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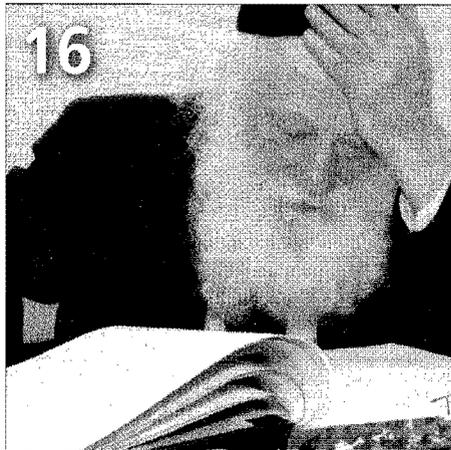
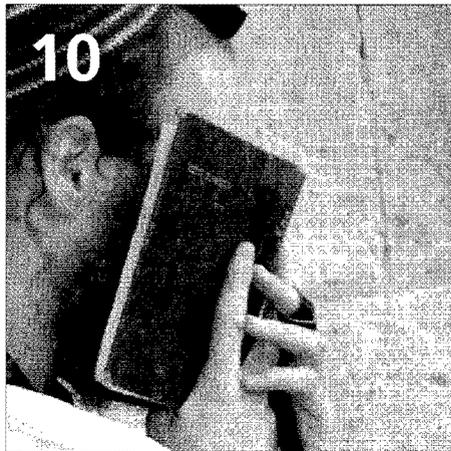
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IN THIS ISSUE

SHARING THE BURDENS OF OUR FELLOWS

- 7 SAVING KLAL YISROEL WITH CHESSED, Rabbi Aryeh Zev Ginzberg
- 10 THE AWESOME POWER OF HAMISPALEIL BE'AD CHAVEIRO, Rabbi Heshy Kleinman
- 16 DIMENSIONS OF AN AMEIL BATORAH: RABBI SHMUEL BERENBAUM, זצ"ל, Rabbi Shimon Finkelman
- 42 THE CLUTTERED NEST ..., Marsha Smagley

LETTER FROM JERUSALEM

- 19 SOME LESS OBVIOUS LESSONS FROM THE MAYORAL ELECTION, Yonason Rosenblum

HIGHER LIGHTS OF CHANUKAH

- 23 THE CANDLES AND THE STARS, Rabbi Yonason Goldson
- 27 WAKE UP AND FIGHT, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Reinman
- 31 PLEASE KEEP THE SHADES DOWN! Rabbi Sholom Smith
- 32 ZOS CHANUKAH, A POEM BY Liba Lieberman
REALLY MISSING IT, A POEM BY Bracha Goetz
- 33 "ISH YEHUDI": THE LIFE AND THE LEGACY OF A TORAH GREAT, RAV JOSEPH TZVI CARLEBACH, A REVIEW ARTICLE BY Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer
- 39 REMEMBERING THE PONOVEZHNER RAV, זצ"ל, CHAPTER TWO, FROM THE MEMOIRS OF Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz

COVER PHOTO: Rabbi Eliyahu Shain שליט"א helps an avriech from Kollel Yesod Refoel get his van started outside of Yeshiva Gedolah Matisyahu (Yehuda Boltshauer)

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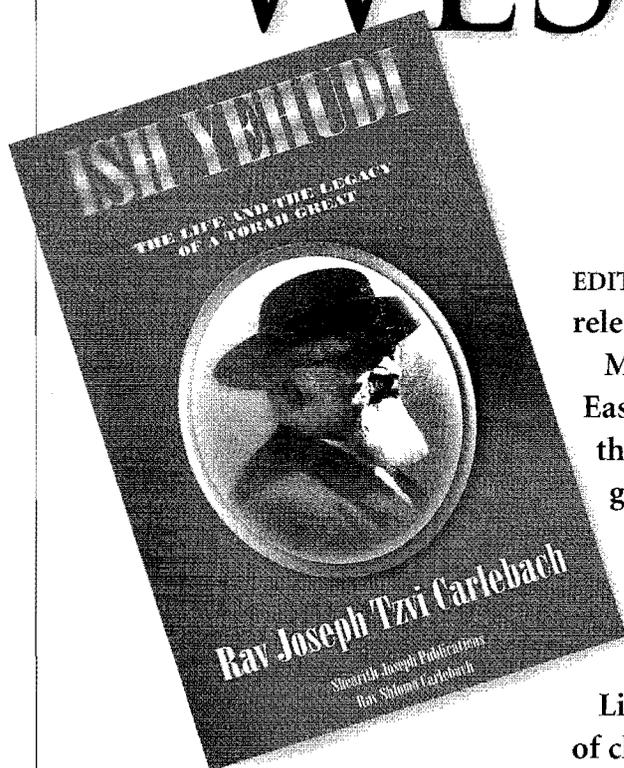
YOSEF GAVRIEL BECHHOFER

EAST MEETS WEST

ISH YEHUDI: THE LIFE AND THE LEGACY OF A TORAH GREAT, RAV JOSEPH TZVI CARLEBACH

by Rav Shlomo Carlebach

(Shearith Joseph Publications; Brooklyn, NY, 2008)



EDITOR'S NOTE: The following essay, a book review of a recently released Torah biography, serves a dual purpose.

Many of us are accustomed to viewing the history of Eastern European Jewry between the two world wars through the prism of the records of its great yeshivos and Torah giants. There is a paucity of Torah literature dealing with the state of the *hamon am*, the great masses that made up Jewish society beyond the walls of the yeshivos. The *Haskala* movement, ignorance, assimilation and grave economic deprivation all had a strong impact upon Lithuanian and Polish Jewry. The confluence of these tides of change resulted in mass abandonment of the already struggling *cheder* form of education. At the outset, formal Torah education for girls and young women did not yet exist.

This essay extracts from the book under review details of the manner in which educational methodologies of the great German school of *Torah im Derech Eretz* were being introduced to be employed in the Lithuanian Yavneh and the Polish Bais Yaakov school networks to combat the problems of the day. This review has been reviewed by *gedolei Torah* and *roshei yeshivos*, who confirmed the picture drawn by Rabbi Carlebach in his new work, and who encouraged us to put his "new" historical insights before our readership.

RABBI BECHHOFER IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO THESE PAGES, WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE INTERACTION OF PRE-WAR EASTERN AND WESTERN EUROPEAN JEWRY. HE IS A MAGGID SHIUR AT YESHIVAS OHR SOMAYACH IN MONSEY AND AT THE MESIVTA OF YESHIVAS R' YITZCHOK ELCHONON, AND IS ALSO EDITOR AT ARTSCROLL MESORAH, CURRENTLY WORKING ON *THE DAILY DOSE*.



Rabbi Ssmson Raphael Hirsch

"To them, the Torah is not a lesson in religion but the very wisdom of life, the living spirit which penetrates every fiber of existence, and defines the structure of the soul, in which one thinks and forms concepts, which fills heart and mind, is guide and support for the whole spectrum of life, giving creative inspiration, and anchoring the soul."

THE ENORMOUS UPHEAVAL in the political and social structure of Jewish society throughout the land [of Lithuania] in the aftermath of the war threatened the stability and loyalty of Jewish youth. Under those circumstances, these Torah leaders felt an urgent need to introduce a similar educational program, on a broad scale, by reorganizing existing schools and establishing new ones, where subjects in *Derech Eretz* would be taught alongside *Limudei Kodesh* (*Ish Yehudi*, p. 74).

Legend has it that the Brisker Rav said that the last true German *gadol baTorah* was the Aruch Laner (Rabbi Yaakov Yokel Ettlinger, 1798-1871). Perhaps. Nevertheless, there arose in late nineteenth century Germany (and even more so in the early twentieth century) a cadre of rabbanim and *talmidei chachamim* whose "superior scholarship in many disciplines, coupled with extraordinary personal qualities, convinced multitudes of doubters that those who advocated reform and abandonment of the Torah way of life were charlatans, exploiting a wave of discontent among the masses to promote their own interests" (*Ish Yehudi*, p. 17). The *sheleimus* of these German leaders complemented their greatness in Torah scholarship.

Rabbi Joseph Tzvi Carlebach (1883-1942) was the last, and one of the greatest, of the illustrious line of such leaders that began with the Aruch Laner,

Chacham Bernays of Hamburg, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfurt, Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer of Berlin, and the Wuertzburger Rav, Rabbi S. B. Bamberger. Both literally and figuratively, he was the captain who went down with the ship of German Jewry, when the illustrious history of *Galus Ashkenaz* was brought to its conclusion.¹

It is beyond the scope of a brief review essay to capture the greatness of the multi-faceted Rabbi Dr. Joseph Tzvi Carlebach. In *Ish Yehudi*, the author, his son, the renowned *mashgiach*, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, a"jyls (building on an earlier work by his uncle, Rabbi Naphtali Carlebach), does so in a comprehensive and gripping manner. Anyone interested in the history of Orthodoxy in the first half of the twentieth century (a group that should include the entire readership of *The Jewish Observer!*), anyone interested in the *Torah im Derech Eretz* approach to *avodas Hashem*, and anyone seeking role models to emulate should read this biography. In this essay, we would like to highlight one of the major contributions that *Ish Yehudi* makes to

¹ Although it is not the focus of this review, one of the many contributions that *Ish Yehudi* makes to our literature is its description of the true role of a rav in times of *extremis*. To take the metaphor further, as captain of his ship, Rabbi Carlebach helped save as many passengers as possible — while declining opportunities to save himself. He remained with those passengers that he could not save, looking out for them and serving as a source of strength for them until the very end.

historical awareness: its highlighting of an insufficiently explored aspect of early twentieth century Jewish history, namely the impact of German Jews and their approach on their Polish and Lithuanian brethren.

EAST AND WEST: A TWO-WAY ENCOUNTER

That the encounter of Western and Eastern Europe made an impact in the reverse is amply documented. For example, upon returning from a tour of Eastern Europe, Rabbi Joseph Tzvi Carlebach wrote:

"The secret is ... the learning of Torah. Young and old, rich and poor, everyone is learning, learning constantly, totally immersed, living and breathing the Torah, be it the written or oral one. Just as their [Eastern European] Yiddish language is interwoven and intermingled with idioms and phrases from the Talmud, so is their very life pulsating and throbbing with the echo of sacred writ. Everyone is learning and drinking from the sources, not from the distilled and bottled excerpts and essences which we spoon-feed our youth, but from the fountainhead of Jewish wisdom, which is always fresh and wide open, rich in spiritual nutrients. For us, Hebrew is a foreign tongue, as is German to a Frenchman, laboriously acquired,

fragments diligently patched together. To them, in contrast, it is the mother tongue, every simpleton's talk, as natural to children's babble as to mature people's talk. To them, the Torah is not a lesson in religion but the very wisdom of life, the living spirit which penetrates every fiber of existence, and defines the structure of the soul, in which one thinks and forms concepts, which fills heart and mind, is guide and support for the whole spectrum of life, giving creative inspiration, and anchoring the soul" (*Ish Yehudi* pp. 117-118).

German Jewish leaders quickly realized that, unlike the case in their own country, the entire culture – even the secularist and Yiddishist elements of that culture – of Eastern Europe was grounded in the texts and lore of Rabbinic literature.

Indeed, German Jewry could and did learn much from its encounter with the great Torah centers and the great Torah scholars of Poland and Lithuania. Accordingly, Western European spiritual luminaries such as Dr. Nathan Birnbaum penned such lines as this: "To achieve growth [*aliya*] in *da'as Hashem* [knowledge of G-d], there float before my eyes [the following ideas]: ... 2. Festive gatherings of Chareidim, for spiritual purposes (such as the introduction of the Eastern European *Shalosh Seudos*, etc.)."² The constant flow of German Jewish youth to the great yeshivos of Telshe, Slabodka and Mir during the '20s and '30s was also a manifestation of the influence of Eastern Europe. In *Ish Yehudi*, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach traces the flow of influence in the opposite direction.

During World War I, the Germans overran Poland and a large part of the Baltic states, including Lithuania. The German High Command was interested in establishing positive ties to the substantial Jewish populations of these areas. To this end, they appointed Rabbi Joseph Tzvi Carlebach's older brother, Rabbi Dr. Emanuel Carlebach, the Rabbi of Cologne, as the Chief Chaplain of all the Jewish soldiers in the Polish sector.

Their brother-in-law, Rabbi Dr. Leopold Rosenak, the Rabbi of Bremen, was appointed the chaplain for the Baltic sector. The brothers-in-law established close ties with the great rabbanim and rebbes of the occupied areas, and they accomplished much for the Jews in their respective sectors. For example: "He [Rabbi Emanuel Carlebach] laid the groundwork for organizing the Jews into a political power bloc,³ established an Orthodox newspaper in modern format, and, together with Rabbi Pinchos Kohn,⁴ persuaded the Gerrer Rebbe ... to join the *Agudas Yisroel*..." (*Ish Yehudi*, p. 70).

3 As a result, in the years between the World Wars, several Orthodox Jews served as officials of the short-lived Eastern European democracies. For example, my great-uncle, Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Hodakov, was secretary-general of the Latvian Ministry of Jewish Education. At the time, he was a staunch member of Zeirei Agudas Yisroel, for a time he also headed the *Torah im Derech Eretz* Gymnasium in Riga, the capital of Latvia – one the many schools that emulated the Carlebach *Gymnasium* in Kovno (see below).

4 Rabbi Dr. Pinchos Kohn was the Rabbi of Ansbach, and one of the founders of the *Agudah*.

CHANGES IN THE WORKPLACE

One of the issues that greatly concerned the German occupiers was the haphazard Eastern European Jewish educational system beyond the rarified realm of the yeshiva world. Following the lead of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's founding of the Frankfurt Realschule in 1853, German Jewry had established systematic elementary and secondary educational institutions – both for boys and for girls – that incorporated his principles of *Torah im Derech Eretz*, combining Torah and secular studies.⁵ On the other hand, the Jews of Poland and the Baltic states, following centuries old customs, possessed only the informal *cheder* model for the elementary years, and no secondary schools at all. A

5 For a detailed description of the program (and the history) of the Realschule, see *Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch* (Artscroll/Mesorah, 1996), Chap. 19. The Realschule's program was the model for all subsequent *Torah im Derech Eretz* schools, and remains the model for most contemporary yeshiva elementary schools and many yeshiva high schools.

2 *Le'ohr Hanetzach*, p. 439



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The *gedolei Torah* and the *Olam Hatorah* of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and beyond held the institutions and personalities that emerged from the world of *Torah im Derech Eretz* in the highest esteem.

relatively small number of outstanding pupils, those destined for *gadlus beTorah*, went on to study in yeshivos.

So long as the Eastern European economy remained rural and backward, the absence of high schools did not present the Jews with a problem. To become a craftsman, a young man would enter an apprenticeship, while to join the vast unskilled labor force and become a wagon driver or water carrier, not even that was necessary. To the extent that it was feasible, such young men would often make up groups who would study in a local shul or *kloyz* when the time was available.⁶

By the time of the First World War, however, even Eastern Europe was becoming increasingly metropolitan. The jobs created by the emerging cosmopolitan economy required far more education and greater skills. The problem of properly educating the young men who were not cut out for the rigors of the elite yeshivos of the day had become acute.

If the problem of boys' education was acute, the problem of girls' education (i.e., the lack thereof) was dire. Hitherto, young women in Eastern Europe had had very little access to Jewish educational opportunities. Whatever existed was informal and home based.

THE "YAVNEH" SYSTEM

Yet, the world was changing. As general society opened more opportunities for the intellectual

6 These groups frequently went by the name of *Tiferes Bachurim*. To go off on a slight tangent, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, שליט"א, *shteibel* is called *Tiferes Bachurim*, as one of his early "positions" was as a *maggid shiur* for one such group.

development of young women, Jewish girls were exposed to secular thought and culture. Many families elected to send their daughters to non-Jewish schools rather than to no school at all. As a result, many girls and young women were in danger of losing their religious identity and assimilating.⁷

To deal with a problem of this magnitude, Rabbi Rosenak brought his brother-in-law, Rabbi Joseph Tzvi Carlebach, to the capital of Lithuania, Kovno (Kaunas). With the approval of *gedolei Torah*, Rabbi Carlebach founded a *Gymnasium* (the European term for an academic high school), based on the German *Torah im Derech Eretz* model. Rabbi Carlebach brought in highly qualified teachers from Germany to assist in the venture. Among them was Dr. Leo Deutschlander, who later became famous for his enormous contribution to the Bais Yaakov school system.

The school became known popularly as the Carlebach Gymnasium. By its third year of existence, it enrolled one thousand boys and girls in separate schools. Its remarkable accomplishments made a deep impression on the *gedolim* in Lithuania, particularly on the *Rosh Hayeshiva* of the great yeshiva of Telshe, Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch. Rabbi Bloch invited Dr. Deutschlander, in collaboration with Rabbi Carlebach, to found the network of similar schools that came to be known as "Yavneh."⁸

7 Of course, it was largely in order to address the same issue in Poland that the Bais Yaakov movement was founded – almost concurrently – by Sarah Schenirer.

8 Several of my great-aunts attended Yavneh in Telshe, and my great-aunt Mrs. Leah Holtzberg's father-in-law, Dr. Raphael Halevi Holtzberg (Etzion), was the director of the Yavneh Teachers' Seminary in Telshe. From my extensive conversations with my great-aunt, I can attest to the extraordinary breadth, depth and scope of a Yavneh education.

The network included separate teachers' seminaries for men and women in Kovno, *Gymnasiums* in Kovno, Telshe, and Ponovezh, and approximately one hundred elementary schools – all of which brought the *chinuch* methodology of Western Europe to Eastern Europe. Yavneh was intertwined with Zeirei Agudas Yisroel, and it was mostly the idealistic Agudist young men and women who served as the leaders and teachers of the Yavneh system.

The Yavneh system was the main Orthodox school system in the short-lived independent republic of Lithuania.⁹ In the milieu created by this modern state, the old-fashioned *cheder* became extinct.¹⁰ It is with a sense of *deja vu* that one peruses the pages of the Telzer periodical *Hane'eman* that served as the journal of record for both the *olam hayeshivos* (and the closely allied Agudah) and the Yavneh system in the '20s and '30s. The issues that they faced

9 The author of this essay verified this phenomenon in a telephone conversation with Rebbetzin Chaya Ausband, *shetichyeh*, the Dean of the Yavneh Seminary in Cleveland, Ohio.

10 Heard from Reb Zalman Alpert, שליט"א, in the name of Rabbi Tuvia Lasdun, שליט"א. Reb Zalman also related to me in the name of his own rebbi, Rabbi Shimon Romm, that the vibrant young Orthodoxy that flourished in independent Lithuania between the wars was known as "Kovno Orthodoxy." (A similar Orthodoxy existed in Latvia.) It was anchored by the yeshivos of Slabodka, Telshe, Kelm and Ponovezh and the *gedolei Torah* that the yeshivos produced, but in the larger community outside the yeshivos it was dominated by *ba'alei batim* and movements such as the Agudah. The rav of Kovno, Rabbi Avrohom Dovber Kahana-Shapira was recognized as the leader of this Lithuanian Orthodoxy. By contrast, in the part of Lithuania (Minsk, Slutsk, Bobruisk and east) that was annexed by the USSR, religion was banned. Only Chabad managed to maintain limited, underground Jewish education. The part of Lithuania (Vilna, Lomza, Bialystok, Grodno and Brisk) that was annexed by Poland was also not as affected by the *Torah im Derech Eretz* influence. By the outbreak of the Second World War, with the exception of the *talmidim* of the great yeshivos (and a relatively nascent network of schools founded by *talmidim* of Novaradok), the youth of this region had been lost to Orthodoxy. Only the Chassidim of the region – Chabad, Slonim and Karlin-Stolin – fared somewhat better. Indicative of this trend is the fact that in 1936, Rabbi Elazar Menachem Mon Shach took a position as *rosh yeshiva* in the Karliner yeshiva in Luninets.



Dr. Nathan Birnbaum

For one, Dr. Nathan Birnbaum was among the most frequent contributors to *Hane'eman's* pages. Moreover, its columns on news from the Jewish world included detailed reports on the affairs of German Jews. More significantly, the journal published many essays that were literary – often fictional – which explored historical and philosophical issues.

in the *chinuch* of the younger generation in Lithuania read as if they were coming from the minutes of the latest Torah U'Mesorah convention!¹¹ A report in *Hane'eman* from a summer teacher training institute held in Polangen in 1930 that Rabbi Carlebach attended,¹² and at which he delivered hundreds of hours of lectures on topics ranging from child psychology to the age of the universe, reads as if it is the record of a seminar that just took place this past summer.

Leafing through the extraordinarily impressive pages of *Hane'eman* also impresses upon one the extent to which the Lithuanian yeshiva world embraced elements of the German Jewish *derech*. For one, Dr. Nathan Birnbaum was among the most frequent contributors to its pages. Moreover, *Hane'eman's* columns on news from the Jewish world included detailed reports on the affairs of German Jews. More significantly, the journal published many essays that were literary – often fictional – which explored historical and philosophical issues. This was much in the genre of the great German Jewish writers, such as Rabbi Marcus Lehman. Finally, when they saw such works as inspirational and elevating, the editors of *Hane'eman* did not hesitate to publish (in translation, of course) poetry by Goethe and other non-Jewish authors.

Thus, Rabbi Carlebach's influence upon Eastern Europe continued to grow even after he finally returned to Germany to succeed his father as the rav in Lubeck. The Carlebach family continued to be personally represented

in Lithuania by his nephew, Rabbi Dr. David (son of Rabbi Emanuel) Carlebach, who served as principal of the Yavneh boys' school in Telshe. The influence of the German methodology of education and of German educators on the Bais Yaakov movement – most notably through the offices of the Agudah's *Keren HaTorah*, directed by Dr. Deutschlander from Vienna – has been duly chronicled in numerous works.¹³ Rabbi Carlebach himself returned to Eastern Europe under the auspices of *Keren HaTorah* to help found and assist more schools, and, as we have seen, to train teachers.

It is fascinating to contemplate the "What if?" What if the Holocaust had not occurred and turned everything to naught? Would the introduction of a two-track school system have continued to grow and further influence the

¹³ See, for example, *Rebbetzin Grunfeld* (Artscroll/Mesorah, 1994).

broader context of Eastern European Orthodoxy?

It is, of course, impossible to answer this question. But *Ish Yehudi* puts one fact beyond question: that the *gedolei Torah* and the *Olam Hatorah* of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and beyond held the institutions and personalities that emerged from the world of *Torah im Derech Eretz* in the highest esteem. It therefore behooves us all to perceive the *sheleimus* and *tzidkus* of the person who engendered that esteem to the highest extent: Rabbi Joseph Tzvi Carlebach, the individual who in so many ways reminds us of the original *Ish Yehudi*: גדול ליחודים ודצוי לרב אחיו דדש טוב לעמו ודבר שלום לכל ודעו.

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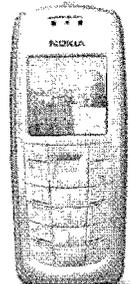
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¹¹ Even to the extent of discussion as to how to ensure that boys came to school wearing tzitzis!

¹² See also the extensive discussion of this institute in *Ish Yehudi*.