

West Side Institutional Review

Vol. X, No. 29

Friday, March 28, 1947

Nisan 7, 5707

BRIEF OBSERVATIONS ON AMERICAN JEWISH EDUCATION



By Rabbi O. Z. Fasman
President — Hebrew Theological
College — Chicago, Ill.

It is a common cry that our Hebrew schools do not teach the children enough. The hours of study have been curtailed, the teachers themselves are not sufficiently informed, the curriculum has been watered down—these are some of the accepted explanations for the inadequacy of the knowledge a child receives, when he attends the average type of Jewish school. There is, however, an even greater tragedy. Whatever knowledge is given to the child is rarely translated into specific action. Thus, there is hardly a Hebrew school in America, no matter how poorly organized in which the children are not taught the benedictions to be recited for the various foods. On the other hand, there is hardly a Hebrew school in America in which you could ask the children in the third year of their studies the blessing to be recited before drinking milk and get the correct answer. The reason is simply that teachers give their instruction in a detached theoretical form, and the pupil is not encouraged to introduce it into the reality of his daily life. Illustrations of this kind can be multiplied extensively and they all underscore the basic fault; namely, not only do our schools fail to teach enough, but they neglect to implement even the little they do teach

The Hebrew teacher of the old school was not a pedagogue, so that invariably he violated many elementary principles of educational

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CONGREGATIONAL SEDORIM April 4th and 5th

This coming Monday, March 31st is the last day that reservations will be accepted for our Congregational Sedorim to be held at the Hotel Riverside Plaza, 253 West 73rd Street. The price of \$8.75 per person, each night, includes all gratuities.

Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein will conduct the services and Cantor Zalman Yavneh will lead in the singing of the traditional Seder melodies.

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS BEFORE MONDAY.

DONORS TO THE YESHIVA APPEAL

There has been a generous response by our Congregation to the appeal made in the synagogue on behalf of 105 Yeshivas abroad, in addition to national institutions in the United States. The following have sent in their contributions since last week:

Emanuel Fine, Maurice Greenstein, Morris Jablow, Miss Regina Levy, Mrs. Esther Rauch, Mrs. Tillie Rosenthal, Abraham Rossett, Dan and Ralph I. Schacter, Samuel W. Siegel and Irving M. Schuyler.

Won't you join in this heart-warming procession?

PASSOVER RELIEF

If you have not already made your contribution for Moes Chitim—Passover Relief, will you please mail your check made out to Joint Passover Relief, to the W.S.I.S., 122 West 76th Street, attention of Mrs. Harry Ward, Chairman.

"G-D WILL BE THERE".

One day the telephone in the office of the Rector of President Roosevelt's Washington Church rang, and an eager voice said: "Tell me, do you expect the President to be in Church this Sunday?"

"That", the minister explained patiently, "I cannot promise". But we expect G-D to be there, and we fancy that will be incentive enough for a reasonably large attendance."

We agree that the only incentive to come to Shule is to join our fellow Jews in prayer. Everything else is incidental. G-d will be there.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Souvenir Album — Dinner-Dance

Guest of Honor —
George L. Livingston

Plans are now being perfected and a General Committee is being organized for our Tenth Anniversary celebration, which will include a Dinner-Dance at the Waldorf Astoria, on June 10, and a Souvenir Album, which will be presented to our Guest of Honor, our Director George L. Livingston.

This will be our first Dinner-Dance since the beginning of the war. We look forward with confidence to the aid and co-operation of each and every friend of this institution.

THE PUBLIC KASHERING OF VESSELS AND SALE OF CHOMETZ

The public kashering of utensils will take place at our Synagogue on Thursday morning, April 3rd, between 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M.

Rabbi Hurwitz will be available at the Synagogue for the sale of Chometz every evening of the week from 5 P.M. to 9 P.M., and every morning from 6 A.M. to 9 A.M.

We urge our readers to attend to this matter promptly.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S COUNCIL ONEG SHABBUS

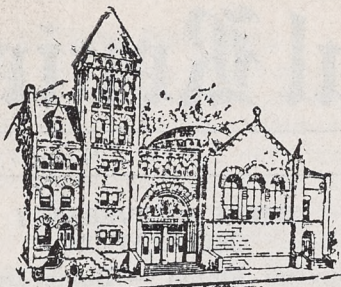
Tonight at 8:30 P.M., at our building, the Young People's Council will hold its weekly Oneg Shabbus.

The evening will feature a debate on the current, "Palestinian Situation." Ned Kirsh will defend the methods of the so-called Terrorists, while Dan Schacter will espouse the cause of the Haganah. Refreshments will be served.

All the young men and women of the Congregation are invited to attend.

SENIOR BASKETBALL TEAM

Our Senior Basketball team under the leadership of Ned Kirsh, now plays every Wednesday night, at 7:30 P.M. on the Basketball Court of P.S. 87, 77th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. All the young men of the Congregation are invited to participate.



WEST SIDE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

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Rabbi H. S. Goldstein Editor
Lester A. Lazarus.....Ass't. Editor
Morris Jablow Managing Editor

"THE UNFAILING LIGHT"

"The Unfailing Light" represents the memoirs of the late Dr. Bernard Drachman of blessed memory. It is the biography of one of the very few English-speaking orthodox rabbis of the last generation. It gives us the history of Judaism in America during the last seventy years. In it are found interesting sidelights on the Chief Rabbinate of Great Britain, the foundation of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the inside story of many other institutions in this country.

Dr. Drachman relates his contacts with the historic personalities of the generation from which we are now emerging. He also gives many amusing sidelights of a rabbi's life. We are anxious to see that this book of memoirs reaches every home. It may be purchased by sending a check of four dollars to the Synagogue.

Dr. Drachman was graduated from Columbia College and received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Heidelberg. His English is excellent; and his style is clear.

"The Unfailing Light" is an important contribution both to American and Jewish history. It should be widely read.



280th COMMANDMENT A Commoner May Not Eat of the Holy Food

By Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein

A layman, namely, one who is not a priest, may not eat of the holy food, for it is written in Leviticus, Chapter 22 Verse 10, "There shall no stranger eat of the holy thing." The holy thing refers here to "Terumah" the 2% of the produce given to the Priests from the Israelites. The word תְּרוּמָה also includes the "Bikkurim," "the first fruits." The Bible ascribes to Bekkurim the words, וְתְרוּמַת יָדָךְ. Although "Terumah" is not regarded as the highest stage of sanctity because it was allowed to be eaten in all of Palestine (not merely in Jerusalem), nevertheless a non-priest was not permitted to eat thereof.

"AS
R'CHASH
SEES
IT"

The purpose of this commandment is to indicate the lofty position in which sanctity was regarded in Israel. The wives and the children and the Cananitish slaves which the Israelites possessed were permitted to eat of the "Terumah," and they were allowed to give of it to their animal and beasts, but not to men and women outside of the Priesthood. A Priest's wife, although she separated herself from him but was not divorced, was permitted to eat of the "Terumah" as we read in our Verse, "A tenant of a priest or a hired servant was not to eat of the holy thing."

Any defiled priest or priestess was forbidden to eat the "Terumah."

An uncircumcized priest was also forbidden to eat of the "Terumah".

All these laws refer to male and female. One who trespassed this law premeditatedly, was guilty of excision since it is written in verse 9 of our Chapter "And die therefor", meaning death by the hand of heaven and if he was warned, he received stripes for violating by an act, a negative commandment, for it is written in our verse, "No common man shall eat of the holy thing."

Brief Observations on American Jewish Education

(Continued from Page 1)

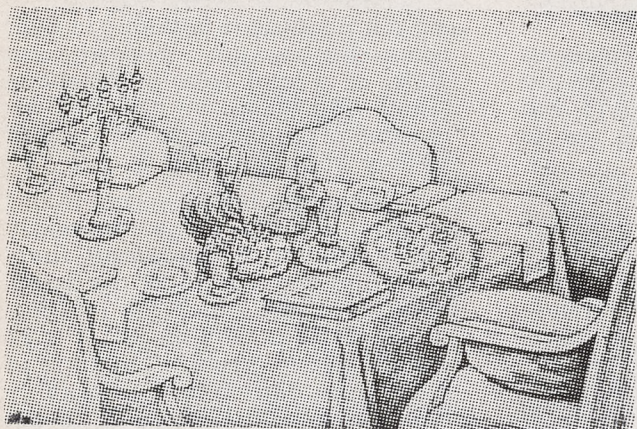
psychology. It is false, however, to say that he could accomplish a great deal only because he had the child for long periods and he had the complete cooperation of the home. There was one other factor that is overlooked in such an analysis. The Hebrew teacher of the old school fervently believed in what he was teaching, was fanatically convinced that the very soul of his charges depended upon his success, and was fiercely in earnest. The average teacher of our day lacks this flaming quality. The child does not sense in him an unshakable belief, an overwhelming faith, an all-consuming urge to lead him to salvation. The highest compliment the pupil can pay him is to refer to him as a "nice guy" or a "pretty good fellow". Where the teacher enters the room with the attitude that the sound of the bell starts him on his job and the sound of the bell releases him from it, the child sees in the period what is at best a pleasant diversion from regular interests, but never anything more than a di-

version. One cannot visualize Moses or the prophets delivering their message with utter detachment, and one cannot expect to transmit their instruction effectively without the fiery enthusiasm implicit in the teachings.

The modern Hebrew school generally underestimates the amount of knowledge a child can absorb and the amount of practice he is ready to exercise. The initial assumption in most schools is that the youngster will never master half as much in a year as his European father obtained in a week, and this assumption weakens the effort of the teacher before it even gets started. Experience has shown that American Jewish children can learn rapidly, when taught rapidly; can learn intensively, when taught intensively, will observe comparatively difficult ritual laws, when properly urged to observe them. Sometimes a teacher who asserts categorically that the ten year old boys he has can never be persuaded to pray in the morning before going to school is amazed to discover that other teachers, taking over the very same children, have most of them if not all, recit-

(Continued on Page 4)

THE LAWS AND SYMBOLISM OF PASSOVER



Rabbi Goldstein gives us the following explanation of the laws and customs of Passover:

Chometz:

We are to search for the chometz (leaven) on the night preceding the Seder (Thursday night) and burn it the following morning. We are not only forbidden to eat chometz, but we are also admonished against having it in our possession.

Symbolically, leaven represents all that is mean and sordid in life and Matzoh, the pure, the lofty and the sublime. The prayer spoken while the leaven is being burned reveals that just as the Jew removes all leaven from his possessions so we pray that all impure thoughts may be removed from the earth.

Abstinence from Leaven:

The abstinence from leaven for the eight days is intended to recall to our minds, each year, Israel's redemption from bondage. The Israelites were in such a great hurry to leave Egypt that they did not take the time to let their dough leaven.

The Fast of the First Born:

On the Eve of Passover, which is the anniversary of the plague of the first-born visited upon the Egyptians our first born, because they were

spared, are required to fast. However, if the first-born is present at a "Seeyum," the completion of the study of a tract of the Talmud, he may eat thereafter of the meal, which is called "Seudas Mitzvah," a religious repast.

The Last Chometz Meal:

On the day preceding Passover, we are permitted to eat chometz only until the passing of the first third of the day. This means until about 9:20 Friday morning.

Matzohs:

The Matzohs are intended to remind us of the bread prepared in haste when the Israelites fled from Egypt. Since they did not have time to let the dough rise, it remained flat, and they baked it in the hot desert sun.

The Seder:

This means "Order of Service," and is the name given to the service held in the home on the first two nights of Passover. The Seder is symbolic of a royal banquet: the father, dressed in white kittel, is the king;

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THE LAWS AND SYMBOLISM OF PASSOVER



the mother is the queen; and the children, the princes and princesses.

The Hessebet:

These are the cushions placed on the left side to lean upon. They represent the oriental custom that all freemen recline at their banquets.

The Three Matzohs:

Three Matzohs are set upon the table, representing the three classes in Jewry—Cohen, Levi and Israel.

The Four Kosos:

These are four cups of wine, representing the four words in Hebrew meaning "to set free."

The Ten Drops of Wine:

The pouring of ten drops of wine recalls the ten plagues. Our cup is not full when others, even though they be our enemies, suffer.

The Five Dishes:

1. The Bitter Herbs are symbolic of our bitter life in Egypt.
2. Charoses, a mixture of apples, nuts, cinnamon and wine, represents the mortar and clay with which the Israelites had to build when they were slaves in Egypt.

3. The Salt Water represents the tears shed by the Israelites in their misery.

4. The Roasted Bone represents the Paschal lamb sacrificed by our people before they left Egypt and also when the Holy Temple was in existence in Jerusalem.

5. The Egg is symbolic of the special holiday offering (Hagiga) that had to be brought for sacrifice (in Temple times) in addition to the customary Paschal offering.

The Cup of Elijah:

Passover is the Festival of Redemption. Therefore, we set a special cup for Elijah, who, according to tradition, will announce our final redemption.

The Opening of the Door:

We open the door during the Seder Service to indicate our belief in the special divine protection of Israel and to show that we are unafraid of our enemies.

The Afikomen:

This is a piece of the middle one of the three Matzohs placed before the master of the house. It is the last thing partaken of at the Seder, because it represents the Paschal offering, which formerly was eaten last.

The "Hagadah":

The outstanding feature of the Seder is the reading of the "Hagadah," which relates the history of Exodus from Egypt. The Bible commands us to relate the story of Passover and to explain it to our children.

Brief Observations on American Jewish Education

(Continued from Page 2)

ing the Shacharith faithfully in their homes day after day. We have been guilty of a fatal error in American Jewish education: we have not demanded of the pupils nearly so much as they would be ready to give . . .

The average Jewish school in this country exploits its exceptionally bright children in the wrong direction. They are utilized for the longer speeches of the Chanukah and Purim program, or they are put to work on the school paper. The attempt is not undertaken to have them study Rashi in a school where it is not carried as a regular part of the curriculum. Instead of translating with the gifted pupil the more difficult pages of the Chumosh, after the other children have left, a procedure that would take added time on the part of the teacher or the principal, the boy is given an extra book of Bible stories to read for himself. No Hebrew school of forty or more children would fail to produce several boys each year to begin the study of Gemara, if the desire existed to develop the brighter children into a heavier program of studies that would involve a teacher in some extra work. The Hebrew schools of this country have squandered the abilities of their best children upon minor objectives. It is not thereby intended to disparage the value of a school paper or a public program, but these, too, would follow from creating a nucleus of mentally alert children with Jewish knowledge more advanced than average.

In summary, the collapse of Jewish education in this country is due not merely to factors of environment, over which we have very little control, but also to weaknesses in the schools themselves that could be remedied. Given the same children from the same homes, the same terribly limited hours of instruction, the same indifference to Judaism in the surroundings of the child, the Jewish schools of this country would be able to show concrete results, if they would develop the intellectually gifted children in their care, if they would elevate what they expect of all their pupils, if they would appoint teachers who have in them a driving compulsion to win young hearts for Torah, and if they would pay attention to evoking in the children the application to life of the ideas conveyed.

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DANIEL TROTZKY, Director

TALMUD TORAH NEWS

We are proud of Jack Verschleiser, who is a graduate of our Talmud Torah, upon his appointment to the faculty of our Hebrew School.

Plans are now under way for special "Sedorim" to be held by the children of our school before Pesach, April 2nd and 3rd, at which time each class will have a "father" and "mother" and a "child" who will ask the questions.

We are now in the midst of a campaign for the Keren Hayishuv. We ask all children to hurry up with their collection and turn in the money so that we may make this much needed contribution to the Holy Land.

The next issue of "Kolenu" (Our voice of W.S.I.S.) will be issued before Pesach. Arthur Aibinder is the editor and Miss Shurin faculty advisor.

If you desire information about kosher camps for your children, we suggest that you ask Mr. S. Kono-vitel, our principal.

WEEKLY PRAYER SCHEDULE

Light Candle Friday Eve.5:55
 Weekly Portion: Tsav-Shabbus
 Hagadol
 Friday Evening Service6:00
 Saturday Morning Service9:00
 Junior Congregation10:00
 Rabbi Hurwitz's Pilpul5:15
 Mincha Service6:00
 Reader of Torah: Lawrence Kobrin
 Reader of Service: Herbert Perlman
 Speaker: Marshall Gertner
 The Sabbath Terminates6:37
 Sunday Morning Service6:45, 8:45

Daily Services:

Mornings6:45, 8:00, 8:30
 Mincha6:05

Pre-Passover Schedule

B'dikas Chometz — Thursday night

Friday morning — Siyum for the First Born

First Minyan6:30
 Siyum First Born6:55
 Second Minyan7:30
 Siyum First Born7:55
 Eat no Chometz after9:20
 Burning of Chometz and its sale up to10:30

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CHATS ABOUT W.S.I.S.

By Morris Jablow

This year marks the passing of a decade in the history of this institution. It is eminently fitting and proper that we celebrate appropriately our Tenth Anniversary and the progress we have made since we were organized.

It seems but yesterday that the organization meeting of the West Side Institutional Synagogue took place in the home of Mr. George L. Livingston, at which time it was decided to acquire the present building. The group of public-spirited residents of this vicinity which met that evening in May, 1937, was imbued with enthusiasm and a determination to render service to the community.

Those of you, our readers, who have participated in our work during the past ten years, can be truly proud of the results achieved. All mortgage indebtedness have been paid. Our building is a beehive of activity. Our prestige and influence are spreading. We are planning and hope to begin in the near future extensive improvements to meet our growing needs. Surely we can all join joyfully in celebrating the Tenth Anniversary and in doing honor to George L. Livingston for his invaluable aid and devoted service.

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GETTING PERSONAL

Many thanks to Director and Mrs. Gustave Roth, the first to respond to the announcement of our Dinner-Dance to honor George L. Livingston . . . Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Louis Scherer upon the birth of their second grandchild . . . Grandpa and Grandma Isidor Freedman beamed with pride as their grandson, Sandy Ward, son of our Director and Mrs. Jess Ward, opened the Ark last Shabbus with the dignity of an adult . . . Another member of our younger generation who also departed himself in a most becoming manner while carrying out this religious privilege, recently, was Jay Kobrin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Irving Kobrin . . . So glad to see Mrs. Annie Mirken in our midst, after her long absence . . . We are happy that Mrs. Allan Fox is off the sick list . . . We missed Mrs. Meyer Pargament. Best wishes for a speedy recovery . . . Rabbi Emanuel L. Lifschitz paid us a surprise visit and occupied our pulpit. We certainly were very glad to see him looking so well . . . Best of luck in their new home in Cedarhurst, L. I., to Mr. and Mrs. Harold Reich, son-in-law and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Altman . . . Many thanks to Jonas Leisten, Mortimer H. Epstein, David Roaman and Miss Phyllis K. Epstein for their donation of prayer books . . . Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Morris Benson upon the birth of a son, Ray Abram . . . Congratulations to Seymour Reichlin, now attending Washington University Medical School, St. Louis, Mo., upon his election as President of Phi Delta Epsilon Alpha Kappa Fraternity . . . Birthday Greetings this week to Freddy S. Goldstein (his first), son of Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel F. Goldstein; to Avigdor Ziskin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ziskin; to Eleanor S. Goldman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Julius Goldman; Renee Merkin, Robert Kirsh, Robert Livingston and David J. Beier . . . Wedding Anniversary greetings to Director and Mrs. Samuel W. Siegel, Mr. and Mrs. Irving E. Stebbins, and Mr. and Mrs. David L. Messing . . . Happy to see Mr. Bitensky and his son-in-law Moses Schoenfeld in Schule Shabbus . . . We missed our dear President Lester Udell last Shabbus . . . Our own Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein has been appointed by the State Department a member of the National Commission of UNESCO, and attended their meetings in Philadelphia last week.

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