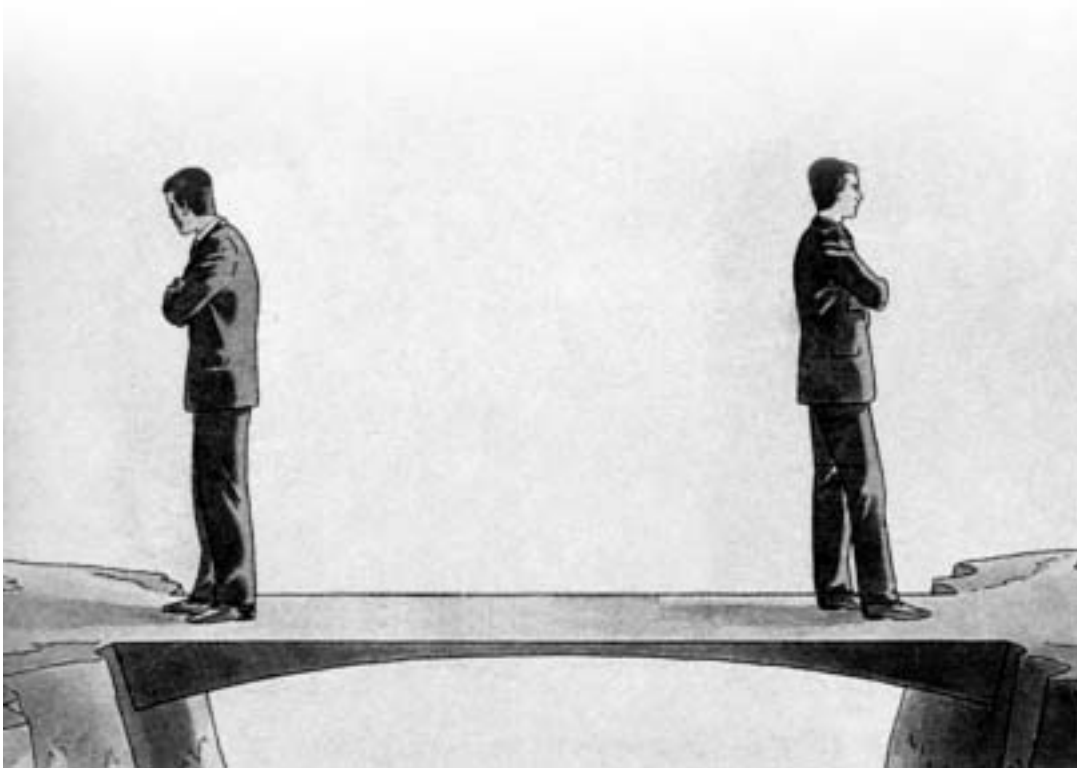
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BEIN ADAM L'CHAVEIRO

...At All Times



Rabbi Yisroel Salanter left a profound and enduring impact upon the world of Torah when he founded what became known as the Mussar Movement. One event that reputedly motivated a very young Reb Yisroel was an incident that occurred on the eve of Yom Kippur. It is recounted in *Nesivos Ohr* by Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer (a disciple of Reb Yisroel).

Reb Yisroel noted a very devout Jew coming toward him. Reb Yisroel asked him something he needed to know (i.e. the time). The man was so overwhelmed with his own teshuva process that he did not answer.

Why, asked Reb Yisroel to himself, should that man's involvement with teshuva have the effect of impeding his required attention to the precepts of *bein adam l'chaveiro* (of interpersonal nature)?

In truth, teshuva and the consequent greater *frumkeit* should strengthen one's observance of all mitzvos. Accordingly, the sincere teshuva of the Yamim Noraim should inspire a heightened sensitivity to *bein adam l'chaveiro* rather than have the opposite effect.

Reb Yisroel apparently saw that man's type of inconsistency as part of a pattern common to many others. He went on to promulgate the Mussar Movement which stressed (among other things) the idea that Jews should direct a special focus on the Torah's precepts of *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

Based on the Torah reading of the first day of Rosh Hashana, this article focuses on one of the daunting challenges faced when seeking to refine one's *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

Rabbi Ganz is a former *talmid* and a *musmach* of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim of Forest Hills, NY. His recently published book, *Defining Humanity – Exploring Torah Insights into Man and Morality* (Feldheim,) contains a series of Mussar-style insights into *Sefer Bereishis*. This article is based on the ninth chapter of that volume.

It is relatively easy to act graciously with others (1) when those other people are themselves gracious and charming, and (2) when personally, one is feeling happy and content. When feeling irritable, however, acting with

exemplary *bein adam l'chaveiro* is a far greater challenge. It is even more difficult when dealing with an annoying or unpleasant individual. Another difficult scenario is when one must express words of dissatisfaction or

Avraham's conduct represents the Torah's ideal. No situation should cause a letdown of one's outpouring of kindness and respect toward others.

rebuke, perhaps to a child, a spouse, a student or an employee. Typically, there has already been a buildup of resentment, hurt, or conflict. So confronting the person and situation with good will and equanimity is exceptionally difficult.

The conduct of Avraham, as described in the Torah reading of the first day of Rosh Hashana, is revealing.

Sarah became convinced that both Hagar and her son Yishmael had to be banished from their household. The *S'forno* explains that this was because the conduct of Yishmael was intolerable and detrimental, and that Hagar

was largely responsible. Avraham was at first reluctant, but then *Hashem* advised him to heed Sarah's counsel.

Avraham was told to evict both Hagar and Yishmael and send them into the desert on a life-threatening journey. Furthermore, according to the *S'forno*, Avraham had to then designate that forever after, the descendants of Yishmael would be subservient to the descendants of Yitzchak.

Yet, the *S'forno* explains that Avraham accompanied them from his home with the same "abundant kindness" that he lavished upon the three guests who had visited him. Avraham's treatment of those guests (described

in *Bereishis* 18) is the Torah's exemplar of how one person should lavish kindness, graciousness and good will upon another.

Avraham loved his son Yishmael as he loved his son Yitzchak (*Bereishis* 22, 2 – *Rashi*). One can easily imagine that with his unequalled kindness and sensitivity, Avraham could have felt distraught over being required to break up his family, relegate his son and wife to eternal subservience, and then send them off into real danger. He could have also perhaps felt bitterness and anger towards Hagar for causing this to happen.

But he was Avraham, the paradigm of *chesed*. Although he enacted the harsh response that was required by *Hashem*, in every other respect he maintained his superlative goodness and gentleness toward Hagar.

Avraham's conduct represents the Torah's ideal. No situation should cause a letdown of one's outpouring of kindness and respect toward oth-

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ers. Even when a word of reproof or a punishment is called for, all other aspects of one's *bein adam l'chaveiro* toward that person must remain at the most exalted of levels.

(It could perhaps be compared to someone who seeks to rid his lawn of some scattered weeds. It would be disastrous if the material used killed all of the grass as well. The objective is to eliminate the weeds while maintaining every bit of the grass's vitality.)

Rabbi Avraham Trop ז"ל (a son of Rabbi Naftali Trop of Radin) developed a somewhat similar point from Rashi in *Bereishis*, 21, 25 (which is also read on of the first day of Rosh Hashana). That *pasuk* describes how Avraham rebuked Avimelech over a well that was stolen. *Rashi* "adds" that he called him to task over "this matter" (the well). But the *pasuk* clearly states that Avraham rebuked Avimelech over "this matter" (the well). What did *Rashi* add to what was clearly stated in the *pasuk*?

Rabbi Trop answered that *Rashi's* words were meant to be exclusionary. *Rashi* was pointing out that Avraham's rebuke concerned "this matter" – that of the well, and that only. This is an important lesson, because criticizing someone face-to-face can easily give rise to a dredging up of numerous other past grievances, totally unconnected to the subject at hand (in modern terms, "kitchen sinking"). Avraham, in his greatness, was above this practice, and thus, *Rashi's* point is that his reprimand of Avimelech was lim-

ited to that one matter only.

We learn from this *Rashi* that rebuke should be issue-specific, and it should not evolve and disintegrate into accusations and condemnations on many different fronts.

The *S'forno* quoted above expands this concept and teaches that at difficult moments, it is not sufficient to merely avoid an escalation into broad-based conflict. Rather, what is required is that the entire interaction should otherwise remain in step with the Torah's loftiest principles of *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

People may disagree with each other — at times, fairly intensely. (As a rule, *machlokes* — feuding — is almost always antithetical to Torah.) Very often, the greatest damage does not emanate from the disagreement itself, but from the overall breakdown in civility and consideration that can accompany strife. Two people arguing over a specific matter may soon find themselves embroiled in an extensive multilevel conflict that can include out-and-out personal defamation and character assassination.

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The Torah calls upon people to strive to refine themselves (this is a lifetime process) to the extent that they will naturally and instinctively act as Avraham did. Then, even in the midst of a difficult situation with another person, the prevailing attitude of kindness, respect and love that characterized the relationship will continue unabated. This will enormously limit the harm that can ensue from an initially circumscribed disagreement.

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There are numerous examples of this dynamic in the everyday interactions between friends, spouses, family, business associates, etc. For example, a husband and wife are at the beginning of a dispute. Accusations are exchanged, and tempers begin to rise. At this critical point, the “*frum*” response is to hear *Rashi* and the *S’forno* speaking. *Rashi* would be saying to them, “If necessary, you may discuss your one point of grievance, but do not dredge up anything else.” The *S’forno* would then say, “Excuse me, *Rashi*! I agree with what you said. However, that is not enough. Not only must they avoid additional complaints, but also, like Avraham, they should act with the greatest consid-

eration imaginable; they must be speaking to each other as affectionately as they did on the day of their marriage. Then they may proceed to their issue.” If people would hearken to these voices at such moments, almost anything in the world would improve – except perhaps for the therapy business.

The discipline of children poses a similar challenge. Chastisement over a finite issue should not evolve into a sweeping denunciation of the child as a person. The habit of sending a unilaterally negative and disapproving message at such moments can cause lasting harm. The ethic of the *S’forno* calls upon the parent or teacher in the midst of rebuke or discipline to maintain the normally warm and supportive attitude toward the child.¹

(And if the parent or teacher does not have a “normally warm and supportive attitude toward the child” - then that would seem to be a far greater problem.)

This also relates to the first point raised regarding one’s conduct when feeling irritable or when dealing with difficult people. Avraham’s exemplary conduct toward Hagar remained unchanged, despite the terrible things that were then transpiring – things for which she was to blame. Certainly, then, one’s level of *bein adam l’chaveiro* should never falter simply because at certain times it is more difficult to act graciously. ■

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¹ After considering the ideas of this article, one can better appreciate the words of Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky. A recently published work mentioned that Reb Yaakov was asked about the advisability of spanking children as discipline. He responded that a young grandson of Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz once turned on the lights on a *Motza’ei Shabbos* before *Havdala*. Reb Baruch Ber called the boy over, and with complete calm, he lovingly said to the child, “You are very dear to my heart, and I bless you with long and good years. However, you just violated an *issur d’rabannan*, and for that you deserve a *potch*.”

Reb Yaakov continued that if a parent would give the child a *potch* with the calm and love that Reb Baruch Ber did, then it could be permitted.

When Grown-Ups are



Helpless

One of the standard hallmarks of childhood is a sense of powerlessness, both in relation to one's family and to the world at large. To be a small person surrounded by giants is an experience all humans share – one which we fully expect to escape one day by turning into adults.

But when, eventually, we do find ourselves disguised as those odd-looking creatures called grown-ups, we discover that “being in control” remains, in fact, a pleasure rarely to be savored. Adulthood offers endless opportunities to feel as helpless as a child.

Thanks to Arab terrorism, life in Israel has never been less than unstintingly generous in this respect. If it's existential truths you're after – insights into the transient nature of our sojourn on the planet and the unpredictability of the universe – then get on an Egged bus to downtown Jerusalem. Walking along the sidewalk, your mind will of itself be attuned keenly not only to each and every passerby (alert to the possibility that the woman coming your way in her *chador* may be large not with child but

with an explosive belt, and that the Israeli soldier with a *kippa* on his head may not be an Israeli soldier with a *kippa* on his head), but exquisitely attuned, as well, to the gloriously soft breeze upon your face. That's how it works. The profound emotional recognition that you are unceasingly, helplessly vulnerable to the world around you heightens not only your anxiety but all your other senses, too. The capacity for joy is deepened, and broadened – a capacity for pleasure in all things large and small. The sky is bluer than blue. Little girls jumping rope – a sudden vision, sometimes, of unearthly loveliness. Simple kindnesses in the course of normal interactions between strangers can be invested with extraordinary poignancy. A Friday night meal in your home, with Shabbat candles flickering and the people you love safely around your table, can induce such a mighty celebration of the heart as to rival the roaring of a happy crowd.

Since human helplessness is obviously one of the main things that life is designed to teach us, one way or another, before we slide off the mortal coil, then getting a crash course such as this can only be to our ultimate advantage. Although we who are fortunate enough to live here cannot claim a corner on the

world market when it comes to suffering — the most cursory reading of any daily newspaper will remind us of tornados in Tennessee, earthquakes in Iran, ongoing brutality against civilians in Sierra Leona, a daughter who disappears in Washington D.C., a daughter kidnapped in Utah — we can indeed boast of being star pupils with front row seats when it comes to learning about the limits of human power. We're being forcibly indoctrinated.

And since as individuals we'd have to absorb the knowledge of our weakness sooner or later, no matter where we were living, it is a great privilege to get the message in a uniquely meaningful fashion, in this setting, under these circumstances, all together as a people. We

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Mrs. Shapiro of Jerusalem is a frequent contributor to these pages, most recently with “Living Where Everything is Ground Zero” (Feb. '02). Her most recent book is *A Gift Passed Along: A Woman Looks at the World Around Her* – ArtScroll.

watch ourselves up on center stage, as prophesied history unfolds.

* * *

In a taxi on the way downtown an hour ago, the 4 p.m. news reported that a warning is out in America that terrorists might be planning an attack on nuclear facilities.

"What was that?" I asked the driver sharply from the backseat. Suspiciousness has become second nature. In a most unwelcome fashion, this bulletin had managed in an instant to unearth that ancient childhood sense of being utterly, maddeningly at the mercy of strangers toying dangerous-

ly with my world.

The driver, an Ethiopian in his early twenties, said "Oh, it's America, *geveret*. Nothing here. Don't worry."

"Don't worry? How can I not worry? My relatives are in America! And that would start a whole new era, and besides, any nuclear radiation over there will get here, too! Don't you know that?"

"Here?" His eyes met mine in his rear-view mirror. He seemed skeptical.

"Yes! Of course, here! Radiation goes everywhere!"

"We are in G-d's hands, *geveret*."

* * *

I'm in the quiet upstairs atrium of a café on Ben Yehuda Street, the pedestrian mall in the center of town where many suicide bombers have detonated themselves over the years, where so many, many Jews have lost their eyes, their hearing, their faces, their hands,

their feet, their children, their parents, their friends, their health, their peace of mind.

We thank You for our souls that are entrusted to You.

An hour ago when I emerged from the taxi, it was a toss-up. Should I come here, to my favorite café, or to the other one, with security guards at the entrance? ... *in Whose hand is the spirit of every human being.* Given the situation not only on this street but in the world, I'm glad to have opted for the greater comfort. From this small cozy corner table that I favor, I glance down watchfully from time to time at the door.

Two ambulances flash by, shrill sirens screaming, and instantly, in an admirable demonstration of Jewish unity, all the coffee-drinkers stiffen, alert. Did something happen? *In Your hand are the souls of the living and the dead.*

Will there be more sirens? *Into Your hand I entrust my spirit.*

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A FEW THOUGHTS ON A MOTZA'EI SHABBOS

Last *Motza'ei Shabbos*, as usual, I took a long walk with a close friend. After briskly circling the neighborhood, and sighing over the difficulties of life, we hurriedly returned home to our families.

It was then that I noticed Avi.

Avi is not religious. His family is, but he is not. Until very recently, he was addicted to hard drugs. Today he is struggling to rebuild his life – and his relationship with *Hashem* – after having freed himself of his abusive habit.

Avi was perched on the bench outside of his parents' apartment house, staring into nothingness. A cigarette dangled from his mouth.

I greeted Avi with a warm smile and asked him how he's doing.

"Terrible," he replies.

"Something's the matter?"

"Yes."

It was obvious that Avi could barely continue. "My close friend just died – tonight. He was critically wounded in the bombing last week."

I have known Avi since he was an infant, and felt myself almost overwhelmed by my desire to hold this child and protect him from the cruel world that surrounds us. But that, of course, was not possible.

I can only stand and share in his sorrow.

"When did you find out?" I ask.

"I was with him... tonight... when he died."

There are times that words can only be superfluous. There was nothing that I could possibly say. I stood for a few more minutes near the entrance to our building and shared in Avi's pain.

Debbie Shapiro, a professional writer in Jerusalem whose byline appears weekly in the American *Yated Ne'eman*, has had articles published in these pages, most recently, "Food For The Soldiers," (April '02).

We probably seemed an odd pair. Me, an ultra-Orthodox grandmother, busy raising a large family. Avi, a recovered drug addict, dressed in cut-off blue jeans and a ragged t-shirt.

But we were joined together in our

pain for *Am Yisroel*.

As I turn away to enter my apartment building, I found myself silently asking *Hashem* to give Avi – and all of *Klal Yisroel*, for that matter – the strength to grow from these challenging days. ■

Dear Oorah,

Things have really changed since you came into my life.

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I wish people knew what a difference using Cucumber has made for me. Thank you, Oorah, and please say thank you to all your friends who have chosen Cucumber.

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We were perfect strangers. Yet, the Bostoner *Rebbe* invited us for *Shabbos* right over the phone. We were newly married, checking out housing possibilities in the Boston area. We didn't give it a second thought: the *Rebbe* invited us for *Shabbos* and so we went. Years later, having had many children and hundreds of *Shabbos* guests of our own, I realized what it meant for a husband to invite guests without first checking with his wife. It meant: His wife agrees. In the *Rebbetzin's* case it meant: Invite as many as you want. It even meant: The more you invite, the more I accomplish in life.

The passing of the Bostoner *Rebbe's* wife, *Rebbetzin* Raichel Horowitz, was a penetrating loss for the countless thousands who had been the recipient of her unreserved *chesed*. The *Rebbetzin* was the utterly reliable provider of meals, beds, advice, comfort, cheer and hope for the entire spectrum of humanity. It is difficult to describe this credibly; if you did not witness it, you will think I exaggerate.

We went to the *Rebbe's* for *Shabbos* that hot summer weekend over 30 years ago. We noticed: Many others went, too. The *Rebbe* and the *Rebbetzin* ran what they called an "open house." Open to the charity collectors from Israel. Open to very ill people seeking major cures. Open to students from Brandeis, Harvard, MIT and other uni-

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versities in the area. Open to friends in Boston and outside Boston. Open to relatives – and open to all of these people's children.

The home of Bostoner *Chassidim* had three floors just for guests. After a while, a separate building (with eight apartments) was secured just for the medical patients. Week in and week out, year in and year out – for decades – *Rebbetzin* Raichel Horowitz prepared *Shabbos* meals for 10 to 40 people. Some of the medical patients willingly pitched in for the *Shabbos* preparations. Compared to the advice, warmth, prayers and hope that the *Rebbe* and *Rebbetzin* supplied, it seemed very little to help the *Rebbetzin* prepare for the huge *Shabbos* crowd.

The unstated message was this: You were not repaying a favor. You weren't actually helping out the *Rebbetzin* or the *Rebbe* – because they were not helping each other. This was not a model of a marriage in which spouses respected and cared for each other. This was much more. When the *Rebbe* invited us for *Shabbos*, it was not because he wanted to and knew his wife would go along; it was because they both wanted to come closer to G-d. They were working for a higher cause. They both believed that *chesed* – reaching out to and caring for other people – was a major path to G-d. Their marriage was not in service of each other, but in service of G-d. This is why so many gladly rolled up their sleeves for the *Rebbetzin*.

Rebbetzin Horowitz invited couples into her home for months at a time. One

of our most beautiful memories came at a Beth Jacob High School of Denver graduation some years ago. A student from out of town had been friends with one of our daughters for four years. It was not until graduation that we met her parents. They looked familiar. Finally, we put it together. Some 19 years earlier, they were the couple that the *Rebbetzin* had taken in so that they could undergo fertility treatment in Boston. They had endured countless disappointments. My wife and I remembered the *Rebbetzin* encouraging them, month after month. They stayed at her home more than a year! Now, 19 years later, we realized that this friend of our own daughter – this graduate – was the fruit of that medical treatment.

In 1996, the *Rebbetzin* published *The Boston Rebbetzin Remembers: Rebbetzin Raichel Horowitz of Boston / Har Nof Recalls Jewish Life in Poland, America and Israel* (ArtScroll).

Violence marked the *Rebbetzin's* early years. She came to the US in the 1920's, but her sister remained behind. So did countless relatives – all killed in the Holocaust. Their murder was hardly a distant happening. Raichel Horowitz had returned to Poland for long visits twice. She knew her family well; with eloquence and pain she expresses her ache over their absence. Then there were the pogroms, illnesses, and premature deaths she witnessed. Through it all, she remained an optimist, giving her the fortitude for the life she

eventually chose with the *Rebbe*.

Her parents divorced when she was four; her mother and stepfather, "Cleveland-Nadvorna *Rebbe*," ran an open house – also preparation for her married life. She grew up with *meshullachim* (charity fundraisers) and other visitors, some of whom were mentally ill. Her exposure to Chassidic *Rebbs*, Polish anti-Semites, ne'er-do-wells, *tzaddikim* and American, non-Jewish public school classmates gave the *Rebbetzin* an inexhaustible pool of wisdom even before she met the *Rebbe*. Then, through exposure to countless *Shabbos* guests, medical specialists, brilliant students, impoverished drifters and religious seekers – not to mention her own, five accomplished children – the *Rebbetzin* knew exactly what she stood for and what she wanted to do: *chessed*. Aptly, her memoir had two unintended consequences. It revealed that she was older than the *Rebbe*, which gave hope to older, unmarried girls; and it revealed that for years she had been raised by a single mother, which gave hope to single parents. *Chessed*.

By the time the *Rebbe* and *Rebbetzin* moved to Israel half-time in the mid-1980's, their children were following in their footsteps. For example, in Jerusalem, the *Rebbetzin* could spread the wealth – the guests – among two children who lived in the Har Nof neighborhood. Even so, the *Rebbe* and *Rebbetzin* still invited guests; their apartment was packed for *Kiddush* and *Havdalah*.

At these events I looked around and saw young people, just as we had been many years before. The *Rebbe* and *Rebbetzin* had not reached out to us because this is what they were doing at that stage of their lives. Singles, newlyweds, students, *Chassidim*, medical cases, friends, relatives: the *Rebbe* and *Rebbetzin* were reaching out to these people their entire lives.

The diversity of people whom the *Rebbetzin* could relate to in Boston was dazzling. In Jerusalem, the range widened still more, with even the most traditional denizens of Me'ah She'arim added to the mix. Secular students

rubbed shoulders with people decked out in *Yerushalmi* garb, utterly removed from the secular world of Boston. But the *Rebbetzin* made everyone feel com-

fortable together. Age did not slow her schedule or commitment. Only her final illness did that. May her example continue to inspire us. ■

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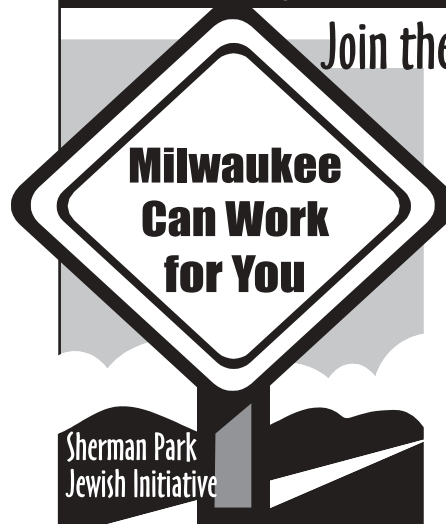
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